

# Approval of New or Renovated Food Facilities

This publication is designed to help those starting a food business with the many steps involved with opening a food establishment within Alberta. While the roles and responsibilities of other government agencies are briefly reviewed, it is advised that the applicant contact those agencies directly for detailed requirements. This document will focus primarily on the requirements of Environmental Public Health that must be met in order to obtain a Food Handling Permit.

## **LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**

When a food or food related business is built or renovated, the premises must be constructed to an acceptable standard to ensure public safety. In Alberta, buildings that are constructed or renovated must comply with the Alberta Building, Fire, Electrical, and Plumbing Codes. Consulting with local Safety Codes Officers about submitting plans for review and obtaining the necessary permits will help ensure your premises complies with the minimum construction requirements.

Zoning ordinances and bylaws determine what specific business activities may be carried out at a given location. One of the first steps in starting your new business should be contacting the local municipality in which your food business will be located for information on Alberta Building Code requirements and zoning requirements. The municipality should be able to direct you to the local Safety Codes Officers and provide information on municipal zoning ordinances.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH PLAN REVIEW, CONSTRUCTION AND APPROVALS PROCESS**

The process of getting approval from Environmental Public Health to open or renovate your food establishment consists of two parts:

1. Construction or renovation plan approval.
2. Operational approval, which includes permit issuance and construction approval.

Please contact your local Alberta Health Services, Environmental Public Health Department and provide the required documentation listed below at least 14 business days in advance of the time you expect to start construction or renovations.

### Step 1:

Before you start construction or renovations in a food establishment, floor plans must be submitted to and approved by Environmental Public Health.

A review of plans should prevent potential problems prior to costly purchases, installation and construction. Environmental Public Health can help ensure regulatory compliance with the Alberta Food Regulation (AR 31/2006) and establish an organized and efficient flow of food through your facility by reviewing the plans.

The level of food handling proposed for a food establishment will affect the infrastructure requirements that are necessary to meet the needs of that facility. Along with your plan submission, Environmental Public Health needs to have an understanding of the food handling you are proposing so we can ensure the facility is designed properly.

To help you develop a set of plans for submission to Environmental Public Health, please refer to the *Food Premises Plan Submission Checklist* and the *Food Premises Construction and Renovation Checklist* sections of this document.

### Step 2:

After Environmental Public Health reviews your plans, you will receive written notification from an Alberta Health Services Public Health Inspector (PHI), also known as an Environmental Health Officer (EHO). Your plans will either be:

- **Approved:** There may be conditions that you will need to follow to comply with the Food Regulation.  
OR
- **Rejected:** Plans were incomplete or have deficiencies that require plan revisions. You will be given an explanation to help you make the necessary changes to obtain plan approval.

Please Note: This approval is only from Environmental Public Health, addressing Alberta Food Regulation requirements. Nothing in this document sets aside or limits any requirements of the *Alberta Building Code* or the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and its regulations.

### Step 3:

Once you receive written approval from Environmental Public Health, you can begin the construction or renovation. Please contact your local Public Health Inspector/Environmental Health Officer (PHI/EHO) should you have any questions or concerns during the construction or renovation process.

### Step 4:

Once the facility has been constructed, or all the renovations have been completed, you must call your local PHI/EHO for an approval inspection. Please call for the inspection at least one (1) week prior to your expected date of opening. All construction must be completed, and the premises must be in a “ready to operate” condition for the approval inspection. **Do not** start any food preparation until your approval inspection has been successfully completed.

Please refer to the *Food Establishment Health Approval Checklist* included in this package to prepare for your approval inspection.

Please Note: Plan approval does not guarantee approval to operate will be granted during the approval inspection, as conditions may be noted during the inspection that are not evident or described in the floor plans.

### **Step 5:**

If your facility complies with the requirements of the Alberta Food Regulation (AR 31/2006), the facility will be granted approval from Environmental Public Health to open. Your local PHI/EHO will help you through the process to obtain your Food Handling Permit.

Alternatively, if there are deficiencies noted during your approval inspection, the PHI/EHO may deny your approval until these deficiencies are corrected. Once these items have been corrected, you can call your local PHI/EHO for a re-inspection.

### **Step 6:**

Open for business! Congratulations!

## **FOOD PREMISES PLAN SUBMISSION CHECKLIST**

### ***Before you start any construction or renovations***

- Have you submitted premises plans or blueprints to Environmental Public Health for review?
- Have you submitted a sample menu? If a menu is not yet ready, provide information about type of foods you plan to prepare, serve and/or sell.
- Have you consulted with your local Safety Codes Officers about submitting plans for their review and obtaining the necessary permits that will help to ensure your premises complies with their construction requirements?

