



Food Establishment Safety Regulations: Permit Amendments FAQ's

GENERAL

Q: What is the Northwest Territories ('NWT') Agriculture Strategy?

A: The Government of the Northwest Territories' Agriculture Strategy, "The Business of Food: A Food Production Plan 2017-2022", is an interdepartmental plan that focuses on the economic viability of the NWT agriculture sector. The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), specifically the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer, has a mandate to protect the health of the public. This includes food safety to prevent food-borne illness. With the emergence of agricultural activities and local food production in the NWT, DHSS has reviewed and updated the current *Food Establishment Safety Regulations* (FESR) to better reflect these new activities while ensuring safe food practices.

A copy of the NWT Agriculture Strategy is available here:

https://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/sites/iti/files/agriculture_strategy.pdf

Q: What are the NWT Food Establishment Safety Regulations ('FESR')?

A: The NWT *Food Establishment Safety Regulations*, under the *Public Health Act*, ensure food establishments in the NWT are meeting health and safety standards. A food establishment is a premises where food is manufactured, processed, prepared, packaged, stored, handled, displayed, transported, distributed, served, offered for sale or sold.

A copy of the FESR is available here:

<https://www.justice.gov.nt.ca/en/files/legislation/public-health/public-health.r8.pdf>

FOOD ESTABLISHMENT SAFETY REGULATION ('FESR') AMENDMENTS

Q: What amendments were made to the FESR?

A: The FESR were amended to:

- Allow the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer to exempt operators from the payment of permit fees;
- Allow the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer to grant more than one temporary or seasonal permit per year to individual applicants, as well as extend the durations for these permits; and
- Update permit fees.

Additional amendments to the FESR allow the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer to exempt some of the permitting requirements for "home food processors" while still ensuring food safety practices by home-based food businesses, as well as modernize food establishment and food safety requirements.

Q: Do these FESR amendments affect me?

A: The FESR apply to any premise that is handling food for a commercial purpose, including home-based producers, farmer/community market vendors, restaurants, etc.

The FESR, however, do NOT apply to traditional community feasts or for functions / gatherings for members and their invited guests (i.e. food is prepared or serviced by volunteers of that organization or group).

Q: When do the amendments come into force?

A: August 15, 2019.

Q: Are there additional resources being developed for potential and current vendors?

A: Yes. Food safety signage has been created for vendors, covering topics such as hand washing safety, important cooking and cooling temperatures, and manual dishwashing safety. These will be distributed by the DHSS Environmental Health Unit. There is also a new Food Establishment Permit Application and companion User Guide for those interested in applying for a permit. These resources will also be available on the DHSS website.

Q: Where can I receive more information?

A: Contact the Environmental Health Unit:

Phone: 867-767-9066 ext. 49262

Fax: 867-669-7517

Email: environmental_health@gov.nt.ca

Mail: Environmental Health Unit

Population Health Division

Health and Social Services

P.O. Box 1320

Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9

AMENDMENTS TO THE PERMITS AND FEES UNDER THE FOOD ESTABLISHMENT SAFETY REGULATIONS ('FESR')

Q. Why did the Department make amendments to the permits and fees under the FESR?

A. Amendments to the FESR were made to more easily permit the sale of locally produced foods and to support food security, while ensuring food products are safe to eat.

These amendments also support the overall goal of the NWT Agriculture Strategy to improve economic viability of agriculture production in the NWT. In addition to the health impacts of food contamination, food-borne illness can have a negative impact on the success of the local food industry as it can reduce consumer confidence in the safety and quality of food being produced.

Additionally, specific changes to the FESR recognize the emerging local food production economy. For example, while there is a small increase to the permit fees for 'For Profit' food establishments, the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer can also exempt operators from the payment of permit fees to support food security and / or for operators that require multiple food establishment permits.

Q: What permit types are there under the FESR and do the amendments change the types of permits?

A: There are three types of permits that apply to both For-Profit and Not-for-Profit establishments:

1. *Annual* (Example: Commercial businesses);
2. *Seasonal* (Example: Seasonal food trucks or seasonal food market vendors); and
3. *Temporary* (Example: Time-limited single-event establishments).

Permits are required for any premise where food and beverages (including drinking water or ice) is handled.

The amendments do not change the types of permits under the FESR. The amendments only change the fees, including the ability of the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer to waive certain fees, and extend the duration for certain permits.

Q: Have permit fees changed?

A: Yes. There is a small increase to the annual and seasonal food establishment permits for 'For Profit' vendors. This increase likely applies to most food establishments in the NWT. Temporary food establishment permits now have a \$25.00 fee.

There will continue to be no fee for Not-for-Profit vendors (Example: charitable purpose or by a non-profit organization).

It is important to note that the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer has the ability to waive fees to support food security and for operators that require multiple permits.

The table below depicts the monetary increase for each permit type:

Permit type		Current Rate	New Rate
For Profit	Annual	\$100	\$108
	Seasonal	\$50	\$54
	Temporary	No fee	\$25
Not-for-Profit	Annual	No fee	No fee
	Seasonal	No fee	No fee
	Temporary	No fee	No fee

Q: How will the duration of each permit be changing?

A: Seasonal and Temporary permits will be amended to the new durations below:

Permit type		Current Duration	New Duration
For Profit & Not-for-Profit	Annual	1 year	1 year
	Seasonal	2 weeks to 4 months	3 weeks to 4 months
	Temporary	Less than 2 weeks	Less than 3 weeks

All permit types are issued based on the start- and end-dates of the proposed activity. For example, if a vendor intends to sell food at a community market over a period of 4 weeks (from time of first event to time of last event) they will be required to apply for a seasonal permit.

Q: What will happen to my existing permit that was issued before August 15th?

A: All permits issued prior to August 15th are valid until their specified expiration date. A new permit is not required until the previous permit expires. All permits issued after August 15th will be subject to the fees and other requirements set out in the new FESR.

The Environmental Health Unit is reviewing permit holders who may have renewals in August to ensure an effective transition to the new FESR.

Q: Where can I find the food establishment permit application form?

A: The DHSS [webpage](#) will be updated with the new permit application form and guide.