

Questions & Answers from Proposed Changes to Public Health Fee Webinars

October 2026

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
Public Health

City Elected Officials, City Managers, Council of Governments

1. **Will there be a cap or Board approval trigger if the Consumer Price Index (CPI) runs unusually high in a given year, or would it be automatic?**

The current proposal includes an automatic CPI increase on a fiscal year basis.

Community Events & Certified Farmers' Market

2. **Annual Temporary Food Facilities (TFFs) for prepackaged food will increase by over \$100. Why such a big jump? Prepackaged foods require no extra checks made by Environmental Health personnel.**

The fee was determined using both direct and indirect costs and the time associated with this permit category. The fee was reviewed and approved by the Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller.

3. **When I renewed my Cottage Food Operation (CFO) this year, it took over 2 months for a simple renewal because they said there is only one person who can approve the labels. Will more personnel be added to be able to approve permits in a timely manner?**

Yes, EH intends to increase personnel once the fee proposal is approved. This will significantly help us approve permits in a timely manner. Also, to simplify the process, CFO-A operators will self-attest that they will operate in the same manner every year. Instead of having to reapply for a registration on an annual basis, operators will be sent an invoice that renews the registration, unless there is a change in the operations. In this fee proposal, EH has decreased the annual registration for CFO-A to \$73 instead of \$118. Additionally, there will be a separate fee specifically for the label review if new labels are added after the initial approval. The general timeline for initial review of an application is twenty (20) working days. If corrections are required, the second review may require 10 days.

4. **If it takes 2 months for a TFF, can you prorate the cost?**

The cost of the application cannot be prorated as the costs for the permit are associated with the length of the community event. We encourage temporary food facility operators to submit the application 30 days prior to the event but at least 14 days in advance of the event start date to avoid a late fee.

5. **Can you explain which of those costs repeat when the vendor attends a second or third market, and why a countywide annual permit or reduced multi-market fee was not used instead?**

Under the California Retail Food Code, all permits are location-specific, therefore, a permit cannot be issued for multiple events, unless you obtain a permit as a Mobile Food Facility or a Compact Mobile Food Operation. There is an annual site-specific temporary food facility permit available for community events that occur at the same location throughout the year.

Food Sanitation Advisory Council (in person) Meeting

6. **Are the Public Health Fees in your fee proposal presentation annual?**

Public Health Permit fees are based on fiscal year (July 1st through June 30th). All other fees are invoiced based on the plan check or service fee.

7. **What hourly rate was used in your fee study for Plan Check Inspectors, when calculating fees for site or equipment evaluations?**

The hourly rates are listed on the [proposed fees](#).

8. **Would Plan Check site and equipment evaluation fees replace third-party evaluations?**

No. Third-party evaluations are required to verify compliance with ANSI certification in the absence of certification for the specific piece of equipment. Any new or modified equipment must still be cleared by the Plan Check program to confirm proper installation, including plumbing connections.

9. **If new equipment already has UL, NSF, or NEMA certification, what is the purpose of an additional evaluation by LA County EH/Plan Check?**

Equipment evaluation is required if the proposed equipment will have water, gas, or wastewater connections or a permanent electrical connection.

10. **How do you address illegal street vendors blocking sidewalks? How do you inspect permitted street vendors? Are permits issued for specific locations? Do you conduct inspections at night or weekends? Can you explain the difference between MFFs, CMFOs, and commissaries?**

Permits for mobile food operations are issued through EH. These permits allow for operation within the county with the exception of the cities of Pasadena, Long Beach and Vernon who have their own environmental health divisions. Operators must submit a route sheet showing their proposed work locations. Commissaries, MFFs, and CMFOs are reviewed during Plan Check and are subject to routine inspections.

- **A Mobile Food Facility (MFF)** is a vehicle used to sell food, such as a cart, trailer, or food truck, and is classified as low, moderate, or high risk based on food preparation. MFFs also serve film and television production crews.
- **A Compact Mobile Food Operation (CMFO)** is a smaller, nonmotorized type of MFF, such as a pushcart or pedal-driven cart that may perform limited food preparation under the California Retail Food Code.
- **A commissary** is a food facility that supports MFFs by providing food preparation areas, storage, utensil cleaning, waste disposal, and potable water.

EH inspects and permits MFFs, CMFOs, and commissaries to ensure food safety and regulatory compliance. Inspectors also conduct evening and weekend inspections as necessary.

The blocking of sidewalks does not fall under EH's authority. This is regulated by local land use or Public Works agencies under local city ordinances.

11. Is this presentation a plea for a fee increase? How was the fee study conducted? Was it completed by a third party? If salaries account for 79% of expenses, how have you operated while being 56%–70% underfunded?