All plans submitted to Environmental Public Health must be either:

- a blueprint drawn to scale; or
- a hand drawn floor plan with the dimensions of all rooms within the premises clearly identified on the plans.
  - kitchens
  - bars
  - server stations
  - dining facilities
  - washrooms
  - food storage areas
  - food processing areas
  - garbage areas
  - retail areas
  - utility rooms
  - laundry areas

Plans need to identify all areas within the food establishment, including but not limited to:

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Plans need to list all food equipment (common name) to be used in the food premises and their location. This includes, but is not limited to:

- cold food storage equipment (e.g. any prep coolers, walk-in coolers, chest freezers, etc.)
- hot food storage equipment (e.g. steam tables, warmers, etc.)
- ventilation canopy locations
- food preparation equipment (e.g. prep tables, mixers, grills, oven, etc.)
- storage equipment (shelving, cupboards, etc.)

Plans need to detail the proposed layout of plumbing fixtures for the premises. This includes, but is not limited to:

- location of designated food handling handwashing basin(s);
- location of dishwashing area (Plans will need to include location and size of dishwashing sinks if a manual method is proposed, OR identify the location and description of dishwashers/glasswashers if mechanical ware washing is proposed.)
- location and identification of mop sinks, food preparation sinks and floor drains, if applicable;
- description of the hot water system for the facility and capacity (hot water tank and size).

Plans need to include a description of finishes to be used on all surfaces. This includes, but is not limited to:

- walls, floors, ceilings, base boards
- food preparation surfaces
- food service counters and shelving

Plans need to include a lighting layout, including the type and placement of all fixtures and the means of protection against bulb/tube breakage in food service areas.

A sample diagram of a food establishment's floor plan is available on page 9 for your reference. It is included as a guideline of how an acceptable plan would look. It is not intended as a guide that you must follow when designing your plans.

### ***Other Considerations***

Some food establishments may not be connected to municipal potable (drinking) water and/or a municipal wastewater system. If these municipal connections will not be available to your premises, you will be responsible for supplying these services. Please provide a description and schematic of the non-municipal drinking water and wastewater systems to be used.

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## **FOOD PREMISES CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION CHECKLIST**

### *Potable Water and Wastewater Disposal*

- Hot and cold potable water, under adequate pressure and in sufficient quantities, must be provided to meet the peak demands throughout the food establishment. Acceptable water systems are:
  - A. a municipal water system; or
  - B. small public water systems (private water) that has a multi-barrier process in place that includes:
    - source water protection;
    - appropriate water treatment devices to make the water potable if not a high quality groundwater supply; and
    - maintenance and monitoring program, including submission of water samples and satisfactory results from the Provincial Laboratory of Public Health.
  
- Facility is connected to a lawful and properly operating sewage disposal system.
  - A. a municipal wastewater system; or
  - B. an onsite sewage treatment system that complies with the Alberta Plumbing Code and the Alberta Private Sewage Systems Standards of Practice. Proof of compliance from an accredited Safety Codes Officer is required to verify the system has been designed for the commercial purpose intended and installed properly.

### *Solid Waste Disposal*

- Waste and recyclable materials should be removed from the facility at a frequency that will minimize odours and conditions that may attract pests.
- Waste disposal containers or bins should be readily available for refuse disposal, but separated from the premises to discourage pests from gaining access to the facility.

### *Handwashing Sink(s)*

- Handwashing sinks must be adequate in number and location to ensure convenient access to all employees who handle or serve food and/or beverages. Immediate, unobstructed access to a handwashing sink is required in every area where food may be handled. These sinks are to be:

- used exclusively for handwashing; and
- supplied with hot and cold water, as well as liquid soap and paper towel in dispensers.

