

# Starting a Food Business in Calgary and Surrounding Areas

This guide will help you start a food business in Calgary and surrounding areas. More Information is available at [www.ahs.ca/eph](http://www.ahs.ca/eph) under [Information for Your Business/Food Facilities](#).

## *Step 1: Define your business*

Define the basics about the business you would like to start:

1. Type of business (caterer, take away, sell off site, restaurant, food store, food truck)
2. Type of food being prepared or sold
3. Location and space details
4. Restriction of minors and/or serving alcohol

## *Step 2: Contact the municipal office*

### **Contact the City of Calgary EARLY!**

The municipal approval process may take two or more months to complete. Call before signing any agreements to understand your approval timeline.

Contact the City of Calgary (3-1-1) or visit [www.calgary.ca](http://www.calgary.ca). If your business will be outside of Calgary, please contact your local municipal office. The City of Calgary will assist you in determining:

1. Suitability of location for your business
2. Permits you will need
3. Most suitable business licence for your business

The municipal office will direct you to the departments you need to contact, and may include:

#### **Planning and Development**

[www.calgary.ca](http://www.calgary.ca)

Phone: 403-268-5311

#### **Fire Department, Fire Prevention Bureau**

[www.calgary.ca](http://www.calgary.ca)

Phone: 311

#### **AHS, Environmental Public Health,**

[www.ahs.ca/eph](http://www.ahs.ca/eph),

Phone: 403-943-2288

#### **Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission**

[www.aglc.gov.ab.ca](http://www.aglc.gov.ab.ca)

Phone: 403-292-7300

### **Step 3: Review documents and legislation**

It is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with all applicable legislation. The legislation will include zoning bylaws and building, fire, electrical, plumbing, ventilation and licensing codes.

For Environmental Public Health you must comply with the following:

1. Alberta Food Regulation
2. Alberta Food Retail and Foodservices Code
3. Alberta Dishwashing Standards

These can be found at [www.ahs.ca/eph](http://www.ahs.ca/eph) under [Information for Your Business/Legislation](#).

*If you plan to package food, it must be properly labelled.*

For more information on labelling requirements, please contact the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) Fair Labelling Practices office at 403-292-4650 or search [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca).

### **Step 4: Develop your plans**

**Floor plans are required by Environmental Public Health and the City of Calgary for approval.** The City of Calgary may also require site plans. Plans should be drawn to scale and comply with the Alberta Building Code. They can be hand drawn or professionally developed, but they must show accurate metric measurements. Permit applications for businesses located in the City of Calgary can be downloaded from [www.calgary.ca](http://www.calgary.ca) or picked up from:

Planning Counter  
3rd Floor, Municipal Building  
800 MacLeod Trail S.E.

Please phone 403-268-5311 for more information.

All plans for building or renovating a food establishment must identify the following, when applicable:

#### **Construction**

- floor dimensions in metric, floor dimensions of waiting area
- total number of seats, number of seats in dining area
- hot water tank and capacity, fume/exhaust hoods
- ceiling, wall and floor materials
- floor drains, mop sink(s)
- handsink(s), pot and prep sink(s), drain board and shelving
- dry storage room/shelves
- washrooms

#### **Don't forget to include:**

- Detailed information on food items that will be prepared, served and/or offered for sale
- Hours of operation
- Number of parking stalls

## Equipment

- walk-in cooler(s) and freezer(s), coolers and freezers
- grill, stove, fryer, donair machine(s), coffee/cappuccino maker(s), ice machine
- dishwasher and/or dishwashing sink(s)
- food preparation table(s) and materials
- buffet table(s) – cold and hot

Calgary's Waterwater Bylaw and the National Plumbing Code require food service businesses such as restaurants, kitchens and production facilities to use a properly sized grease interceptor. The interceptor should be cleaned approximately every month to protect your and your neighbouring properties from a sewer backup, odours and clogged pipes. You can reduce these maintenance costs by scraping your dishes before washing them. For more information, visit [calgary.ca/FOG](http://calgary.ca/FOG) or call 311.

