

FOOD SAFETY NEWSLETTER



BFHD's Food Safety 2025 Inspection Findings

The Benton-Franklin Health District (BFHD) works to protect public health by ensuring food establishments follow safety regulations to prevent foodborne illnesses. Our risk-based inspections help identify and correct food safety violations that could impact the community.

In 2025, BFHD's Food Safety team completed:

- 2,124 routine inspections
- 269 follow-up inspections
- 521 food safety complaints addressed
- 1,131 temporary food establishment inspections

Growth and Compliance

215 New Establishments THAT OPENED FOR BUSINESS

1,929 Establishments PASSED A ROUTINE INSPECTION

From inspections to education and enforcement, our food safety team partners with the community and local food vendors to keep food safe and reduce the risk of foodborne illness.



2025 TOP 5 VIOLATIONS

(#1) Demonstration of Knowledge – WAC 246-215
The Person in Charge (PIC) must understand food safety rules and ensure employees are trained in safe food handling to prevent foodborne illness.

(#2) Food Worker Cards – WAC 246-215
All food workers must have a valid Washington State food worker card to confirm they've received proper food safety training.

(#11) Date Marking/Proper Disposition – WAC 246-215
Proper disposition of returned, unsafe, or contaminated food; proper date marking procedures for food at high risk for Listeria.

(#19) No room temperature storage; proper use of time as a control – WAC 246-215
Time & Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods must be held in temperature-controlled equipment at temperatures below 41°F if cold held and 135°F if hot held.

(#21) Proper Cold Holding – WAC 246-215
Perishable foods must be stored at safe cold temperatures (41°F or below) to prevent bacterial growth.



Food safety starts with knowledge, training and compliance. Let us know how we can help you by taking our food safety survey!

We offer two options—one for food industry partners and one for the general public.

Your feedback will help us strengthen education, outreach, and support for both food vendors and our community.



Scan Here For Consumer Survey

Scan Here For Industry Survey



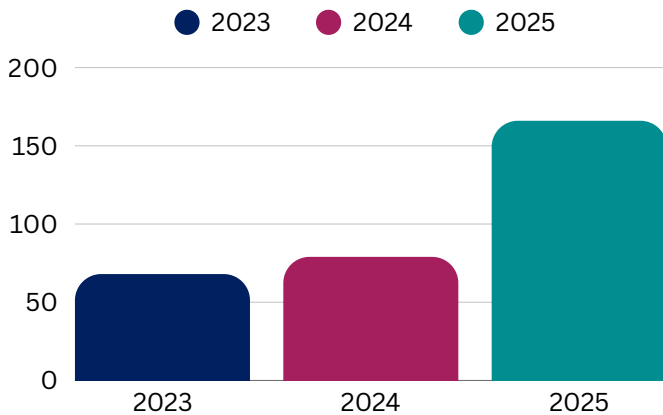
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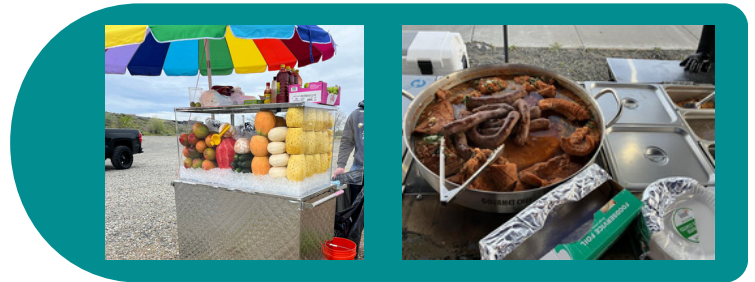
The Rise of Unpermitted Vendors in Benton-Franklin Counties

Last year, Benton and Franklin counties saw a sharp increase in unpermitted food vendors. As shown below, complaints in 2025 have risen significantly—up 89% compared to 2024 and 119% compared to 2023.

Complaints of Unpermitted Food Vendors



Many of these unpermitted operations were not meeting basic food safety requirements. Common issues included missing or non-working handwashing stations, poor temperature control, use of unapproved food sources, and a lack of safe food handling practices. These types of field observations by food safety inspectors are among the top contributing factors to foodborne illness.



BFHD’s Food Safety Department’s Approach

BFHD is actively addressing the rise in unpermitted vendors with a strong focus on food safety. As complaints are received, our team responds by assessing each situation and taking appropriate action to address unpermitted food operations and reduce potential public health risks.

We also provide outreach, guidance, and language-accessible materials to help vendors understand how to become permitted and operate safely. Prospective vendors are encouraged to take advantage of free consultations with our inspectors, who can help navigate the permitting process.

To support these efforts, BFHD works with city, county, and state partners to coordinate enforcement when needed. Our focus remains on food safety within our jurisdiction, and we do not share information beyond those concerns. Because some unpermitted vendor activity crosses county and state lines, BFHD is also working with the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and other partners to explore broader, long-term solutions.

In the meantime, we remain committed to addressing all unpermitted food vendor complaints and protecting public health in our community.



Choosing Safe Food Sources & Reporting Illness

Food from unsafe sources is one of the top five contributing factors to foodborne illness. Choosing to eat at permitted establishments—where food sourcing, preparation, and service are routinely inspected—significantly reduces this risk.

If you or someone you know has experienced symptoms of illness and suspects it may be foodborne, it is important to report it to your local health jurisdiction. You can contact your health department’s food safety team, submitting a report through their website, or using Washington’s new Foodborne Illness Notification System (FINS). Reporting helps identify the source of the illness, prevent additional cases, and protect public health.

Scan For Food Safety Inspection Reports

For more information, please reach out to a food safety inspector at (509) 460-4205 or email the Food Safety Department at ContactUsFoodSafety@bfhd.wa.gov

