



## HOW TO OPEN A RETAIL FOOD BUSINESS

**The Colorado Retail Food Establishment Rules and Regulations** govern the requirements for and operation of retail food businesses. The items mentioned below are required by Tri-County Health Department prior to opening new establishments, or changing ownership of existing establishments.

### **When is a license from Tri-County Health Dept. required?**

If selling or serving food to the public (other than hot coffee, bottled or canned beverages, pre-packaged non-potentially hazardous foods such as chips and candy, or non-potentially hazardous pastries & bagels which have been prepared in a approved facility)

This license is renewed every year and is good from January 1 through December 31. The license is not transferable or prorated.

**\*\*Note:** You may not operate under the license of an existing food facility if there is a change in ownership of the business. This applies if there is any change in the Colorado Department of Revenue account number.

### **NEW ESTABLISHMENTS AND MAJOR REMODELS OF EXISTING ESTABLISHMENT**

#### **When is a Plan Review required?**

If you are taking over an existing retail food facility and will be changing the equipment or doing a major remodel of the existing food preparation/utensil washing/food storage/restroom areas.

OR

If you are building a new retail food facility.

#### **Where to begin:**

#### **Helpful hint**

Prior to purchasing a business or signing a lease for an existing retail food establishment you may request that Tri-County Health Department do a site evaluation of the establishment. This will inform you of structural and equipment shortcomings, some of which may be costly to correct. An Environmental Health Specialist will conduct a full inspection and inform you of

construction items and equipment issues that need to be corrected for approval of a license to operate.

The fee for a site evaluation is \$75.00 or the actual cost of the inspection, calculated at the rate of \$45.00/hour. This fee may be applied to the change of ownership fee should you decide to open your business at the same location where the evaluation was conducted. To request a site evaluation phone 303-220-9200 for referral to the appropriate Tri-County field office.

For more detailed explanation see the “Change of Ownership Fact Sheet” on tchd.org.

### **Agencies to contact**

There are several agencies which may need to be contacted when opening a Retail Food establishment including:

- Local Health Dept. (Tri-County Health Department 303-220-9200)
- Building Department (city or county). They may also require plans.
- Fire Department
- Water and Sanitation District
- Colorado Department of Revenue (for sales tax license account)
- City where business will be located (for business license)

Helpful hint: Contacting all of these agencies prior to beginning construction will get you on the right track, and will help you to avoid costly mistakes or oversights.

### **What to provide to Tri-County Health Dept. for Plan Review:**

1. Tri-County Food Establishment Specification Form (filled out completely). This form is available at all of our area offices, or online at tchd.org. To locate the office nearest you phone 303-220-9200.
2. Equipment list (example and blank form are included in the Specification Form)
3. Manufacturer’s Specification sheets for all equipment (these may not be available if you are purchasing used equipment)
4. 1 set of plans (equipment layout, plumbing plan, lighting plan). See example in Specification Form.
5. \$100.00 application fee (plans will not be reviewed until this fee is paid)

Note: Plan review and inspection fees are billed at the rate of \$45.00/hour (\$580.00 maximum).

Allow 2-3 weeks from the time of plan submission until you receive our letter of approval.

Building Departments often require a Tri-County plan review approval letter as a condition for issuing a building permit.

### **Construction & pre-Opening Inspections**

Typically, a minimum of 2 inspections are recommended. You may call for an inspection once you have received the plan review approval letter and have reached the following steps in the construction of your establishment (we require 1 weeks notice for inspections).

1<sup>st</sup> Inspection: Interior finishes inspection.

Wall, floor, ceiling finishes complete (or nearly so) and plumbing stub-outs present.

2<sup>nd</sup> Inspection: Pre-Opening inspection.

Everything finished, all equipment installed, lighting functioning, refrigeration units functioning, hot and cold water at all sinks.

Fill out Retail Food Establishment License Application

Pay for license and inspection fees (License fees range from \$115.00 to \$690.00 per year).

Note: Additional inspections may be required depending on results of each inspection.

### **Change of Ownership for Existing Facilities**

Prior to beginning operation a change-of-ownership (COO) inspection is required by this Department. Violations noted on the COO inspection must be corrected to obtain approval of a retail food establishment license application.

Note: If you have already had a site evaluation of the establishment prior to purchasing the business, you will already have an inspection report that notes all construction violations to be corrected. Please be sure to mention this to the Environmental Health Specialist conducting your COO inspection.

The fee for change-of-ownership inspections is \$75.00 or the actual cost of the inspections, calculated at the rate of \$45.00/hour.

This Department may require a plan review of your establishment. A final inspection of the establishment and approval from TCHD are necessary before you open for business.

For more detailed explanation see the “Change of Ownership Fact Sheet” on [tchd.org](http://tchd.org).

### **Licensing Fees**

Retail Food Establishment license fees range from \$115.00 to \$690.00/year based on the total seating capacity or square footage, depending on the type of operation.

A completed retail food establishment license application must be submitted **at the time of inspection**, and the license fee paid prior to approval to operate.

The license is renewed annually and is good from January 1 through December 31. The license is not transferable or prorated.

\*\* Note: You may not operate under the license of an existing food facility if you are taking over the business.

## **Minimum Equipment Requirements**

Three compartment sink – properly sized and indirectly drained.

Indirectly drained food preparation sink if fruits and/or vegetables are a regular menu item

Mop sink

Hand sinks – appropriate number and locations

Commercial refrigeration – adequate for operation

Steam producing equipment (including high temperature sanitization dish machines) must be located under a ventilation hood

Grease producing equipment must be located under a Type 1 hood with grease collection and fire suppression systems; contact your local fire prevention authority for more information

Water heater – sized to meet peak hot water demand

Grease Interceptor – contact your local water & sanitation district

Toilet facilities – the number of public restrooms required is determined by customer seating:

- No seating = no public restrooms required
- 15 seats or less = one public restroom required
- More than 15 seats = minimum of two restrooms required, separate facilities for men and women
- The number of fixtures per each restroom is determined by local building codes – contact your local Building Department for more information
- In all cases, restroom facilities must be provided for employees

Other equipment may be required based on the size and type of operation.

All equipment must be NSF approved or the equivalent. All equipment must be in good condition.



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Greenwood Village, CO 80111  
**(720) 200-1670**

**Castle Rock**  
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Castle Rock, CO 80109  
**(303) 663-7650**

**Commerce City**  
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**(303) 288-6816**

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