



FOOD ESTABLISHMENT PLAN APPROVAL PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION:

A food establishment is any business that prepares, processes, stores, serves or sells food and/ or drink directly to a customer. When a food establishment changes ownership, is constructed, remodeled (at least 20 percent of the preparation area and storage area or an increase in dining capacity), or an existing structure is converted into a food establishment, the plans and specifications for construction, remodeling, or conversion shall be submitted to Harris County Public Health (HCPH), Environmental Public Health (EPH) Division for review and approval before work begins or within 30 days of a change of ownership. The review and approval of plans and specifications shall be made in coordination with the Harris County Engineering Department.

The plan review and approval process is an important part of EPH's Food Safety Program. This process allows EPH to evaluate the proposed food establishment's menu, equipment, and facilities to identify potential food safety hazards prior to construction and operation. Avoidance of these hazards helps ensure the food establishment's capability to prevent foodborne illness and provide safe food to the citizens of Harris County.

*NOTE: If a food establishment changed ownership without prior notification, plan review, and permit approval, a citation and closure notice may be issued upon the 31st day if the application, fee, floor plan and menu are not received by EPH.

REVIEW PROCEDURES

The completed Application for Food Establishment, a flash drive with the menu and food establishment plans in PDF format, and plan review fee must be submitted to EPH before the review process can begin. Plans will be reviewed to determine compliance with the Texas Food Establishment Rules and the Rules for the Regulation of Food Establishments in Harris County, Texas.

*NOTE: All food establishments located within the limits of an incorporated city under EPH's regulatory jurisdiction must also comply with the city guidelines, which may require separate permits and plan approval.

Construction or remodeling may begin after plans are approved. The specific documents that must be submitted will be determined during the plan review appointment.

DOCUMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED MAY INCLUDE:

1. Certificate of Compliance OR Passing Fire Marshall Inspection – For food establishments in unincorporated Harris County, this certificate is issued by the Harris County Fire Marshal's Office in partnership with the Harris County Engineering Department to ensure the minimum requirements with regard to function, design, and construction or substantial improvement is in compliance with the Harris County Fire Code as of a specific date and for a specific occupancy.
*NOTE: Food establishment plans must be approved by EPH prior to submittal to the Engineering Department for fire code review.
2. Certified Food Manager – A minimum of one employee must have a valid Food Manager Certification during all hours of operation of the food establishment. This certification will be verified during the pre-opening inspection. The permit application and operation of the establishment will be delayed if this requirement is not met. Only establishments that handle prepackaged food and do not prepare or package food are exempt from the requirement.
3. Water District Approval AND OR Certificate of Inspection – If water and/or sewer service to a food establishment is provided by a Municipal Utility District (MUD), a Customer Service Inspection Certificate and/or a Water District Approval must be signed by the district and submitted to EPH.
4. Individual Septic System Permit – The Harris County Engineering Department will review all plans for new construction where sewer service is provided by an individual sewage disposal system and for existing systems where there is a proposed increase of 25% or more in the flow or a 50% or more increase in the capacity of the sub-surface drainage field. A professional engineer or a registered sanitarian must survey existing individual sewage disposal systems, which have never been permitted by the Harris County Engineering Department. When an establishment on a septic system changes ownership, the Harris County Engineering Department must be notified.
5. Individual Water System Survey – Plans for new and existing water supply system (wells), which will serve as public water systems (PWS) will be reviewed by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), Plans Review Section, Austin, TX. However, EPH will make the initial inspection for both new and existing systems. Please contact Harris County EPH at 713-274-6300 for required documentation.
6. Certificate of Occupancy – Establishments under the jurisdiction of an incorporated city that has a contract with EPH to conduct food establishment inspections will be required to submit approvals from their local regulatory officials.

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Harris County
Public Health
Building a Healthy Community

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Environmental Public Health
101 South Richey, Suite G
Pasadena, TX 77506
Tel: (713) 274-6300
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PRE-OPENING INSPECTION:

After all the requested documents are received and reviewed, you will receive an email and be contacted within 24 hours to schedule the pre-opening inspection. The pre-opening inspection will be the final inspection to complete before approval of your permit application. A re-inspection fee of \$50 will be charged if the establishment does not meet requirements to pass the pre-opening inspection to obtain an approved permit application. The establishment may begin operations after the HCPH permit is purchased.

EXPEDITE FEE:

The expedite fee is an option for establishments that would like to have a plan review or pre-opening inspection conducted prior to the next available spot. The expedite fee can be paid for the plan review appointment, the pre-opening inspection, and/or pre-opening re-inspection.

Expedite fees must be paid at the EPH office: 101 S. Richey Suite G Pasadena, TX 77506 or call 713-274-6300

Plan Review appointment	\$150.00	Scheduled within 2 business days
Pre-Opening Inspection	\$150.00	Conducted within 5 business days
Pre-Opening Re-Inspection	\$150.00	Conducted within 2 business day

***NOTE: Plan Review and Expedite fees are non-refundable. Please ensure Harris County Public Health is your regulatory jurisdiction before the fee is paid.**

Questions?

If you have any questions please contact the appropriate agency according to the subject matter previously discussed.

Environmental Public Health Division Harris County Public Health

M-F, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (no payments or applications taken after 3:30 p.m.)

