



Starting a

# FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENT

A Helpful Guide

# CONGRATULATIONS!



We want you to succeed in operating your food service establishment!

To that end, we have developed this booklet to assist you in obtaining a food permit. Careful thought and good planning are critical to obtaining your food permit to operate in a timely manner. We want to meet your expectations.

## WHAT IS A FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENT?

A food service establishment is an operation that stores, prepares, packages, serves, vends or otherwise provides food for human consumption including:

- Restaurants, bars, retail food stores, school cafeterias, nursing home kitchens, catering facilities, food banks, meat and seafood markets, delis, etc.
- An establishment that relinquishes possession of food to a consumer directly or indirectly through a delivery service.
- Food transportation vehicles, central preparation facilities that supplies vending locations or satellite feeding.
- Operations conducted in mobile, stationary, temporary or permanent facility locations, regardless of whether there is a charge for food.

## WHERE DO I BEGIN?

Every new or significantly remodeled/renovated food service establishment serving or selling food or beverages in Galveston County **must submit plans** to the Galveston County Health District's Consumer Health Services Division (Health District) **before a permit can be issued.**

A registered sanitarian in our Consumer Health Services Division will review your plans to ensure that the equipment, facilities and design will be suitable for the food items served or sold at your establishment and in compliance with the Texas Food Establishment Rules (TFER). These TFER are used during the planning phase and your routine operational health inspections.

**We suggest that you download a copy at [www.gchd.org](http://www.gchd.org) or ask us for a free copy.**

# PLANNING AHEAD

- ✓ — **WHAT IS REQUIRED IN MY FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENT?** Every business is unique. What will be required will be based on your menu. So, you must make sure that you have the space and equipment needed to store, prepare and serve those foods safely. Smaller food service establishments may not need as much equipment as a larger operation would require.

## EQUIPMENT YOU MAY NEED

**Hand washing sinks:** All food service establishments are required to have adequate employee hand washing sinks, conveniently located in each food and dishwashing area, and equipped with soap and disposable towels. Convenient location indicates that the sink is accessible and visible from any food area, including bars and ice dispensing locations such as wait stations. These sinks are required to have signs to remind employees to wash hands.

**Utility sink:** Also called a mop sink or service sink, all facilities are required to have a sink designated for cleaning of mops and cleaning tools, and for disposal of mop water. The utility sink must include a faucet and drain. This sink should have hooks or other means to allow mops to air dry.

**HELPFUL TIP:** *A curbed sink provides an easier means to dump mop water and is a good storage spot for the mop bucket when not in use.*

**Dishwashing sinks:** A 3-compartment sink designated for dishwashing is required in any food service establishment that sells or serves unpackaged foods. The sink should have curved interior edges and at least 3-compartments for washing, rinsing and sanitizing. The sink should have two (2) drainboards, one for collection of dirty dishes and the other for air drying. Depending on the manufacturer of your sink, many do not have enough drainboards to sufficiently accommodate all the equipment that needs to air dry. We suggest that you plan for and install self-draining drying racks.

Dishwashers are optional, but a 3-compartment sink is required. Each compartment of the sink must be large enough to submerge the largest piece of equipment you have.

**HELPFUL TIP:** *Try a 4-compartment sink for pre-soaking.*

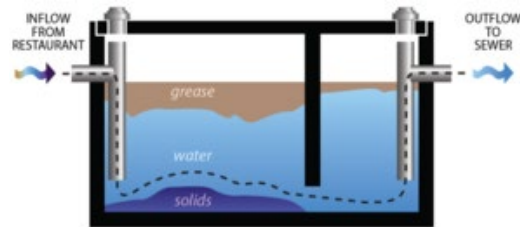


**Dry Storage Space:** Enough space must be planned for storage of food, dishes and equipment. Ensure that there are designated locations for bulk foods, cans and other items. All food items must be stored at least 6 inches off the floor, both in walk-in coolers or freezers and on storage shelves. Raw wood shelves are not allowed. Look for wire racks and food grade shelving. Equipment and single service items must be protected from contamination and stored at least 6 inches off the floor.