## *Dishwashing*

- Manual Method: Suitable sinks and dish area set-up for ware washing
  - Space is designated for the separation of clean and dirty utensils to prevent cross-contamination.
  - There is a suitable backsplash (e.g. puck board, fibreglass reinforced plastic, tile or stainless steel) behind the sinks and silicone caulk sealing of any cracks to prevent moisture damage and mould growth.
  - Adequate numbers of sinks are provided to ensure proper sanitation.
  - Sinks are adequately sized to accommodate the largest utensil/equipment and are constructed of durable material that is not easily damaged (e.g. stainless steel).
  - Adequate drain boards are provided on either side of the sinks.
  - There is suitable space to allow all utensils, dishes and equipment to air dry (e.g. drying racks).
- Mechanical Method: Suitable dishwasher and dish area set-up for ware washing
  - Space is designated for the separation of clean and dirty utensils to prevent cross-contamination.
  - Adequate drain boards are provided on either side of dishwasher. Ideally, there should be a scrape sink and spray wand to properly rinse dishes prior to going into the dishwasher.
  - This is a suitable backsplash (e.g. puck board, fibreglass reinforced plastic, tile or stainless steel) behind the sinks and silicone caulk sealing of any cracks to prevent moisture damage and mould growth.
  - The commercial dishwasher is NSF approved.
  - Suitable space is provided to allow all utensils, dishes and equipment to air dry (e.g. drying racks).

## *Additional Plumbing Considerations*

- Food preparation sinks are recommended if extensive food handling is proposed, such as washing fruits and vegetables, thawing frozen meats and cooling food products, to reduce cross-

contamination potential.

- Pot-wash sinks are required when large pots and other cooking equipment do not fit into a dishwasher.
- Janitorial sink is provided for filling and/or emptying cleaning pails, mops etc. Ensure no cross connections are present. There must be an air gap or a backflow prevention device on the tap if a hose is installed. The sink is located away from food areas so as to not contaminate food or food related items.
- Floor drains are recommended for ease of cleaning. It is strongly recommended that these drains are installed in high moisture areas, such as the dishwashing area or in food premises that will have large equipment that needs to be cleaned in place using a spray system (e.g. large meat grinder).
- Dipper wells may be required if hard ice cream will be served frequently.
- A grease trap is recommended if cooking produces a lot of grease. Your local municipality may require that a grease trap is installed. These are designed to reduce clogged wastewater lines due to grease build-up. A grease trap is also strongly recommended if the premises are connected to a septic field.

### ***Finished Surfaces***

- Surfaces in food preparation and storage areas (e.g. walls, ceilings, floors, shelves and counters) must be finished so that they are smooth, durable, impervious to moisture and easy to clean.
- Backsplashes are provided behind sinks, preparation areas and washing areas.
- Baseboard or equivalent coved material must be provided between wall and floor joints to facilitate easy cleaning.

### ***Equipment***

- Equipment, utensils and food contact surfaces are constructed from materials that are suitable for their intended purpose, durable, easily cleaned and maintained in good working order.
- Equipment meets NSF or ULC standards.
- All equipment, cabinets and shelving have at least 15 cm (6 inch) clearance from floors and 5 cm (2 inch) clearance from walls or can be easily moved for cleaning.
- Equipment, if not fixed to the ground, should be on casters (wheels) to allow for proper cleaning.

- Equipment connected to natural gas should be connected to a flexible gas line, which allows for the equipment to be moved for proper cleaning and sanitation.
- Refrigeration and hot holding equipment is of a type and capacity to adequately meet the demands of the premises and be capable of maintaining food at the required temperatures.
- Thermometers are required for monitoring food temperatures.

### **Lighting**

- Lighting in the food preparation and food storage areas must be of sufficient intensity to facilitate easy cleaning. Shatterproof covers are required.

### **Ventilation**

- Ventilation systems and exhaust hoods must be in compliance with the Alberta Building Code and Alberta Fire Code.

## **FOOD ESTABLISHMENT HEALTH APPROVAL CHECKLIST**

Plan approval is the first step toward health approval and obtaining a food handling permit. However, an approval inspection, conducted by a Public Health Inspector/Environmental Health Officer, must be completed prior to opening any food establishment. All of these requirements must be met before health approval will be given to any food establishment.

- Ensure that construction/renovations are 100% complete and a thorough cleaning has been done.
- Cooler units must be below 4°C/40°F at the time of inspection and be equipped with thermometers.
- Freezers should be below 0°C/32°F (ideally –18°C/0°F).
- At least one probe thermometer capable of measuring temperatures between 0°C and 100°C must be on site. Probe thermometers need to be available to prep and line staff at all times.
- Shelving in coolers and freezers must be properly finished and constructed to allow for proper air circulation.
- Handwashing stations must be fully operational, with hot and cold running water, liquid hand soap and paper towels in proper dispensers.
- Dishwashers must be operational and meet sanitizing requirements.