(713) 274-6300 (Secretaries)

(713) 274-6375 Fax

E-mail: planreview@phs.hctx.net

Plans are reviewed by appointment only

HARRIS COUNTY ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT (for building permits & fire code review)

10555 Northwest Freeway, Suite 120

Houston, Texas 77092

(713) 274-3900, M-F, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Water Utility Division Plan Review Section

P.O. Box 13087

Austin, Texas 78711-3087

(512) 908-6103

HARRIS COUNTY FIRE CODE QUESTIONS

(713) 956-3000 (ask for fire code review)



REQUIREMENTS FOR FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS

SUBMISSION OF PLANS: The completed Application for Food Establishment, a flash drive with the menu and food establishment plans in PDF format, and plan review fee must be submitted to EPH before the review process can begin. Plans and specifications shall indicate the proposed layout, arrangements, mechanical plans and construction materials of work areas, and the proposed fixed equipment and facilities.

FLOORS: The floors of all food preparation, food storage, and utensil washing areas, dressing rooms and vestibules shall be smooth, durable, and easily cleanable. Floor drains shall be provided in floors that are water flushed for cleaning, or in areas where pressure spray methods of cleaning equipment are used. Such floors shall be constructed only of non-absorbent materials such as sealed concrete, ceramic tile, or similar materials and be graded to drain. The junctions between walls and floors shall be coved and sealed, and the installation of exposed utility lines and pipes on the floor is prohibited.

WALLS AND CEILINGS: The walls and ceilings of food preparation areas, food storage areas, equipment and utensil washing areas, toilet rooms and vestibules shall be light colored, smooth, non-absorbent, and easily cleanable. Studs, joists, rafters, utility service lines, or pipes shall not be exposed in those areas listed above.

TOILETS: Toilet facilities shall be conveniently located and accessible to employees at all times. Toilet rooms shall be completely enclosed and have tight fitting, self-closing solid doors.

HANDWASH SINKS: Handwash sinks shall be located for easy use by all employees in food preparation and utensil washing areas. Handwash sinks shall be accessible to employees at all times, including in toilet rooms or vestibules. Each handwash sink shall be provided with hot and cold water tempered by means of mixing valve or combination faucet, hand soap, and paper towels or a drying device.

CLEANING AND SANITIZATION: A three compartment sink is required for washing, rinsing, and sanitizing equipment or utensils. Sinks shall be large enough to permit the complete immersion of utensils and equipment. Drain boards of adequate size shall be provided.

PLUMBING: The potable (drinking) water system shall be installed to prevent the potential of backflow. A hose shall not be attached to a faucet unless a backflow prevention device is installed. Grease traps, if used, shall be easily accessible for cleaning, and if in a Municipal Utility District's jurisdiction, the district operator shall approve the installation.

POTABLE (DRINKING) WATER SUPPLY: Every food establishment must have an acceptable potable water supply. Most establishments will be supplied potable water by a Municipal Utility District. Establishments with their own water well must have the well inspected and approved by the Harris County Environmental Public Health Division and plan reviewed by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

EQUIPMENT: Equipment shall be located to facilitate cleaning the establishment and prevent food contamination. Floor mounted equipment, unless readily movable, shall be sealed to the floor; installed on a raised platform of concrete; or elevated on legs to provide at least a six inch clearance between floor and equipment. Sufficient space shall be provided for easy cleaning between and behind each piece of floor mounted equipment, the space between it and adjoining equipment units or be sealed to surfaces for cleanability. Aisles and working spaces between equipment and walls shall be unobstructed and wide enough to permit employees to perform their duties readily without contamination of food or food contact surfaces by clothing or personal contact.

UTILITY FACILITIES: At least one utility sink (mop sink) or curbed cleaning facility with a floor drain shall be provided and used for the cleaning of mops or similar wet floor cleaning tools.

VENTILATION: All rooms should have sufficient ventilation to be free of excessive heat, odors, smoke, and fumes. All rooms from which obnoxious odors, vapors, or fumes originate shall be mechanically vented to the outside. When such ventilation may result in the particulates or liquids within the ventilation system, ventilation hoods and ventilation equipment shall have effective, easily removable and cleanable filters.

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LIGHTING: At least 50 foot-candles of light shall be provided at all working surfaces and at least 30 foot-candles shall be provided to the surfaces and equipment in food preparation, utensil washing and hand washing areas, and in toilet rooms. At least 20 foot-candles at a distance of 30 inches from the floor shall be provided in all other areas. Protective shields shall be provided for all light fixtures located over, by, or within food storage, preparation, service and display facilities, and where utensils and equipment are cleaned and stored.

GARBAGE: Garbage and refuse containers, dumpsters and compactor systems shall be stored on or above a smooth surface of nonabsorbent materials, such as concrete or machine laid asphalt.

LAUNDRY FACILITIES: Laundry facilities, if provided, shall be restricted to washing and drying of items necessary to the operation. If a washer is provided, then a dryer must also be provided.

INSECT AND RODENT CONTROL: Openings to the outside shall be effectively protected against the entrance of insects by tight-fitting, self-closing doors, closed windows, screening, controlled air currents or other means. Screen doors shall be self-closing.

POISONOUS OR TOXIC MATERIALS: All cleaning agents, chemicals, and poisonous or toxic materials shall be stored and located separate from all food and food contact surfaces and stored in cabinets or a specific area used for no other purpose. To prevent potential contamination, poisonous or toxic materials shall not be stored above food, food equipment, utensils or single service articles.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT HARRIS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH AT (713) 274-6300 or planreview@phs.hctx.net