

Guidance for Commissary Owners/Operators

This guidance document is intended for owners/operators of commissary kitchens and food premises operating out of a commissary. A commissary is a shared commercial kitchen, available for rent, where foods are processed and stored for public consumption. Commissaries provide food processors and food service establishments (e.g., caterers, mobile food premises, vending machines, pop-up food premises) with a base of operations and services.

Plan Approval Process

Prior to construction or structural changes of a commissary, the commissary owner/operator must submit floor plan drawings to the local VCH Health Protection office for approval. Refer to the [VCH Food Premises Orientation Package](#) for plan submission details and design requirements. Visit our [website](#) for more information on [Food Service Permits & Health Approvals](#). Be sure to submit floor plans to the planning/zoning department of your local municipality as well. For alterations, such as changes in facility configuration, installation or removal of equipment, or adding more workstations to increase occupancy, ensure to contact your district Environmental Health Officer for review and approval prior to conducting changes.

The number of vendors that can use a commissary kitchen at the same time depends on the size, layout, and equipment available. This includes refrigeration, food preparation and storage spaces, designated hand sinks, warewashing and janitorial sinks. It is best practice to have a designated hand sink located at each workstation so food handlers can conveniently and directly access it. This will reduce demands on shared handwashing stations among multiple food premises operations and reduces monitoring and maintenance (such as restocking supplies). As operational considerations may vary, an alternative layout can be considered provided it is reasonable and aligns with health and safety standards. Facilities and equipment must adequately support the needs of the users. As per section 4(1)(b) in the *Public Health Act, Food Premises Regulation, B.C. Reg. 210/99*, facilities must be designed to ensure the safe and sanitary handling of foods. **Vancouver Coastal Health Authority may limit capacity/number of food premises approvals based on facility design and operations.**

Commissary Operational Plan

Submit an operational plan to the local VCH Health Protection office for approval. Include the following:

1. Hours of Operation.
2. Commissary managers'/delegates' contact information.
3. The proposed number of food preparation workstations, designated hand sinks, food preparation sinks, and food storage areas associated with each workstation.
4. The maximum number of food premises operators that can operate out of the commissary at the same time based on the number of workstations. Include details of scheduling (full-time, part-time, hourly operations) and rental parking agreements for mobile food premises.
5. A written cleaning and sanitation plan for common/shared equipment and areas.
6. Types of proposed operations in the commissary (e.g., mobile food vendors, food processors).

7. A description of services provided to food premises operators. This must include:
 - a) Professional pest control service contract and inspection/maintenance frequency of the building to exclude pests from entering the premises.
 - b) Details of equipment maintenance.
 - c) Monitoring and recording of freezer and refrigeration temperatures.
 - d) Monitoring and recording of dishwasher temperatures and/or sanitizer levels.
 - e) Liquid soap and paper towels at hand washing stations and washrooms.
 - f) Janitorial supplies and services (cleaning and sanitizing products, detergents, disinfectants, degreasers).
 - g) Water filling station and liquid waste disposal services for mobile food premises.
 - h) Waste removal services detailing the frequency of removing solid waste, recyclables, and organic waste. Location of waste storage amenity.
 - i) Appropriate parking space for mobile food premises (if applicable).

8. Commissary use policies for food premises, including:
 - a) Obligations to comply with safety, fire, and health regulations.
 - b) Number of staff allowed per food preparation workstation.
 - c) Instructions for the use of shared equipment.
 - d) Prohibited equipment at workstations. For example, deep fryers or equipment that produces grease-laden vapours or significant steam/heat; Unless specifically designed and provided for with proper mechanical ventilation/fire suppression.
 - e) Disclose food allergens used in the workspace. Operators should be aware of all food allergens prepared in the commissary.
 - f) Responsibilities of commissary users for maintaining cleanliness at their individual food preparation workstations, implementing and/or following preventative pest control measures, and fulfilling waste disposal obligations.
 - g) Commissary owner is responsible for the maintenance of adequate number of hand sinks and commissary users are responsible for adhering to proper hand hygiene practices.
 - h) Personal hygiene and sick policy requirements.
 - i) Food storage requirements (e.g., secured, off the floor a minimum of 15cm (6 inches), in food grade containers with tight-fitting lids, protected from contamination).
 - j) Non-employees/guests are prohibited in production areas.
 - k) Management of deliveries and orders.
 - l) For mobile food premises - Instructions for connecting a potable water source to potable water tanks, and instructions for the disposal of the liquid waste from the wastewater tanks.

9. Maintain a current, accurate list of commissary users. Include the business name, owner/vendor contact information (phone and e-mail address). Update this list when adding new users or removing existing ones. Notify VCH when an operator/vendor is no longer using the commissary space (e.g., rental agreement expired or terminated).

