

# Food Establishment Health Permits: Frequently Asked Questions for Business Owners

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## **Q: What is a health permit?**

A: Health permits are documents that authorize a business owner to operate a food establishment.

Maintaining a valid health permit for your food establishment is not only lawful, but also the best way to show your customers that the food you serve is safe. Health permits are verification that the food establishment adheres to proper food safety requirements as detailed in the [Washoe County District Board of Health Regulations Governing Food Establishments](#) (hereafter, “Washoe County Food Establishment Regulations”). Washoe County Health District Environmental Health Services (EHS) authorizes health permits, regulates the safe operation of food establishments through the inspection process, and enforces compliance with the regulations when necessary. Health permits, Washoe County Health District EHS, and business owners of food establishments all share the same goal: to ensure that the food served in Washoe County is wholesome and safe.

## **Q: How does my health permit affect my business license?**

A: A valid health permit is one of the items that must be obtained by a business owner before their business license is approved and issued. If you are selling or serving food to the public as part of your business, your business license will require a valid health permit for food establishments prior to approval. Washoe County Health District EHS works in partnership with the business licensing departments for the City of Reno, the City of Sparks, and Washoe County to ensure that business owners get the information and documentation necessary for obtaining their business license.

## **Q: What types of food establishments require a health permit?**

A: Any business that manufactures, prepares, sells, or serves food items to the public requires a valid health permit. Food establishments include restaurants, food trucks, grocery stores, coffee shops, bars, and snack carts – to name only a few examples. If you’re not sure if your business requires a health permit, reach out to Washoe County Health District EHS by calling the front desk at 775-328-2434, option 8.

## **Q: What applications do I need to complete to get a health permit?**

A: To obtain a health permit for a food establishment, the business owner must complete, submit, and pay for all required applications with Washoe County Health District EHS. All business owners wishing to operate a food establishment must complete the [Application for Permit to Operate](#). Applications can be completed in person at the Washoe County Health District EHS Office located at 1001 E. Ninth Street, Building B, Reno, NV 89512 or using the [online portal](#) by [creating a new account](#). Application completion also requires various supplemental materials related to the anticipated activities of the food establishment. For most businesses, the [Food Establishment Review Application](#) is the only supplemental application that is required to be completed; however, some businesses are notable exceptions and require completion of different supplemental applications. Complete information regarding required applications can be found on the Washoe County [Forms/Applications Resources webpage](#) under “Food Protection Program”; however, some common supplemental application materials include the following:

- Mobile Food Establishments must complete the Mobile Food Supplemental Application and Service Area Authorization
- [Temporary and Special Events](#) food services must complete an Annual Producer/Sampling Application.
- [Cottage Food and Farm-to-Fork](#) operations must complete Registration Forms

Business owners that intended to conduct special operations at their food establishment or special processes for food handling/preparation must complete an Operational Plan Review Application, or a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Plan Review Application. Applications for Operational Plans or HACCP Plans can be completed at any time during the operation of a food establishment and are not required to obtain a health permit. However, all operational plans and/or HACCP plans must be approved prior to the implementation of applicable special operations or processes within the food establishment. To access resources and learn more about operational plans and HACCP plans, visit the [Operational Plan Requirements](#) and [HACCP Information](#) webpages.

**Q: I am in the process of becoming the new owner of a food establishment that is already operating. Can I use the previous owner's existing health permit?**

A: No, health permits are not transferrable between business owners. New owners of existing food establishments must complete all required health permit applications and receive an approved opening inspection of the food establishment. For information on health permitting for changes/transfers of ownership, visit the [Guidelines for Change of Ownerships of Food Establishments](#) webpage.

**Q: How can I get help with filling out my health permit application?**

A: You know the plans for your food establishment better than anyone; for that reason, it is always best to complete whatever information you can when you first starting health permit applications. Familiarize yourself with the [Washoe County Food Establishment Regulations](#) and have a copy accessible as you fill out your applications so you can reference the information as needed. If/when you need help, contact Washoe County Health District EHS by calling the front desk at 775-328-2434, option 8, or email the Food Safety Services Program at [foodsafety@washoecounty.gov](mailto:foodsafety@washoecounty.gov).

**Q: What fees are connected to getting my health permit?**

A: For the first year of food establishment operation, business owners pay a one-time application fee in addition to the establishment's annual permit fee. Applications for Operational Plans or HACCP Plans are also associated with a separate one-time application fee. Once the health permit is approved, permit holders must pay the annual permit fee associated with the food establishment. Payment of the annual permit fee is required to maintain a valid permit. The annual fee schedule for health permits is published on the Washoe County Health District website on the [Schedule of Fees](#) page.

**Q: How does the health permit for my food establishment get approved?**

A: Applications submitted to Washoe County Health District EHS are first reviewed to ensure that all required application materials have been completed. If the application packet is missing required information, the business owner is contacted to complete the additional materials. When application packets are deemed complete, the business owner is sent an invoice for the fees associated with their application. All required fees must be paid to advance the application to the next stages of the permitting process. The food establishment application packet is assigned to an inspector based on the establishment's geographical location. The inspector schedules an opening inspection with the business owner to ensure that the establishment's construction, equipment, and intended operations align with current regulations to support food safety. If items in the establishment are found to be deficient, the opening inspection results in a "Correction Notice." The business owner must correct all deficient items and contact the inspector to schedule a reinspection. Food establishments that receive an opening inspection (or reinspection) that is "Approved" are issued a valid health permit and the inspector recommends approval of the business license to the licensing agency. Information regarding permit applications and fees can be found in Chapter 020 of the [Washoe County Food Establishment Regulations](#). Food establishments receive a routine inspection within 90 days from the date of health permit approval to verify compliance with food safety processes. To learn more about routine inspections, visit the [Food Establishment Inspection Process](#) webpage.

**Q: Where can I get more information?**

A: Business owners of food establishments are strongly encouraged to reach out to the Food Safety Services Program with Washoe County Health District EHS by calling the front desk at 775-328-2434, option #8, or via email at [foodsafety@washoecounty.gov](mailto:foodsafety@washoecounty.gov). Access general food safety guidance and information on the following webpages by clicking the links or scanning the associated QR codes.

[Washoe County Food Establishment Regulations](#)



[Washoe County Health District EHS Food Safety Services Website](#)



[Washoe County Health District Food Safety Services Resource Library](#)

