

Madera County Environmental Health Department
How do I Start a Food Business?

1. What do I do if I want to open a restaurant, grocery store or other retail food facility?

If you are interested in starting a business which will provide food to the public, you should first contact the Environmental Health Services Department for assistance. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, except for County holidays. Our Office is located at 2037 W. Cleveland Ave. You can contact us by phone at (559) 675-7823 or on the web at www.madera-county.com.

Our office will provide you with a copy of state regulations and guidelines for the construction or remodel of food establishments. Guidelines may also be downloaded. You will need to submit plans and specifications to the department for review and approval. Our staff will review your plans and specifications to insure that your food facility, once constructed, will meet state regulations.

You should also contact the Building Inspection Department and other government agencies having jurisdiction over the type of business you are interested in.

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

If you are interested in purchasing an existing food facility of any type, please contact our office. We will conduct an up-to-date inspection and inform you of any changes or remodeling which may be required to bring the facility up to current standards. Since standards have changed over the years, even a restaurant which is operating may not meet current regulations because it has been "grandfathered" under the laws as they have changed. When a facility has been closed, the facility may be required to have an inspection to bring the facility into compliance with current regulations. In addition, if the former owner or lessee removed all the equipment, plans and specifications may be required.

3. How do I get a health permit to operate a food facility?

Contact the Environmental Health Services Department for an inspection. When your facility receives approval to open and the required health permit fee is paid, a health permit will be issued. The health permit is non-transferable and non-refundable.

4. How much does it cost for a food facility health permit?

Fees for health permits are established by the Board of Supervisors. The fee ordinance contains health permit fees for various types of facilities.

5. What other agencies do I need to contact?

Other agencies which may be involved in the type of food operation you are planning may include Building, Planning, Fire, State Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, State Board of Equalization, Internal Revenue Service, etc.