The presentation is to inform industries of the proposed fee changes that will be submitted to the Board of Supervisors in November. The fee study was conducted internally, and results were reviewed and approved by the Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller. A 15% fee increase was approved by the Board of Supervisors in 2018. The COVID pandemic occurred shortly thereafter, and the Board later requested another fee study before considering our proposal. Our division has been experiencing a major structural deficit and is currently down 250 positions. If approved, the fee proposal would allow us to add 119 positions over the next 5 years.

12. Are inspectors using a risk-based inspection approach to justify higher Public Health Permit fees for high-risk facilities? For example, our food facility is receiving re-inspections for a score of 98 due to damaged tile.

Reinspection for Good Retail Practices (GRP) are generally conducted when there is a history of repeated violations. Correction of some GRP violations, such as a broken tile, can be verified by submitting a photograph of the replaced tile, while some GRP violations may be addressed during the next routine inspection.

13. How do you verify complaint allegations and assess inspection fees?

If a complaint is found to be justified during the investigation, fees will then be assessed until compliance is obtained. If the complaint is found to be unjustified, no fees are charged.

Housing

14. How much of the Rental Housing Habitability Program (RHHP) and Max Indoor Temperature fees are landlords allowed to pass onto tenants?

In the unincorporated area, the Indoor Maximum Temperature fee is included in the proposed RHHP fee of \$131. The law allows the landlord to pass up to fifty (50) percent of the RHHP fee to the tenant, therefore \$65.50 is allowed to be passed on to the tenant.

8.53.050 Rental Housing Habitability Program Fees.

B. Tenant Pass Through. A Landlord may pass through up to fifty (50) percent of the Rental Housing Habitability Program Fee for a Rental Housing Unit to the Tenant.

For incorporated cities, please refer to your city jurisdiction for information regarding tenant pass through fees.

Mobile Food & Home-Based Operations

15. Will the time study be shared so we can see the breakdowns by permit type?

The time study is submitted to the Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller who validates the information. There is a letter from the Auditor-Controller that states the fees have been reviewed and approved; this letter can be shared.

16. What is being done to equitably regulate street vendors and food trucks, and how are fees being collected from unlicensed vendors?

Unlicensed vendors are a challenge, and Environmental Health (EH) is exploring ways to address it. Currently EH has been focusing efforts on the large unpermitted commissaries that are supporting unpermitted food vending. Also, EH is working with other county departments on enforcement strategies.

17. Can you explain why fees for Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKO) are lower and how that is justified, and clarify the basis for the 40% increase in food truck fees?

The fees are comprised of both direct and indirect costs associated with the Retail Food Program. Environmental Health Inspectors spend more time inspecting mobile food facility vendors due to the nature of their operation. MEHKOs are at a fixed, permanent location.

18. What is done to regulate food trucks that park outside of required commissary?

Environmental Health can address complaints regarding food trucks that do not return to their commissary at the end of their operating day for servicing. Complaints can be made by contacting the call center at 888-700-9995, Monday - Friday from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., excluding Holidays or [online](#).

19. Is there a fee for a complaint that does not lead to a violation?

No, if the complaint is found to be unjustified, a fee will not be charged.

20. Will Environmental Health perform future time studies to ensure that the time is still aligned with the fees?

Yes. The goal is to have the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and cost of living adjustment (COLA) increase on an annual basis so incremental fee increases are made until the next time study is completed.

21. Will permit holders need to pay the increased fee even if they paid for the permit when it was a lower fee?

Yes, the increased fee will need to be paid if the permit fee is approved by the Board of Supervisors for this fiscal year 2026/2027.

22. Is there a pathway to be able to clean and store our food cart with the Cottage Food Operation-B permit instead of only storage?

Some carts can be cleaned at home while others need to be cleaned at the commissary. Please contact the Mobile Food Program at (626) 430-5500 for guidance.

23. How is Environmental Health (EH) holding trucks that do not pay permit fees or park in front of commissaries accountable.

If the public finds that food trucks are operating without permits, EH can investigate. Submit a complaint to EH [online](#) or call (888) 700-9995 Monday - Friday from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., excluding Holidays.

24. Why has reviewing food labels for Cottage Food Operations increased from \$100 to \$167 per hour.

The hourly rate for reviewing food labels for Cottage Food Operations will be increased due to higher overall program implementation costs. The fees have not been adjusted since 2018.

25. Why are the increases more than the stated Consumer Price Index?

The last fee adjustment was in 2018 and was not based on a time study. This proposed fee package was completed as required by the Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller and aligns with state and local laws.

