Operating your Food Establishment

Person in Charge (PIC)
At least one PIC must be present at all times during food service to ensure all food safety rules are followed. The PIC is required to:

- Demonstrate food safety knowledge
- Know when to restrict or send home sick food employees
- Ensure all Food Employees follow the food safety regulations

Employee Training and Food Worker Cards (FWC)
All Food Employees must have a valid FWC. New employees without a FWC have up to 14 days to obtain one, but must be given food safety training before beginning food handling. The training must be documented.

Employee Health & Hygiene Policy
Employee health and hygiene is important in preventing the spread of food-borne illness. It is good practice for a food establishment to have a written employee health policy that states how and when ill food workers are restricted from handling food. Washington State Retail Code Working Document chapter 214-215 Washington Administrative Code sub-section 2-101.11 Employee Health, will help guide you on this subject.

Inspections
After your pre-opening inspection, your first routine inspection will usually occur within the first thirty days of operation. Inspections are unannounced and occur twice per year. Establishments with substantial violations may be subject to re-inspections to ensure the violations have been corrected. A re-inspection fee will be billed after the re-inspection. If violations are substantial enough, the inspection may result in closure. The Health District also conducts inspections of establishments to investigate complaints or reports of food-borne illness.

Contacting your Local Health Jurisdiction (LHJ)
Please call any time you have questions or concerns regarding your food establishment.

- Food establishment operators are required to contact the LHJ to report food-borne illness or notify us when a food worker is diagnosed with any condition, illness, or infection by a disease agent that can be transmitted from a food employee through food.
- Establishments must also report any imminent health hazard such as a fire, flood, loss of electricity or water (hot or cold), or if a sewage spill or back-up happens. You will need to close your Food Establishment if any of these situations occur.
- Any proposed changes to the food establishment such as a remodel or major menu change must also be provided to the LHJ for approval.

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Opening a New Food Establishment!
Guidelines on the plan review process, pre-operational inspection and continued operation of your new Food Establishment.
Opening your Food Establishment

Congratulations on your decision to start a new Food Establishment in Okanogan County! This brochure is designed to provide a quick overview of Okanogan County Public Health (OCPH) permitting requirements and procedures for a Food Establishment. This is only meant to be used as a guide.

The Plan Review Process

It is required in Washington State food safety regulations that all new/remodeled food establishments have plans reviewed and approved before construction. The plan review process usually takes several weeks to complete once all required documents are received by OCPH. An Environmental Health Specialist will review and ensure the plans fully comply with Washington State Food Safety regulations. Changes may be required to the plans in order to meet all requirements. Required changes will be notified by letter, email or phone.

Other Agencies

Depending on your business plan, there may be other state and local agencies you will need to contact for approval. L&I, Building Dept., Dept. of Licensing, and Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board will be some common agencies you will also require approval from.

The following steps will outline the permitting process:

Step 1: Complete and submit all the following items to OCPH:

- Completed plan and menu review
- Completed new food establishment to operate application
- Menu
- Scaled floor plan
- Equipment list
- Proof of approved water and sewage disposal
- Commissary information (mobile and catering only)

Step 2: Approval Letter

Once plans are approved, the Environmental Health Specialist will send you a letter stating that your Food Establishment fully complies with Washington State food safety regulations.

Step 3: Pre-operational Inspection

An Environmental Health Specialist will conduct a pre-operational inspection to ensure that the food establishment was constructed/remodeled according to the approved plans. When the establishment is ready to operate, contact the Environmental Health Specialist to schedule the inspection. You must call at least two weeks prior to the expected date of opening.

If the pre-operational inspection is not satisfactory, the operator must make all required corrections and reschedule another inspection. You cannot operate until you receive approval.

Step 4: Approval to Operate

If the establishment is in place according to plans, all possible required corrections are made, equipment functioning correctly, Food Employees are properly trained and have Food Worker Cards, and all required fees are paid; approval will be given to operate.

Food Safety Regulations

The Washington State Retail Food Code (WAC 246-215) contains all the food safety regulations you are required to follow. Copies can be found online at the Washington State Department of Health Food Safety Program website. Hard copies are also available at OCPH.

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