10. A written Emergency Management Plan posted in a visible location onsite, including procedures for loss of power, fire, flood, sewage back-up, lack of hot water, lack of running water, essential equipment failures. Include contact information for the commissary owner/operator, and local Health Protection Office.

Commissary Owner/Operator Requirements for Health Approval:

- A) Submit floor plans for approval (see plan approval process above).
- B) Submit a copy of operational plans and a completed [non-permitted VCH application form](#).
- C) Arrange for an initial inspection with an Environmental Health Officer for health approval.

Food Premises Operator Requirements for Health Approval:

Individual food premises operators must also receive health approval prior to producing and storing food in the commissary kitchen. The following information must be submitted **in advance**:

- A) [VCH food service permit application form](#) + food service permit fee (i.e., caterers) OR a [VCH non-permitted facility application form](#) (i.e., food processors)
- B) Certificate of Incorporation (if applicable)
- C) Commissary use application form (see Appendix A)
- D) Mobile food premises floor plan (if applicable)
- E) [Mobile Food Premises Commissary/Service Agreement](#) (if applicable)
- F) A complete menu and/or list of food products being processed
- G) A food safety plan and a sanitation plan (see Appendix B for resources)
- H) [FOODSAFE Level 1](#) certificate or its equivalent
- I) For foods that are processed and packaged for retail:
 - specify where products will be sold (e.g. indicate if outside of BC)
 - provide lab results of product testing to determine shelf stability and/or microbiological safety (see the [Canadian Food Inspection Agency – Shelf life studies webpage](#) for guidance and Appendix C for a list of Commercial Food Testing Laboratories)
 - Use caution when listing allergy free claims on products
 - provide a copy of the product labels
 - the process for canned food/higher risk foods packaged aseptically must be reviewed and accepted by a qualified Processing Authority

If there are changes to the list of approved menu items or processes after health approval is granted, the food premises operator must contact the local Health Protection office, provide supporting documents and obtain approval for the changes **prior** to making them.

Serving or selling foods at a Temporary Event or Temporary Food Market?

Use the [Interactive Tool](#) to find out what forms and approvals are needed.

Contact your local Health Protection Office:

Service Area	Phone	Email Address
North Shore	604-983-6793	HealthProtectionNS@vch.ca
Powell River	604-485-3310	HealthProtectionCG@vch.ca
Richmond	604-233-3147	HealthProtectionRH@vch.ca
Squamish	604-892-2293	HealthProtectionCG@vch.ca
Sunshine Coast	604-885-5164	HealthProtectionCG@vch.ca
Vancouver	604-675-3800	ehvc@vch.ca
Whistler	604-932-3202	HealthProtectionCG@vch.ca





Coast Garibaldi Office, Box 1040, 5571 Inlet Ave., Sechelt, V0N 3A0 Tel 1604-885-5164
North Vancouver Office, 132 W Esplanade, North Vancouver, V7M 1A2 Tel 604-983-6700
Richmond Office, 8100 Granville, Richmond, V6Y 3T6 Tel 604-233-3147
Squamish Office, Box 220 1140 Hunter Pl., Squamish, V8B 0A2 Tel 1604-892-2293
Vancouver Office, 1200-601 West Broadway, Vancouver, V5Z 4C2 Tel 604-675-3800

Appendix A: Commissary User Application Form

Contact Information:

Legal Name of Company/Partnership/Sole Proprietor (if applicable):	
Premises Name: (trade name/doing business as):	
Commissary Site Address:	Commissary Workstation Location:
Commissary Owner's Name(s):	Phone: () Mobile: () Email:
Food Premises Operator's Name(s):	Phone: () Mobile: () Email:
Food Premises Operator's Mailing Address:	

Operational Information:

Type of Food Premises: (e.g., mobile food premises, catering, food processing, etc.):	
Days/Time of Commissary Use (e.g., list days of week and hours):	Parking Included (yes/no):
Frequency and period of use (e.g., number of hours per week):	Effective Date (DD-MM-YYYY):
Services Provided to Food Premises Operators (check all that apply):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dishwasher sanitizer level monitoring	<input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning and sanitizing products
<input type="checkbox"/> Refrigerator/freezer/hot holding temperature monitoring	<input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning/restocking supplies in common areas
<input type="checkbox"/> Hand washing supplies	<input type="checkbox"/> Pest Control
<input type="checkbox"/> Waste removal services	<input type="checkbox"/> Use of shared equipment (list equipment):





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 Squamish Office, Box 220 1140 Hunter Pl., Squamish, V8B 0A2 Tel 1604-892-2293
 Vancouver Office, 1200-601 West Broadway, Vancouver, V5Z 4C2 Tel 604-675-3800