**HELPFUL TIP:** *Storage containers for bulk items (e.g. rice, flour) must be made of food grade material and labeled with the type of food inside. Trash cans and non-food grade containers cannot be used for bulk food storage.*

**Ventilation hoods:** A ventilation hood is required at a grill line or where other cooking equipment and high temperature dish machines are located to prevent the accumulation of grease, heat, condensation, smoke and vapors. Installation of a ventilation hood requires additional permitting and inspections (building inspection, fire marshal, etc.). You are responsible for these additional requirements.

**Grease interceptor (grease trap):** A grease trap is a device that is attached to sinks and/or drains to collect fats, oils and grease in order to prevent accumulation in the sewer system. Grease traps are connected to dishwashing sinks, some floor drains (e.g. at wok lines) and some dishwashers. Building inspection or engineering departments within municipalities help with the sizing of these interceptors. A grease trap can be a costly installation and is generally required when a dishwashing sink is used. Make sure to research and budget for this item in your planning stages.



**HELPFUL TIP:** *Grease traps must be cleaned periodically to keep them working properly. An indoor grease trap may need to be cleaned monthly/quarterly, while a larger outdoor unit may only need cleaning once or twice per year.*

## Additional items to consider



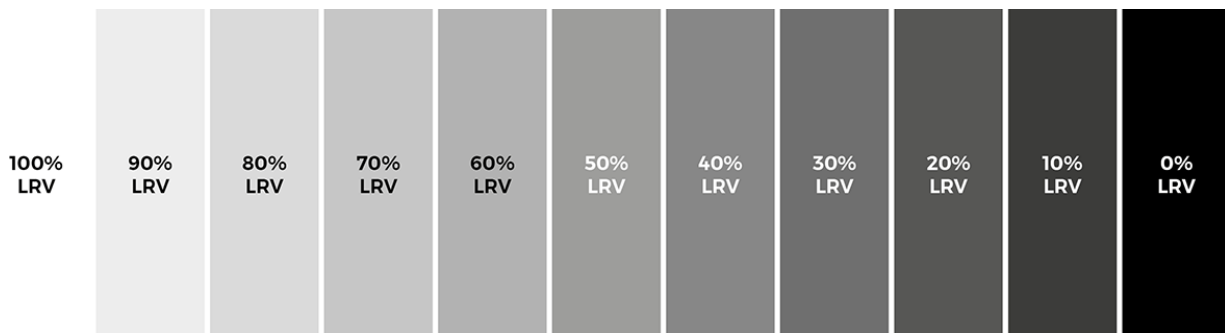
**Light in color:** Health District uses Light Reflectance Values (LRV) to help guide food service establishments when choosing colors for these areas. Any paints selected for these areas that are at 50 or greater LRV are acceptable as light in color. During the application and plan review process, we will ask to see a sample of all your paint colors, finishes and LRV values.

Walls including non-supporting partitions, wall covering and ceilings of the walk-in refrigeration units, food preparation areas (including server stations and drink dispensing areas) equipment

washing and utensil washing areas, toilet rooms and vestibules shall be light in color in accordance with TFER.

### **What is Light Reflectance Value (LRV)?**

LRV is measured on a scale that ranges from zero (absolute black, absorbing all light and heat) to 100 percent (pure white, reflecting all light). Building and design professionals (everyone from architects and engineers to interior designers and color consultants) use these measurements as guidelines to predict how light or dark a color will appear. The values are also used by lighting designers to calculate the number and type of light fixtures needed to provide a certain amount of light for interior spaces.



**Lighting:** Lighting must be adequate in food areas and other areas for safe work conditions and to facilitate cleaning. Requirements of general lighting intensity as specified by TFER are listed below:

- At least 10-foot candles at a distance of 30 inches above the floor, in walk-in refrigeration units and dry food storage areas and in other areas and rooms during periods of cleaning.
- At least 20-foot candles at a surface where food is provided for consumer self-service such as buffets and salad bars or where fresh produce or packaged foods are sold or offered for consumption inside equipment such as reach-in and under counter refrigerators. Must be at a distance of 30-inches above the floor in areas used for handwashing, ware washing and equipment and utensil storage, and in toilet rooms.
- At least 50-foot candles at a surface where a food employee is working with food or working with utensils or equipment such as knives, slicers, grinders or saws where employee safety is a factor.

