

# Certified Food Protection Manager FAQ's

The following questions and answers are based on the [Food Regulations](#) (12VAC5-421 et seq.) and are subject to change upon notification from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH).

**1) Q: What is a certified food protection manager (CFPM), and why I am required to have one?**

*A: A CFPM is an individual who has demonstrated, by successfully passing an exam, the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to protect the public from foodborne illness.*

*VDH changed the [Food Regulations](#) on July 12, 2016, to require certain food establishments to employ a CFPM no later than **July 1, 2018**. The regulations were further updated in 2021 to clarify when low-risk food processes can be employed without a CFPM. Food protection manager certification provides food establishment staff with in-depth knowledge of food safety practices that reduce the risk of foodborne illness.*

*There are two places in law that list exemptions to the CFPM requirements: § 35.1-25B, and 12VAC5-421-55B.*

- Under § 35.1-25B, CFPM requirements do not apply to any food establishment operated by a non-profit civic service organization, a volunteer fire department, or a volunteer medical services agency.*
- Under 12VAC5-421-55B, CFPM requirements do not apply to any food establishment, including temporary food establishments and mobile units, that serve only:
  - non-time/temperature control for safety (non-TCS) food; or/ and*
  - commercially processed, fully cooked time/temperature control for safety foods and do not exceed: (1) reheating or (2) cold holding (i.e., no hot holding or cooling).**

**2) Q: What certification programs are recognized by VDH?**

*A: VDH recognizes certification programs accredited by the Conference for Food Protection. For information about CFP's accreditation and a list of accredited programs, please refer to <http://www.foodprotect.org/food-protection-manager-certification/>, or the list of programs located at <https://anabpd.ansi.org/Accreditation/credentialing/personnel-certification/food-protection-manager/ALLdirectoryListing?menuID=8&prgID=8&statusID=4>.*

**3) Q: I have a food establishment permit but do not have a CFPM. When am I required to employ one?**



*A: Food establishments, unless exempt, must employ a CFPM no later than **July 1, 2018.***

- 4) **Q: I would like to open a food establishment in the near future. What will change about the application process after July 1, 2018?**

*A: In addition to any applicable fees and documentation required to approve an application for a food establishment permit, be prepared to submit a copy of your CFPM's certificate. Failure to have a valid CFPM certificate upon submission of a food establishment permit application may delay the processing of your application.*

- 5) **Q: Is a CFPM required to be on-site at each establishment at all times?**

*A: No. The CFPM must have management and supervisory responsibilities over the food establishment and have the authority to direct and control food preparation and service at the food establishment. The CFPM should be prepared to demonstrate how they perform the above referenced tasks off the premises in such a fashion to protect the health of the public.*

- 6) **Q: Does the CFPM requirement apply to temporary and mobile food establishments?**

*A: Yes, the requirement applies to all permitted food establishments, including temporary and mobile food establishments unless the facility meets one of the exemptions stated in Question 1. Temporary and mobile food establishments must have a CFPM in order to lawfully operate. Only facilities that meet the exemptions in [12VAC5-421-55 B.](#) or [§ 35.1-25B](#) will not need to have a CFPM.*

- 7) **Q: If an owner has more than one temporary food establishment or mobile food unit, are they required to have a CFPM for each establishment/unit?**

*A: No. If the CFPM is: 1) employed by the owner of the food establishment, 2) has management or supervisory responsibility over the food establishment, and 3) has the authority to direct food preparation and service at the food establishment, a separate CFPM is not required for each food establishment.*

*This is applicable to all food establishments including mobile food units and temporary food establishments.*

- 8) **Q: Does this requirement apply to not-for-profit or other organizations that are exempt from a food establishment permit?**

*A: Some organizations are exempt from VDH permitting and inspection under § 35.1-25A. These organizations are not required to have a CFPM as they don't have to obtain a permit.*



*If an organization that may sometimes be exempt from permitting and inspection under § 35.1-25A operates in a way outside of the limits of the exemption, they are required to obtain a permit. In these cases, the determination of whether a CFPM is required is determined by the exemptions in [12VAC5-421-55 B.](#) or § 35.1-25B (see question 1).*

- 9) **Q: Are facilities such as daycares, public/private schools and colleges, local correctional facilities, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, or hospitals with food establishment permits exempt from this requirement?**

*A: No. These facilities must employ a CFPM by **July 1, 2018** unless the facility meets one of the exemptions from the requirement as stated in Question 1.*

- 10) **Q: What happens if I do not have a CFPM employed at my food establishment after July 1, 2018?**

*A: A food establishment that is required to employ a CFPM but cannot provide documentation that a CFPM is employed by the food establishment will be cited for a violation of 12VAC5-421-55 on the Food Establishment Inspection Report. In accordance with 12VAC5-421-3950 the permit holder shall correct this core item violation by a date and time agreed to or specified by the regulatory authority but no later than 90 calendar days after inspection.*

- 11) **Q: Will health department staff verify that a CFPM is employed only during routine inspections?**

*A: VDH staff may request verification of employment of a CFPM with a current certification at any time.*

- 12) **Q: Once certified, how often must a CFPM renew their certification?**

*A: The certifying organization determines certificate expiration. Most certificates expire five years after issuance. Address questions regarding expiration of certificates to the CFPM program vendor.*

- 13) **Q: Am I required to post my CFPM certificate?**

*A: The Food Regulations do not require the posting of the CFPM certificate.*

- 14) **Q: Is the CFPM course or examination offered in languages other than English?**

*A: Direct questions regarding the CFPM course, costs associated with the course or testing, and language offerings to the CFPM program vendor.*

- 15) **Q: Is it easy to take the CFPM exam and how much does it cost?**



*A: The CFPM exam is offered by several vendors that may also provide training courses and exam prep classes. Exam cost vary (some offer the exam only for \$55.00 while others offer bundle packages which include the exam and study material for less than \$125.00) and some vendors offer the exam online which you can take from the privacy of your home. Most exam vendors offer the exam at least five days a week throughout the state at various testing locations. Contact exam vendors for specific information.*

Find more information regarding CFPM on VDH's Environmental Health website [here](#) or at <http://bit.ly/2FgLZrC>. Your [local health department](#) is also a great resource.

Be sure to ask your local health department if they have local ordinances regarding the CFPM requirement.