



FAQs: Food Safety for Regulated Facilities

What do I do if I want to open a restaurant, grocery store, or other food outlet?

If you are interested in starting a business that will provide food to the public, you should first contact the Environmental Health Division of the Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment at (970) 400-6415 for assistance. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday - Friday except for county holidays. Our offices will provide you with a copy of the state regulations and advice on how to get started. You will need to submit a copy of your plans and specifications to the health department for review and approval. Our staff will review your plans and specifications to ensure that your establishment, once constructed, will meet state regulations.

What do I do if I want to purchase an existing restaurant, grocery store, or other food outlet?

If you are interested in purchasing an existing food outlet of any type, you should contact our office. We will conduct an up-to-date inspection and inform you of any changes or remodeling that may be required to bring the facility up to current standards. When there is a change of ownership or any extensive remodeling, the owner will be required to bring the facility into compliance with current regulations.

How much does a food service license cost?

The fees for licensing a restaurant are established by state law. These fees are based on seating capacity of the establishment:

- For seating capacity between 0-100 the fee is \$385.
- For seating capacity between 101-200 the fee is \$430.
- For seating capacity between 201 and up the fee is \$465.

State law establishes the fees for a retail grocery store. These fees are based on the square footage of the establishment and whether the establishment includes a deli:

- For retail establishments with a deli, the fees range from \$375 - \$715.
- For retail establishments without a deli, the fees range from \$195 - \$353.

For Mobile Units:

- \$270 if selling pre-packaged items.
- \$385 if cooking items that will need temperature control (hot/cold hold).

How do I get a license to operate a food facility?

Contact the Environmental Health Division of the Health Department at (970) 400-6415. When your facility receives approval to open, from the department, a license will be issued at that time.

What does the Health Department look for when it conducts an inspection?

Health Department inspections focus on the factors that have shown to cause most foodborne illnesses: food temperature control, worker hygiene, cross contamination, and food protection. Inspectors monitor how quickly hot foods are cooled, how cold foods are reheated, to what temperatures foods are cooked, and at what temperatures refrigerators and hot holding equipment hold foods. Worker hygiene, hand washing, basic food safety knowledge, and bare-hand contact also are evaluated. How foods are stored and how equipment is cleaned and sanitized are assessed.

**Health Administration
Vital Records**

Tele: 970-304-6410
Fax: 970-304-6412

**Public Health &
Clinical Services**

Tele: 970-304-6420
Fax: 970-304-6416

**Environmental Health
Services**

Tele: 970-304-6415
Fax: 970-304-6411

**Communication,
Education & Planning**

Tele: 970-304-6470
Fax: 970-304-6452

**Emergency Preparedness
& Response**

Tele: 970-304-6470
Fax: 970-304-6452



Public Health

How often are food establishments inspected?

Inspection frequency ranges from one to three regular inspections per year. Inspection frequencies are based upon risk. How complex the establishment's menu is and the methods of preparation are factored into the inspection frequency, as well. How the operation has done on past health department inspections, the types of violations and how many violations have been found, also are factored into determining inspection frequency. Inspection frequency for each establishment is re-evaluated on an ongoing basis.

What are the most common causes of foodborne illness?

The two most common causes of food borne illness are improper cooling of food product and worker hygiene/health. Improperly cooled foods can cause a foodborne illness by allowing bacteria to grow during the cooling phase to an amount that will make a person ill. Food workers can pass bacteria and viruses to food through improper hand washing, not washing at appropriate times, or even handling of food product after washing hands correctly (in the case of norovirus). In addition to these two main causes, there are other items that can cause a foodborne illness such as improper cooking temperatures, improper holding temperatures, and cross contamination.

What should I do if I become sick after eating at a restaurant?

Contact the Environmental Health Services Division of the Health Department at (970) 304-6415 as soon as possible after becoming ill. We are interested in investigating potential foodborne illnesses and will need to obtain a 72-hour food history to better pinpoint the potential source of the problem. Note that it takes anywhere from one hour to several weeks to become ill from a foodborne pathogen, therefore the last meal you ate may not have been the one that made you ill. Obtaining confirmation from your doctor also is important since it can tell us what type of foods may be involved.

What is the risk associated with fast-food restaurant employees handling money and food without washing their hands in between?

Though this practice is not encouraged, the potential for disease transmission is minimal since bacteria do not survive well on money. Money has not been found to be a carrier of foodborne illness. However, you may want to voice your concern with the establishment manager.

Do restaurant employees have to wear hairnets?

Some type of hair restraint is required of food service workers, however, this does not have to be a hair net.

How do I report a dirty kitchen, bathroom, or dining room at a restaurant?

We investigate potential violations of the Colorado Retail Food Establishment Rules and Regulations. If you have a concern about one of these items, you may contact us at [\(970\) 304-6415](tel:9703046415).

I noticed a dumpster left open in the back of a restaurant and trash scattered around the area. Is this OK?

Dumpsters must be kept closed and the area around them kept in a sanitary condition. We investigate any concerns regarding violations of this standard.

What are the regulations on animals in a restaurant?

[Service Animal Information](#)

[Service Animal Warning Poster](#)

[Requirements for Service Animals in Colorado](#)

[Advisory Notice on Colorado Service Animal Laws](#)