**HELPFUL TIPS:** When submitting a lighting plan for the plan review meeting, it should include:

(1) type of fixtures;

(2) location of fixtures; and

(3) whether using plastic covers, shields or shatterproof bulbs to protect food and equipment.

Also, we suggest that you use a light meter to check compliance with the TFER lighting standards prior to your construction inspection.

**Chemical Storage:** Chemicals must be stored below and/or away from food items, equipment and utensils to prevent contamination of these items. Chemicals cannot be stored above the dishwashing sink or on the floor.

**Employee area:** There must be lockers, shelving or a designated area provided only for employee belongings. Personal belongings such as coats, purses, cigarettes, and phones cannot be kept in food areas.

**HELPFUL TIP:** *The employee area is also a great location for storage of employee beverage cups or food.*



**Smooth and cleanable surfaces:**

IT'S VERY IMPORTANT TO HELP MAINTAIN A CLEAN AND SANITIZED FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENT.

All floors, walls and ceilings in food areas (service, storage or preparation) must be smooth and easily cleanable.

**Surfaces which are commonly used:**

**Floors:** quarry tile, ceramic tile, sealed concrete, poured epoxy

**Walls:** stainless steel, FRP, glossy painted drywall, glossy painted concrete blocks

**Ceilings:** vinyl coated ACT (drop ceiling), glossy painted drywall

**Base Coving:** tile, rubber

**HELPFUL TIP:** *Every facility must submit a finish schedule along with plans.*

## **RUNNING YOUR BUSINESS (WITH FOOD SAFETY IN MIND)**

Here are some important questions about how you will safely prepare food for your business that you should start to think about. These questions may also be asked during future inspections:



**Employee Training...**

How will you train your staff about food safety?

What food safety practices will be covered during staff orientation? What is your employee health policy? What do you do about a sick worker? How will you share this policy with employees?



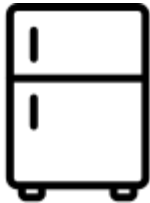
### Services...

Who will provide your waste pickup? How will you handle grease waste and cleaning your grease interceptor? Do you have a certified pest control operator? Who will clean your hood system and/or fire suppression system? Who will provide support and maintenance for your dishwasher? Is your facility secure, and is your food supply safe? Do you make sure to use approved suppliers? Does your food come from approved sources?



### Facilities...

Do you have enough hot water capacity for the busiest time of day? Do you have the storage space needed for dry goods? Do you plan to expand the operation, and will you have the space? Are floors, walls and ceilings constructed with cleanable materials?



### Equipment...

Do you have enough space in your coolers and freezers? Can you prevent overstocking and make certain to allow for air circulation? How will you keep hot foods hot? How will you keep cold foods cold? Have you purchased thermometers for all coolers? Do you have thermometers for taking food temperatures?



### Plan for Easy Cleaning...

There are several things you can do to prevent the amount of future maintenance necessary for your facility and provide ease of cleaning. Have you considered stainless steel on walls at the grill line, and behind and around grease producing equipment?

Have you placed heavy equipment on casters so that it can be moved easily? Every other piece of equipment, especially at the grill line, should be on casters. This makes it easier to clean behind and between equipment. Can you avoid sealing equipment and sinks to walls and instead brace and set equipment away from walls and other equipment? This makes it easier to clean behind 3-compartment sinks, dishwashers, etc. Set equipment at least 4 inches from the wall.

- **Fixed Equipment...**

Is all equipment that is fixed (because it is not easily movable) installed to allow for easy cleaning? This means that it must be spaced from nearby equipment or sealed to walls or equipment. Is table-mounted equipment that is not easily moveable on legs or sealed to a table? Is all floor-mounted equipment (in kitchen areas) that is not easily movable sealed to the floor or elevated on 6-inch legs?

- **Processes...**

What will be your process for date marking ready-to-eat food products? How will you ensure that a “first in, first out” system is used for foods? How will foods be properly thawed? Do you have enough cooler space to allow for overnight thawing? Can large amounts of leftover food be properly cooled? Do you have shallow pans, ice wands or other necessary tools? Will you keep temperature logs? Who will be responsible? When will you take temperatures? How will you avoid bare hand contact with ready to eat foods? Will you use gloves, tongs, utensils, deli paper or other tools?

## FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION

Educating your employees is an important part of planning for a successful food service establishment.