26. Will Inspectors be required to take temperatures of the food before saying that food is at an incorrect temperature?

Inspectors are always required to take food temperatures and document the food temperatures. If incorrect temperatures are identified, the inspector must also have a corrective action noted.

27. With the increased fees, will Environmental Health (EH) be able to translate violation notices into other languages?

The inspection report is a legal document and must be issued in English. However, to assist operators/individuals, there are inspection guides posted [online](#) in multiple languages so that stakeholders can see what the requirements are in their language.

28. Will LA County offer an annual permit that is valid anywhere within LA for those vendors that participate in multiple events?

Environmental Health is evaluating the possibility of offering an annual permit that would allow eligible vendors participating in multiple events to operate throughout Los Angeles County. However, under the California Retail Food Code, permits are location specific and cannot be issued for use at multiple events unless the vendor obtains a permit as a Mobile Food Facility or a Compact Mobile Food Operation. For events held repeatedly at the same location, an annual site specific Temporary Food Facility permit is available.

29. Why do we have to provide proof of a valid health permit to participate in community events?

State law requires a valid public health permit to be posted at the Temporary Food Facility/food booth in a location that is visible to customers.

30. A stationary food truck is in one location, so can the fee be comparable to Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKOs)?

A stationary food truck must still meet all requirements for a mobile food facility, while a Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation (MEHKO) is regulated under a different set of standards because it operates within a private residence. For these reasons, the fee structures for food trucks and MEHKOs are not directly comparable.

31. Why is there a 40% increase for time when Environmental Health has food trucks list their routes?

While food trucks are required to post their routes, the actual cost of the program continues to increase. The last fee increase was in 2018.

32. Will there be public comments?

Yes, public comments can be made at the [Board of Supervisors' Meetings](#).

[Retail Food](#)

33. Why are restaurant fees going up when there is unequal enforcement of the law, compared to the Street Food Vendors or Food Trucks breaking the law daily with unsafe practices resulting in the increase of vermin and pests on the streets creating health risks?

EH recognizes that unpermitted food vending continues to be a challenge for our brick-and-mortar businesses. EH is collaborating with other county departments to address unpermitted food vending along with its current focus on unpermitted catering locations that prepare and store food for these unpermitted food operations.

Food Trucks and Mobile Food Facilities need to obtain a Public Health Permit and are subject to inspections. Complaints related to food trucks may be submitted on our [website](#) or by contacting 888-700-9995, Monday - Friday from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., excluding Holidays.

34. What is EH doing to stop unpermitted street vending?

Unpermitted street vending is a statewide issue. EH is actively working with the state to develop strategies to address this problem. One proposed approach is for the state to grant local jurisdictions greater authority to manage unpermitted food vending. Another strategy involves identifying large organizations that supply equipment and employ individuals engaged in illegal vending operations. Local law enforcement agencies and county attorneys have shut down 17 illegal warehouses to date.

A new strategy, which has not yet been launched, is a pilot program scheduled to begin this year. This program will focus on addressing unpermitted street vending at the point of occurrence. Under this pilot, items belonging to unpermitted vendors will be immediately confiscated when illegal vending activity is identified.

35. Most staff do not know what satellite service is. Will there be guidance on this for both operators and staff?

Yes, there will be guidance developed for both operators and staff on satellite food service.

36. Why are prices being raised? Is less funding being received from the state?

EH does not receive funding from the state. Fees collected as authorized in State/Local law are used to implement the programs as required by state and county code. EH is proposing

that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and cost-of-living increases are applied on an annual basis to avoid huge financial impacts by increasing fees gradually.

37. Currently, plan checks expire at 1 year. Can that be extended?

EH is looking at extending plan checks to more than one year. EH knows that it often takes more than a year to get through all the building and other plan check write-offs that are needed. Once EH has guidance, it will be shared with the food industry and to all partners through the Food Sanitation Advisory Council and listserv.

38. What qualifies under equipment evaluation?

An equipment evaluation may be submitted by a food operator when a new piece of equipment is being installed rather than having to submit a new full plan review process. Equipment evaluation is required if the proposed equipment will have water, gas, or wastewater connections or a permanent electrical connection.

39. Can restaurants and small businesses receive smaller fee increments that are spread out over the years, instead of in bulk at over 20%?

EH understands that anytime there is a fee increase it has an impact on businesses and this is something that is not taken lightly. It is for this reason that EH is looking to include CPI and COLA increases annually so that fees are increased incrementally and not in bulk.

Unfortunately, there has not been a fee increase since 2018 so that is why this increase is higher.