### *Step 5: Submit your completed plan(s)*

You are ready to apply for plan approval and your City of Calgary business licence by submitting your completed application and plan(s). If your business is outside the City of Calgary, contact your municipal office to submit your plans

*You can submit your plans to Environmental Public Health directly:*

Plan Checker  
Environmental Public Health  
Alberta Health Services  
10101 Southport Rd SW  
Calgary, AB T2W 3N2  
403-943-2288

You should submit your application and plans in person at City Hall between 8:00am and 4:00pm, Monday to Friday. Your application and plans will be pre-screened while you wait to ensure that all necessary information is included. You must pay your City of Calgary application fee at this time.

You may request an application meeting at [www.calgary.ca/eappointment](http://www.calgary.ca/eappointment).

You may check the status of your application online at <https://vista.calgary.ca> or by phoning 403-268-5311.

The City circulates a copy of your plans to the Environmental Public Health Program.

### *Step 6: Obtain a building permit, if necessary*

Once your applications and plans are approved by the various departments, including Environmental Public Health, you may be issued a building permit. You may proceed with building or renovating your food establishment. Any changes to your plans will require new approval from the appropriate departments. In Calgary, a building permit will be mailed to you or can be picked up in person at City Hall. You should call the City of Calgary at this time to start your business licence application.

## Step 7: Register in food safety training

Section 31 of the Food Regulation requires food facilities where food is prepared for and/or served to the public employ staff holding a food safety certificate recognized by Alberta's Minister of Health and Wellness. The trained staff must have authority to control how food is prepared and served.

Food facilities must generally have:

- At least one person with an approved food safety certificate. The trained person may be absent when 5 or fewer food handlers, including wait staff, are working on the premises.
- At least one person with an approved food safety certificate present when 6 or more food handlers, including wait staff, are working on the premises.

### *AHS offers food safety training.*

For more information on courses please:

- visit our website at [www.albertahealthservices.ca/Page3151.aspx](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/Page3151.aspx)
- email [eph.education@ahs.ca](mailto:eph.education@ahs.ca)
- call 403-943-2890

## Step 8: Obtain Health Approval

You must call Environmental Public Health at least two weeks before opening your business to book an appointment for an approval inspection with the district public health inspector. The approval inspection normally takes place one or two days before opening. **Everything must be in order to receive health approval.** Use the checklist in Appendix A to help you get ready for the approval inspection. A fire inspection and HVAC inspection may be required by the City of Calgary at this time.

*Opening a food business before getting health approval and a valid business licence may result in legal action against the owner and/or operator.*

All new owners require approval.

Food handling permits and municipal permits and licences are not transferable.

## Step 9: Obtain and post your business licence

Once your district inspector has granted health approval, this information will be faxed to the City. If all requirements from other departments are fulfilled, the City will then print and mail your business licence that must be posted where customers can see it. Please remember to renew your business licence yearly.

For businesses outside the City of Calgary, please contact your municipal office for details on receiving your business licence.

## Step 10: Congratulations

Everything should now be in order and you can open your business.

## Step 11: Pay for, receive and post your permit

Every food establishment is required to have a Food Handling Permit issued by Alberta Health Services. This permit is valid for one year and must be paid for every year. Once you have health approval, you will be invoiced for your food handling permit. The permit will be mailed to you after you have paid the fee. You must post the permit in a conspicuous place and protect it with a glass or another transparent material shield.

### *Failure to pay for your permit may result in closure.*

The permit fee is separate from your business licence. See Appendix B for your yearly permit fee information.

## Step 12: Practice Good Food Safety

It is your responsibility to comply with all applicable legislation. Changes in legislation do occur and it is your responsibility to carry out any necessary changes in your operation. To have a well run food business you should always practice good food safety and keep up to date with trends, concerns and information related to your business. Many resources are available on the internet, through courses, and in magazines and newsletters. Appendix C answers several frequently asked questions.

*Developed in collaboration with City of Calgary Planning and Development.*

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

Edmonton Main Office  
Calgary Main Office  
Lethbridge Main Office

780-735-1800 Grande Prairie Main Office  
403-943-2288 Red Deer Main Office  
403-388-6689 [www.ahs.ca/eph](http://www.ahs.ca/eph)

780-513-7517  
403-356-6366

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PUB-407-201810



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