



Orange County Food Establishment Plan Review Approval Procedures

A food establishment is any business that prepares, processes, stores, serves, or sells food and/or beverages directly to consumers. When a food establishment changes ownership, is newly constructed, undergoes remodeling that affects more than 20% of the food preparation or storage area, increases its dining capacity, or when an existing structure is converted into a food establishment, construction plans must be submitted to the Orange County Environmental Health and Code Compliance Department for review and approval before work begins or within 30 days of a change of ownership.

Plan review is a critical component of the Orange County Food Safety Program. It allows the department to evaluate the proposed establishment's menu, equipment, and facilities to identify potential food safety hazards before construction and operation begin. Addressing these hazards in advance helps ensure that the establishment can effectively prevent foodborne illness and provide safe food to the citizens and visitors of Orange County.

Review Procedures

The completed Application for Food Establishment, the menu, and all required food establishment plans must be submitted to Environmental Health and Code Compliance Department before the review process can begin. Plans will be evaluated for compliance with the Texas Food Establishment Rules and the Rules for the Regulation of Food Establishments in Orange County, Texas.

Note: Food establishments located within the limits of an incorporated city must also comply with that city's regulations, which may include additional permits and plan approvals.

Construction or remodeling may begin only after plans have been approved. The specific documents required will be identified during the plan review appointment.

Requirements for Food Establishments

Submission of Plans

The completed Application for Food Establishment, menu, and food establishment plans must be submitted before the review process begins. Plans and specifications must clearly indicate the proposed layout, arrangement, mechanical plans, construction materials for work areas, and all fixed equipment and facilities.

Floors

Floors in food preparation, food storage, utensil washing areas, dressing rooms, and vestibules must be smooth, durable, and easily cleanable. Floor drains are required in areas using water flushing or pressure spray cleaning methods. Floors must be constructed of non-absorbent materials (e.g., sealed concrete, ceramic tile) and properly graded to drain. Wall-to-floor junctions must be coved and sealed. Exposed utility lines and pipes may not be installed at floor level.

Walls and Ceilings

Walls and ceilings in food preparation, storage, equipment and utensil washing areas, and toilet rooms must be light-colored, smooth, non-absorbent, and easily cleanable. Studs, joists, rafters, utility lines, or pipes may not be exposed in these areas.

Toilets

Toilet facilities must be conveniently located and accessible to employees at all times. Toilet rooms must be fully enclosed and equipped with tight-fitting, self-closing solid doors.

Handwash Sinks

Handwash sinks must be conveniently located in all food preparation and utensil washing areas, as well as in toilet rooms and vestibules. Each handwash sink must provide hot and cold running water through a mixing valve or combination faucet, along with hand soap and paper towels or an approved hand-drying device. Sinks must be accessible to employees at all times.

Cleaning and Sanitization

A three-compartment sink is required for washing, rinsing, and sanitizing utensils and equipment. Sinks must be large enough to allow full immersion of equipment and utensils. Adequate drain boards must be provided.

Plumbing

The potable water system must be designed and installed to prevent backflow. Hoses may not be attached to faucets without an approved backflow prevention device or must be cut at least 1 inch above the flood rim. Grease traps must be easily accessible for cleaning. In Municipal Utility District (MUD) service areas, installation must be approved by the district operator.

Potable Water Supply

All food establishments must have an approved potable water supply. Most facilities use municipal water; establishments with private wells must have the well inspected and approved and have plans reviewed by TCEQ.

Equipment

Equipment must be arranged to allow easy cleaning and prevent food contamination. Floor-mounted equipment must be sealed to the floor, installed on a raised concrete platform, or elevated at least 6 inches above the floor. Adequate space must be provided around equipment for cleaning. Aisles and workspaces must be unobstructed.

Utility Facilities

At least one utility (mop) sink or a curbed cleaning facility with a floor drain must be provided.

Ventilation

Rooms must be adequately ventilated to prevent excessive heat, smoke, odors, and fumes. Areas generating odors or fumes must be mechanically vented. Ventilation hoods must have removable, cleanable filters.

Lighting

50 foot-candles at all working surfaces.

30 foot-candles in food preparation, utensil washing, and handwashing areas, and in toilet rooms.

20 foot-candles at 30 inches above the floor in all other areas.

Light fixtures must have protective shielding.

Garbage

Dumpster, compactor, and refuse container storage areas must be on non-absorbent surfaces such as concrete or asphalt.

Laundry Facilities

Laundry facilities may only be used for items necessary to the establishment's operation. If a washer is provided, a dryer must also be available.

Insect and Rodent Control

All openings to the outside must be protected with self-closing doors, closed windows, screens, or other approved methods.

Toxic Materials

All chemicals and toxic materials must be stored separately from food and food-contact items, in designated storage areas, and never above food.

Inspection Checklist

- ☐ Food thermometers for checking internal food temperatures
- ☐ Thermometers in all cooling units
- ☐ Certified Food Manager certificate
- ☐ Sales Tax ID
- ☐ Sanitizer and test strips
- ☐ First aid kit
- ☐ Bodily fluid clean-up kit or written bodily fluid clean-up procedures
- ☐ Soap at all handwashing stations
- ☐ Paper towels at all handwashing stations
- ☐ Handwash signage at each handwashing station
- ☐ Employee Illness Reporting sign
- ☐ Allergen Awareness poster
- ☐ Trash cans (including one lidded can for women's restroom)
- ☐ Self-closing restroom doors
- ☐ Disposable Gloves
- ☐ Consumer Advisory (if serving raw/undercooked foods; eggs, fish, shellfish, hamburgers cooked to order, or steaks cooked to order)

For more information, please contact the Orange County Environmental Health and Code Compliance Department at 409-745-1463 or by email at: Environmental@co.orange.tx.us