# SAMPLE DIAGRAM OF A FOOD ESTABLISHMENT'S FLOOR PLAN

## Equipment Schedule

- 1 Mop Sink
- 2 Hot Water Heater
- 3 3 Compartment Pot and Pan Wash Sink
- 4 Dishwasher with Pre-Rinse Sink
- 5 Hand Sink
- 6 Water Fill Station
- 7 Sandwich Preparation Refrigerator
- 8 Reach-in Refrigerator
- 9 Ice Machine
- 10 Food preparation sink
- 11 Work Counter with Slicer
- 12 Walk-in refrigerator
- 13 Walk-in freezer
- 14 Garbage area

## Finish Schedule

### Floors

- Kitchen** Vinyl Comp Tile with Base Coving
- Restroom** Vinyl Comp Tile with Base Coving
- Dining** Low Fill Carpet
- Garbage** Sealed Concrete

### Wall

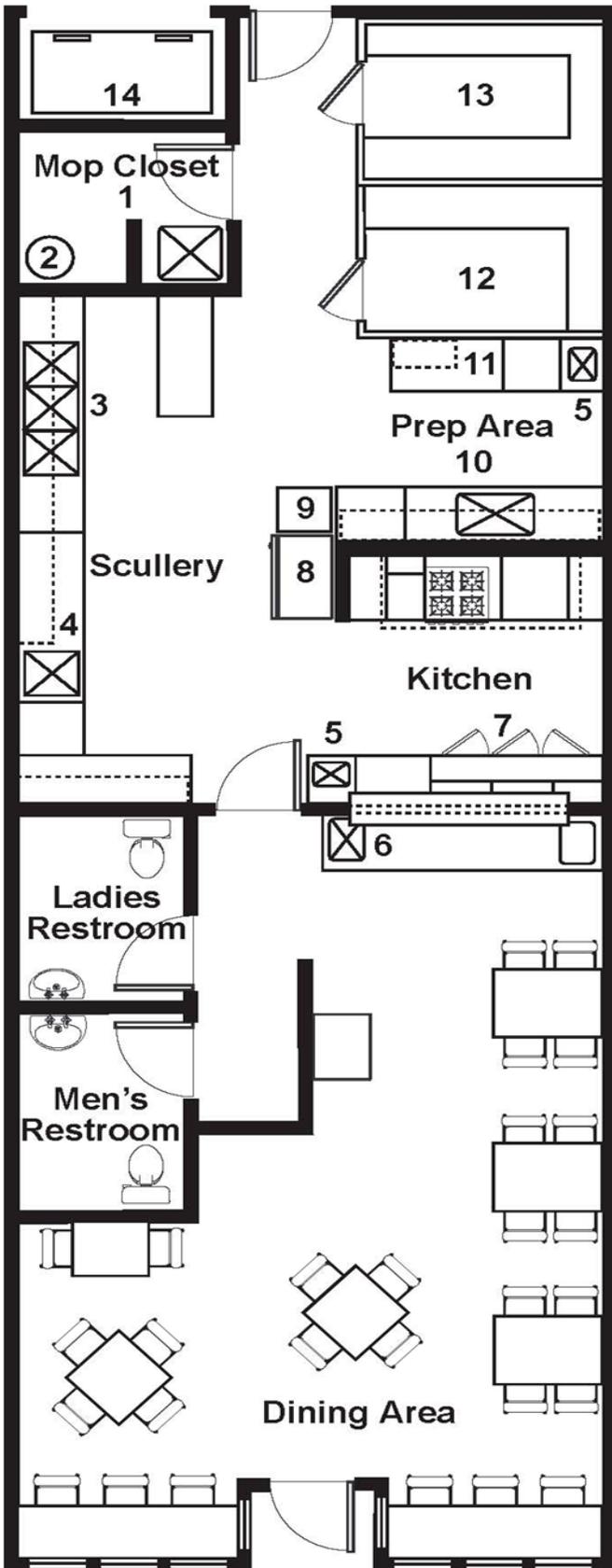
- Kitchen** Gypsum Board
- Cook Line** Stainless Steel
- Dishwash** Gypsum Green Board with FRP\* board
- Restroom** Gypsum Board with FRP\* board
- Dining** Gypsum Board with Enamel Paint

### Ceiling

- Kitchen** Gypsum Board with Enamel Paint
- Dining** Suspended with Acoustical Tile
- Restroom** Suspended with Acoustical Tile

\* FRP: Fibre Reinforced Plastic

This plan is meant to illustrate health requirements only. Adapted from: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/Pubs/FoodRule/food-rule-working-doc.pdf>



For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health office.

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Calgary Main Office  
Lethbridge Main Office

780-735-1800  
403-943-2295  
403-388-6689

Grande Prairie Main Office  
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2EPHF-13-001  
Created: May/12  
Revised: Jan/13  
Updated: Jun/17