

CERTIFICATE OF FREE SALE Q & A

Certificate Titles Provided By IDPH

Q: Can IDPH provide a Certificate of Health, Certificate of Origin or a Certificate of Sanitation?

No. The Department only issues Certificates of Free Sale documents. “Certificate of Free Sale” is the only title the Department will issue. (Section 720.20)

Eligibility Requirements for Certificates of Free Sale

Q: We are a manufacturer of vitamin and dietary supplements. Can we apply for a Certificate of Free Sale through your department?

No. The Department only issues Certificates of Free Sale to food and dairy firms that are inspected by the Illinois Department of Public Health. (Section 720.20)

Q: As long as the product is warehoused and sold in Illinois, can a Certificate of Free Sale be issued? Is ownership of the warehouse by the manufacturer a component of review?

A Certificate of Free Sale can be issued as long as the product is food or dairy, and is warehoused, processed or manufactured by a firm the Department inspects, and is freely available in Illinois. Ownership of the warehouse is not a factor. (Section 720.20)

Q: Do animal feed products fall under the “food” category in the state of Illinois?

Our guidelines allow us to issue Certificates of Free Sale for food from facilities the Department inspects. By definition, animal feed does fall under food. However, our Department does not inspect those facilities and cannot provide certificates. (Section 720.20)

Q: Does your department still issue Certificates of Free Sale for health and beauty aids?

No. Certificates of Free Sale are only provided to firms that are inspected by the Department. Medical devices, cosmetics, fertilizers, soaps, and supplements are not inspected by our Department; therefore we no longer provide certificates for those products. (Section 720.20) (720.35(a)(2))

Q: I am an Illinois business owner and doing food export. I buy general food such as candies, cookies, soft drinks and snacks from a warehouse based in another state, although the products are manufactured across the United States. Am I still able to obtain a Certificate of Free Sale from your department?

No. The Department would not inspect a warehouse in another state therefore we cannot issue a Certificate of Free Sale. (Section 720.20)

Product Listing On Certificates

Q: Each certificate of free sale may contain a maximum of five product names. If a shipment contains more than five product names, do we order multiple certificates?

Yes. If you have more than five products, you must request additional certificates to list the additional products. We no longer accept a product attachment sheet on plain paper. (Section 720.35 (b)(4))

Q: If we need to list over five items, do we need to request multiple Certificates of Free Sale?

Yes. A single certificate can only contain five products. If you have more than five products, additional certificate templates would need to be submitted. Each template requires a fee of \$10.00. The product names can be specific or general. (Section 720.35 (b)(4))

Q: Since only five items can be listed on one Certificate of Free Sale, can we provide an attached product listing?

No. If you have more than five products, additional certificates must be requested. The Department no longer accepts a product attachment sheet on plain paper. (Section 720.35 (b)(4))

Q: Can product descriptions be generic like “Pizzas,” or do we need the item code, sizes and flavors?

“Pizzas” are acceptable. Verify with your customer to make sure that is acceptable with them.

IDPH Issued ID Number

Q: Can we find our Illinois state identification number on the IDPH website?

No. The ID number can be found on the firm’s last inspection report form conducted by the Department. If you do not have the inspection form, you may contact us and we can provide it.

Q: On the application, the applicant is to provide the Illinois State ID number. Do we need our plant inspected by the Department to acquire an ID number?

Yes. An inspection is required.

Processing Time Frame

Q: Is there a way to expedite the Certificate of Free Sale process?

No. The Department processes the requests *first in-first out*. The process time within the office is based on work load and staff resources. The mailing method used is in the control of the requestor. Using an EXPRESS mail method with tracking can speed up the submission and return.

Q: How long will it take to receive my completed Certificate of Free Sale?

The Department is estimating a two week time frame *from receipt to mailing*. The time frame for processing a Certificate of Free Sale request is based on the Department’s work load and staff resources. Requests that are not complete or correct will also cause a delay in processing.

Q: How can I check the status of a Certificate of Free Sale request?

The Department encourages companies to use an express mail method for both delivery and return of their request. Please keep the tracking numbers for your records. The tracking numbers can be used to check the status of a request, via the online website of the mail carrier, to see when it was received and when it has been shipped back to you. If your mail method was a United States Postal Service first class envelope, then it depends on your local post office. The Department discourages telephone calls or emails requesting the status due to the high volume of Certificate of Free Sale requests that are received. Providing status reports delays the actual processing of the requests. Again, please allow two weeks for processing from receipt to mailing.

Certificate of Free Sale Request Forms

Q: What address do we provide on the Certificate of Free Sale?

The physical address (street address and city) of where the product is handled must be provided on the certificate. The headquarters address is not to be placed on the certificate unless inspections of processing also occur at that location. (Section 720.35 (a)(3))

Q: Some countries need the quantity and shelf life extension information on the Certificate of Free Sale. Can we add this information to the certificate or do we need to send a separate sheet with that information?

The Department cannot certify expiration dates, shelf life, lot numbers, etc. Shipment details may be attached from the company before presenting it to the customer. (Section 720.35 (b)(1))

Q: Do we need to send product information with the Certificate of Free Sale request?

No. Since we only issue Certificates of Free Sale to firms the Department inspects, we can obtain that information during inspections or investigations. (Section 720.35(b)(1))

Q: If we request multiple certificates, do we need to issue a separate check or money order for each certificate or can we issue a check or money order with the entire amount for the request?

One check or money order for the entire request total is accepted and preferred. The fee is \$10.00 per certificate.

Q: If I need a Certificate of Free Sale, can I submit the request form and certificate via email for processing and send the payment via mail the same day?

No. Complete requests must come to the Department via mail with all the required documentation.

Q: What happens if I send a Certificate of Free Sale Request and there is a problem with the request?

If your Certificate of Free Sale request is inaccurate or incomplete, it will be returned along with a letter stating what needs corrected prior to processing. If it is a simple correction, the free sale staff will have the option of requesting the information via email. This option is left to the discretion of the staff due to the high volume of requests.

Certificate of Free Sale Language Options

Q: Does the Department issue Certificates of Free Sale in any other languages?

The Department can issue the English and Spanish versions for use to the industry. If any other language is needed it shall be requested through the Department and a translator of the Department's choice will be used. The firm will be required to reimburse the Department for the cost of the translator. (Section 720.35(b)(2))

Other Export Document Resources

Q: Are there any other offices that issue Certificates of Free Sale?

The United States Food and Drug Administration, the United States Department of Agriculture, the Illinois Department of Agriculture, and the Illinois Chamber of Commerce are just a few agencies that issue Export Documents. The exact titles as well as their requirements for requesting would need to be received from them.

Miscellaneous Q & A

Q: If we are shipping to one buyer, a shipment from multiple producers, does each need to be covered by a different Certificate of Free Sale?

Yes. One Certificate of Free Sale must list only one manufacturer's products. (Section 720.35(b)(1))

Q: Our company consolidates a number of brands by the same manufacturer in one shipment. Is the product listing limited by manufacturer and not by brand?

Yes. Only one manufacturer is listed per certificate.

Q: If my completed Certificate of Free Sale gets lost in the mail, can I request a replacement free of charge?

No. If your request gets lost, it must be resubmitted with all of the required documentation including fee. Our Department encourages companies to use a return tracking method for their requests.

Q: If I need a Certificate of Free Sale that is exactly like one I previously submitted, can I request it without sending in another certificate?

No. Each new Certificate of Free Sale request needs to be mailed to the Department with all the required documentation. Our department does not keep copies of previously completed Certificates of Free Sale for reissuance.