School Cafeterias & Camps

40. Why do the new proposed permit fees for school cafeterias range from 300%-500%?

The proposed permit fees for school cafeterias are new fees intended to align permit fees with the program costs to verify compliance of food safety in schools.

41. Will the new permit fees include inspections, or will that be charged separately in addition to the permit fees? Is the permit fee charged once a year or for each visit?

The new permit fees include inspections, and this will help Environmental Health conduct two inspections a year. The permit fee is an annual fee (July 1st through June 30th).

42. Will school sites be charged a permit fee for serving breakfast, lunch, after school snacks, or dinner?

A separate permit is not needed. The permit covers all food service activities that are conducted in the cafeteria, based on the permit type.

43. What happens when a school does not receive the two (2) required inspections by California Department of Education? Are school cafeterias still paying the permit fee?

The Health Permit fee is not based on a fee-for-service model; instead, it is designed to recover the cost of operating and administering the environmental health program. The fees were developed based on a comprehensive time study that accounts for both direct and indirect program costs. If a school does not receive the two required USDA inspections, the permit fee is not refundable as a permit is required to operate the food facility.

44. What constitutes a Service Fee?

A service fee is defined as a one-time fee that is charged for activities conducted by Environmental Health.

45. Is the high-risk category disproportionately penalizing cafeterias that perform scratch cooking?

The High-Risk category reflects the increased level of food handling involved. Scratch cooking carries higher risk because it involves more steps where cross-contamination or improper food handling may occur. Operations that provide only prepackaged food have minimal food handling, resulting in lower risk and a corresponding lower fee.

46. Are other counties like San Bernadino and Riverside implementing similar fee structures? Is it possible to have a state-wide fee structure?

Permitting is authorized at the local level by State law as the costs for each jurisdiction vary based on both direct and indirect costs.

47. Has the Los Angeles Department of Public Health evaluated whether the risk categories will create a financial disincentive for school districts that are trying to expand scratch?

EH does not have the ability to evaluate the financial impact on school districts as its responsibility is to fully recover the cost of implementing the program as established in the California Health and Safety Code. Scratch cooking increases food handling risk and therefore requires more inspection time, which places those operations in a higher fee category.

48. Is this proposal simply full cost recovery for Los Angeles Department of Public Health, or are districts receiving an enhanced level of service for fee increase?

Environmental Health wants to make sure that the school district is provided with the level of service that is expected, regardless of whether there is a fee increase.

49. Does Environmental Health have a chart to compare the fees for schools by county?

EH has a chart that compares some fees within the webinar posted on our [website](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh). Most of the jurisdictions have permit fees that are posted online.

50. What specifically requires substantially more Environmental Health staff time at a scratch-cooking school than at a heat-and-serve school? Can you quantify the average inspection hours for each tier?

Scratch cooking cafeterias require substantially more EH staff time because they involve more food handling steps, more complex processes, and greater overall food safety risk. Preparing food from raw ingredients increases the number of procedures that must be evaluated, resulting in longer inspections and heightened oversight. In contrast, heat and serve cafeterias may conduct reheating and serving, making their inspections shorter and less complex.

The average time for each category is as follows (this accounts for all direct time associated with this program) for two inspections:

- Low risk – 2.99 hours
- Moderate risk – 3.68 hours
- High risk – 4.83 hours

51. If an inspection is not conducted, can you clarify what costs are incurred that would necessitate payment?

A permit gives schools the ability to operate a food facility as required by the California Retail Food Code.

52. What incentive does a tier structure create? Would a district reduce its fees by moving away from scratch cooking and toward more prepackaged or heat-and-serve foods?

The fees are developed in alignment with the Model Food Code recommendations based on risk categories. Additionally, the state mandates inspections to make sure that the schools are meeting the necessary requirements.

53. Does Environmental Health (EH) expect to be able to conduct two inspections per school site for the current fiscal year? Will the permit agreement guarantee the minimum of two inspections?

For this current fiscal year, two inspections will probably not be completed because EH does not have the funding to hire additional staffing. If the fees are approved, then there will be an increase in staff to meet those inspections.

54. How can Environmental Health (EH) already determine the next COLA increase, if the regulations state EH must show actual expenses?

The county approved a 3-year contract in 2025, establishing COLAs for FY 26/27 and FY 27/28. No COLAs were approved for FY 25/26.

55. Why isn't the permit fee part of the building?

When a school is built, there are plan check fees to cover the cost of this process. Plan check fees are separate from the annual health permit fee. The annual health permit fee is required to verify compliance with the California Retail Food Code.

56. When will the permit fees be implemented?

If the board approves the fees they will go into effect in December 2026. However, currently there are agreements with the school districts, and those agreements will be honored through FY 26/27. The new permit fees would go into effect for schools on July 1, 2027.