TFER requires that a least one (1) person that has supervisory and management responsibility and the authority to direct and control food preparation and service shall be a certified food protection manager who has shown proficiency of required information through passing a test that is part of an accredited program.

The Health District provides food safety classes that will assist in educating your managers and employees. We accept the Texas Department of State Health Services, Certified Food Manager (CFM) Program accredited food manager training courses.

## STEPS TO OPENING YOUR BUSINESS



The Health District reviews facility plans to make sure that the design and equipment in a facility are proper for the storage, preparation and service of the foods on the proposed menu or food list.

### PLAN REVIEW

#### Who must submit plans?

- New facilities: New construction and facilities that have never been licensed as a food service establishment in the past.
- Remodeled or altered facilities: Major changes or alterations such as installation of a walk in cooler or ventilation hood or expanding a kitchen. **May require the facility to be brought up to current standards.**



- Change of business: Changes in layout or equipment (example: a new owner converts a bakery into a full-service restaurant and grills and ovens have been added to the kitchen). **May require the facility to be brought up to current standards.**
- Change of ownership: Change of ownership triggers a plan review and **may require the facility to be brought up to current standards.**

*\*If you are not sure whether a plan review is required, please contact the Health District at 409-938-2411.*

### **What is the plan review fee?**

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|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------|
| • <b>Large Establishment</b>  | (>1500 sq. ft.)      | \$225.00 |
| • <b>Medium Establishment</b> | (501 – 1500 sq. ft.) | \$200.00 |
| • <b>Small Establishment</b>  | (<500 sq. ft.)       | \$175.00 |

## **What is the process?**

### **Plan Submittal and Review**

After we have received your set of plans, application and payment for plan review, the Health District will begin reviewing the plans. We will do our best to follow your schedule for opening. The plan review process and the permitting of your food service establishment is explained in the Health District’s document, ***Plan Review Application and Food Establishment Permitting*** (downloadable at [www.gchd.org](http://www.gchd.org) or ask us for a free copy by calling 409-938-2411). A plan review meeting will be scheduled with you that will take several hours. That meeting will take place at our offices, 9850-D Emmett F. Lowry Expressway, Suite D100, Texas City, Texas 77591.

### **Inspections**

- A construction inspection will be conducted once construction has been completed and equipment has been installed. The purpose of this inspection is to assure that your food service establishment and all the accompanying equipment was constructed and installed in accordance with your submitted (and approved) plans, and in compliance with your application for permitting of a food service establishment. The inspection should be scheduled at least 3-5 business days in advance. An inspection report will be issued following this inspection.



- A pre-opening inspection will be conducted following the construction inspection and prior to the final inspection. The purpose of this inspection is to confirm if violations listed on the construction inspection report have been completed or corrected. The inspection report will list violations that must be corrected, and/or requirements that must be met prior to the final inspection. The inspection should be scheduled at least 3-5 business days in advance. An inspection report will be issued following this inspection.
- A final inspection will be conducted to confirm that all construction related violations have all been corrected, general cleaning and sanitization of all surfaces have been completed and assure that the food service establishment complies with the TFER. The inspection should be scheduled at least 2-3 business days in advance. Once it is confirmed that there are no violations and the establishment is in compliance with TFER, the Food Service Establishment permit application will be approved. Following the payment of the food service establishment operations permit fee, a permit will be issued and you can begin to operate. Payment and issuance of the operation permit is completed over the phone or at our offices located at 9850-D Emmett F. Lowry Expressway, Suite D100, Texas City, Texas 77591

*We will do our best to get your inspection scheduled as soon as possible*

## HOW DO I KNOW WHEN I'M READY FOR MY CONSTRUCTION INSPECTION?

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**Have you completed all items on this checklist? If YES, you are ready!**

- I have read the "Starting a Food Service Establishment, A Helpful Guide" to help design my facility based on menu items and processes.
- I submitted plans, plan review application and plan review fee to the Galveston County Health District, Consumer Health Services Division.
- All construction or remodel work is complete.
- I have contacted Health District at least five (5) days in advance asking for a construction inspection.

Before the scheduled construction inspection, make sure that:

- Construction must be complete.
- General cleaning of construction dust and debris should be complete.
- All equipment should be in place.

*Any questions or concerns, please call **409-938-2411***