Documents Enclosed With Application:

- Food Premises Application Form (Permit/Non-Permitted)
- Certificate of Incorporation (if applicable)
- Commissary Rental Agreement/Contract
- Sanitation Plan
- FOODSAFE Level 1 Certificate or equivalent (if applicable)
- Mobile Food Premises Floor Plan and Mobile Food Premises Commissary/ Service Area Agreement (if applicable)
- Food Safety Plan
- Menu/List of Processed Food Items
- List of Suppliers
- Lab Reports (if applicable)
- Product Labels (if applicable)

1. Before producing new food products, submit a FSP and required documents to an EHO for review and approval.

Operator's initials _____

2. All food and equipment used for the food premises operation must be stored at the commissary. Home food production and storage is not permitted.

Operator's initials _____

3. If a food premises operator discontinues to use or changing their base of operation, ensure to notify VCH.

Operator's initials _____

Commissary Owner's Name (print name)

Food Premises Operator's Name (print name)

 Commissary Owner's Signature

 Food Premises Operator's Signature

 Date (DD-MM-YYYY): _____

 Date (DD-MM-YYYY): _____



Appendix B: Helpful Links on Food Safety Plans and Sanitation Plans

[Food Safety Plans: Examples - Province of British Columbia](#)

[Food Safety Plan Workbook - Province of British Columbia](#)

[Food Safety Plan Template – Province of British Columbia](#)

[Sanitation Plan Workbook – Province of British Columbia](#)

[Sanitation Plan Template – Province of British Columbia](#)

[Food Premises Orientation Package – Vancouver Coastal Health](#)



Appendix C: List of Commercial Food Testing Laboratories

Adopted from the 2020 BCCDC Guideline for the Sale of Foods at Temporary Food Markets

BV LABS CANADA (FORMERLY MAXXAM ANALYTICS)

4606 Canada Way
Burnaby, BC, V5G 1K5
Phone: 604.734.7276 | Fax: 604.731.2386
Toll Free: 800.665.8566
Website: www.bureauveritas.com
Email: info@bvlab.com

BV LABS CANADA (FORMERLY MAXXAM ANALYTICS)

2755b Moray Ave
Courtney, BC, V9N 8M9
Phone: 250.338.7786
Toll Free: 800.665.8566
Website: www.bureauveritas.com
Email: info@bvlab.com

CARO ANALYTICAL SERVICES

102-3677 Highway 97N
Kelowna, BC, V1X 5C3
Phone: 250-765-9646 | Fax: 250-765-3893
Website: www.caro.ca
Email: Kelowna@caro.ca

CARO ANALYTICAL SERVICES

110 – 4011 Viking Way
Richmond, BC, V6V 2K9, Canada
Phone: (604) 279-1499 | Fax: (604) 279-1599
Email: Richmond@caro.ca

EXOVA CANADA INC.

104-19575 55A Ave
Surrey, BC, V3X 8P8
Phone: 604.514.3322 | Fax: 604.514.3323
Website: www.exova.ca

FOOD ASSURE LABORATORY LTD

1650 Pandora
Vancouver, BC, V5L 1L6
Website: www.foodassure.com
Email: anna@foodassure.com

FOODMETRICS LABORATORIES

407G 5th Street
Courtney, BC, V9N 1J7
Phone: 604.279.0666 | Fax: 604.279.0663
Website: www.communityfoodlabs.com
Email: spencer.serin@foodmetricslabs.com

I G MICROMED ENVIRONMENTAL INC

190-12860 Clarke Pl
Richmond BC V6V 2H1
Phone: 604.279.0666 | Fax: 604.279.0663
Website: www.igmicromed.com
Email: info@igmicromed.com

MB LABORATORIES LTD

2062 Henry Ave
Sidney BC V8L 5Y1
Phone: 250.656.1334 | Fax: 250.656.0443
Website: www.mblabs.com
Email: mblabs@pacificcoast.net

MERIEUX NUTRISCIENCES (FORMERLY SILLIKER LABORATORIES)

8255 North Fraser Way
Burnaby BC V3N 5G4
Phone: 604.432.9311 | Fax: 604.432.7768
Website: www.mxns.com
Email: west.region@mxns.com

NORTHERN LABS LIMITED

251 Kaien Road
Prince Rupert BC
Phone: 250.627.1906
Toll: 1.800.990.9522

S G S CANADA INC

50-655 West Kent Ave
N Vancouver, BC V6P 6T7
Phone: 604.324.1155 | Fax: 604.324.1177
Website: www.sgs.com
Email: ron.kuriyedath@sgs.c