<https://tpchd.org/healthy-places/food-safety/opening-a-food-business/>

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**Opening or Operating a Food Business**

**New business, new owner or making changes to an existing food business?**

**We can help.**

Through plan review, we make sure you have the equipment and processes needed to make safe food. It’s an important and required step to operate a food business.

**Before you turn in your application.**

* Contact your local building, planning and zoning departments for more requirements. Inquire about grease traps and hoods.
* Get your [Washington Business License](https://dor.wa.gov/).
  + Double check the UBI number. A change in UBI is a change in ownership and you will need to pay the plan review or permit fee again.
* Complete the [Water Adequacy Verification or Application](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Water-Adequacy-Verification.pdf).
* Complete the [Sewer/Septic Verification.](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Sewer-or-Septic-Verification.pdf)
* Review our [refrigeration guidance.](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/refrigeration-guidance-for-food-establishments.pdf)

**Prefer a language other than English?**

Let us know. We have free language services, like document translation and interpreters. Contact (253) 649-1706 or [food@tpchd.org](mailto:food@tpchd.org).

**How to apply.**

We have 1 plan review application. You must submit a complete application and plan review fee (non-refundable). The same application is used for new businesses, change of menu or equipment and remodels. We require an application and fee for each permit. A restaurant with catering requires an application and fee for each.

**To get started:**

1. Complete a [Plan Review Packet.](https://tpchd.org/?p=7963)
2. Complete additional forms if you will have [catering](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Catering-Questions-1.pdf), [commissary kitchen](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Commissary-Kitchen-Plan-Review-Questions.pdf), [vending](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Vending-Questions-1.pdf) or a [mobile food unit](https://tpchd.org/?p=7962).
   * *If you are a mobile unit, read*[*Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (LNI) notice to all food trucks and trailer operators*](https://tpchd.org/?p=36758)*.*
3. Submit your packet, forms and plan review fee payment in-person, by mail, or online through [Envision Connect Online](https://eco.tpchd.org/Login#/) (you’ll need to set up an account and password).

**How long will the process take?**

**At this time we have a higher number than normal of applications in review. Response times will be delayed.** You must get your application to us at least 30 days before you plan to open. We usually respond within 10 days with an approval or to ask more questions. During busy times, it may take longer.

**What happens once I’m approved?**

We will email an approval letter to you and the Building Department. The letter will state which permit you need and the permit fee you must pay. Once you are ready to open:

* Pay your permit fee.
* Schedule a pre-opening inspection at least 5 business days before your food business will open.

**What if I make changes after approval?**

This can cause a delay. If you make changes to your approved plan before our preopening inspection—like changes to your floor plan, equipment, or menu—your approval is no longer valid. You would then need to complete a resubmittal plan review. For a resubmittal, we only review the changes you’ve made before issuing a new approval.

**Questions?**

Call (253) 649-1706 or email [food@tpchd.org](mailto:food@tpchd.org). You can also drop in or call to schedule an in-person appointment. We’re open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. But, close from noon to 1 p.m. for lunch. We accept applications until 4 p.m.

**Resources**

* [Washington Retail Food Code (WAC 246-215).](https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/Documents/Pubs/332-033.pdf)
* [Agency Resource List.](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Agency-Resource-List-2.pdf)
* [Refrigeration guidance.](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/refrigeration-guidance-for-food-establishments.pdf)

**Interested in City of Tacoma’s Curbside Cafe Program?**



Visit [City of Tacoma’s website](https://cityoftacoma.org/cms/one.aspx?pageId=191314) for details.

**If all of the following are true**—you don’t need additional Health Department approval to participate.

* Your facility has a valid food establishment permit.
* Added seats are within your permit category.
* All food is prepared in your approved kitchen.
* Restrooms with hot and cold water are available in your facility.
* Your facility is on City of Tacoma water and sewer.

**If any of the above aren’t true**—you will need Health Department approval to participate. Call us at (253) 649-1706 for more information.