57. How will existing school cafeterias be assigned to a tier? Will districts need to reapply or have each cafeteria reevaluated by Environmental Health (EH), or will EH automatically assign a tier based on existing permit information?

EH is currently assigning existing school cafeterias to the new permit categories based on food operations as noted during routine inspections. EH will work with schools on the permitting process once approved.

58. What agency provided the approval for your cost increases? Can we review the audit report that the increases are based on?

The Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller is the agency responsible for approving the established fees. The Auditor-Controller has issued a letter confirming and validating the fee calculations, which can be provided to school districts upon request.

59. How can we best compare school cafeterias and retail restaurants when each operates in a very different environment?

All food facilities must comply with the California Retail Food Code. Schools and restaurants are considered permanent food facilities and subject to those requirements.

60. Can we start the permit fees at (\$197 x 2) + COLA%? And annually increase based upon COLA?

The current fee that is part of the agreement is based on fees that were approved in 2018. The proposed fee is meant to recover costs and then increase incrementally annually based on CPI and COLA, if approved by the Board of Supervisors.

61. Are there opportunities for public schools and Environmental Health (EH) to collaborate and better understand the unique operational challenges?

EH looks forward to ongoing collaboration with school districts to address unique operational challenges.

62. Can you provide additional information regarding the risk level?

Yes. The risk levels are outlined in the fact sheet. It provides definitions and categorization criteria. For example, a low-risk school cafeteria is defined as one that receives prepackaged and ready-to-serve foods.

The fact sheet includes all risk level descriptions and can be accessed [here](#).

63. Do schools get two inspections per year, or will it align with the retail food facility high risk category and receive three inspections?

The goal is to conduct two (2) inspections per year.

64. Have other County General funds been considered to subsidize these costs?

EH does not receive general funds. EH is funded through the fees it collects as required by state and county code.

65. If the permit does not relate to a service the department provides, why is there a difference in the permit amount? Would the difference in service be at the inspection level?

The annual permit fee is based on the type of food handling activities that are conducted within the cafeteria. The food handling activities are then classified as low, moderate or high risk.

66. Why are middle schools and high schools considered serving high-risk populations?

Middle schools and high schools are not classified as serving high-risk populations, it is the type of food handling that determines the risk category type. A school cafeteria that prepares food from raw ingredients and uses more complex processes are considered high-risk.

67. Does the permit cover a school's student store or stadium snack bar?

A student store that sells less than 25 square feet of prepackaged non-potentially hazardous food is exempt from a health permit. The stadium snack bar is subject to a separate health permit. Environmental Health does have multiple permit options depending on the type of operation.

68. Do our school cafeterias qualify for a no-fee (fee-exempt) permit under Los Angeles County Code Section 8.04.700?

School cafeterias do not qualify for a no-fee exemption as authorized in Section 8.04.700.

69. How is public safety ensured when no inspections or site visits occur? If inspections are not conducted, what costs or services are associated with the permit, and what factors determine the permit tier assigned to a facility.

All permitted food facilities are required to comply with the California Retail Food Code and ensure they provide safe, wholesome food to the public/students. The annual health permit is required to operate the food facility and as such the fees collected support the implementation of the California Retail Food Program, and the associated costs are shared across all Environmental Health (EH) permittees. School cafeterias are assigned a permit tier based on their operational risk level, regardless of whether an inspection occurs during a given year.

EH's goal is to conduct routine inspections; however, limited staffing capacity has affected the frequency of site visits in recent years. The updated fees, validated by the Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller, are designed to cover the cost of program operations, including both direct and indirect staffing expenses, so that EH can meet inspection requirements.

70. Do we reach out to the Board of Supervisors to request subsidized funding?

Environmental Health (EH) does not receive other funding to implement the programs. The permit fees EH collects are for implementing the programs.

71. How do we send letters or statements to the Board of Supervisors that we do not support these fee increases for schools?

- To provide written comments on agenda items, use the following link: [Public Comment](#)
- To participate in the Board meeting, you may do so in-person or virtually. Visit <https://bos.lacounty.gov/board-meeting-information/> for more information.

[Wholesale Food](#)

72. I am with a supplement company in California. Through the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), we have an organic processed registration for a few organic products, and then a processed food registration for three facilities. How would this be affected by the new fee changes? Which category would we fall under? Would we even fall under this scope?

Yes, all food processors within the jurisdiction of Environmental Health (EH) would be subject to permitting and inspection. This is separate from the Processed Food Registration issued by CDPH. A vitamin/supplement processor would fall under food processor low-risk or food processor based on size categories.