

# City Goes Nuts Over Unattended Food Carts

**Veteran nut vendor went to the bathroom, found permit gone when he returned**

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No bathroom breaks for you, street vendors.

Amid a ticketing blitz aimed at curbing the number of unattended food carts throughout the city, health inspectors could care less about the callings of Mother Nature.

New laws enacted on Jan. 1 forbid street vendors from abandoning their carts even for a moment out of concern the food could be contaminated. And health inspectors have been cracking down on vendors in the last two months to ensure they know the rules.

Veteran roasted nut vendor Shiraj Islam found out the hard way. The 42-year-old father of four made a pit stop in a bathroom at a pizza place en route to his usual spot near Park

Row's J&R Music World last week. When he came out, the permit on his cart was gone.

Relief quickly turned to alarm for Islam, who feared for how he would provide for his four children and wife without the money he's made selling nuts on the street for the last 12 years.

"Everybody has to go sometimes," Islam, who was diagnosed with a tumor on his colon that increases the frequency of his trips to the bathroom, [told \*The New York Post\*](#).

Islam told the paper he normally had a friend watch the cart if he had to make a run, but on this particular day he really had to stop and no one was around.

He now has to wait at least 10 days to reapply for his permit, but even then it could take a month or longer to get back in business – if he gets the permit at all -- [Sean Basinski](#), of the Street Vendor Project, told the *Post*.

While industry advocates like Basinski slam city inspectors for creating "rules to harass small-business owners," health officials argue maintaining a constant, watchful eye on street vendor carts is a crucial component of consumer safety.

There are a number of reasons for the new law, said [Associate Commissioner Elliot Marcus](#).

"One: Someone could tamper with the food, and you would never know it," Marcus told the *Post*. "And two: People sometimes park their carts overnight. This cart was in the roadway, wasn't on the sidewalk."

Marcus emphasized the license revocation is only temporary, and says health inspectors usually give vendors up to 20 minutes before they pull the permit.

The Health Department didn't say where and when, exactly, the vendors are expected to use the bathroom and, hopefully, wash their hands.

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