

FAQs

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO OPEN A RESTAURANT?

IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO OPEN AN ESTABLISHMENT THAT WILL PREPARE AND SELL FOOD TO THE PUBLIC, YOU MUST HAVE A PERMIT TO OPERATE. THE OWNER/MANAGER OF THE ESTABLISHMENT MUST ARRANGE FOR AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST WORKING IN THE FOOD PROGRAM. AFTER ANSWERING ANY QUESTIONS THAT ARISE, THE SPECIALIST WILL GIVE YOU AN APPLICATION FORM AND A PLAN REVIEW CHECKLIST. YOU WILL COMPLETE ALL APPLICABLE SECTIONS AND RETURN IT TO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, ALONG WITH A MENU LISTING OF FOODS TO BE SERVED, EQUIPMENT SPECIFICATION SHEETS, AND A SKETCH PLAN OF THE PROPOSED FACILITY. AFTER ALL OF THIS IS APPROVED, AND ANY OTHER AGENCIES INVOLVED SUCH AS BUILDING INSPECTIONS/FIRE MARSHALL HAVE GIVEN THEIR APPROVAL, CONSTRUCTION MAY BEGIN. THE SPECIALIST WILL MAKE PERIODIC VISITS AND/OR YOU MAY REQUEST A VISIT AT ANY TIME DURING CONSTRUCTION FOR CONSULTATION. ONCE CONSTRUCTION IS COMPLETE AND ALL APPROVED EQUIPMENT IS INSTALLED, THE SPECIALIST WILL VISIT AGAIN AND IF ALL REQUIREMENTS ARE MET, WILL ISSUE THE PERMIT. AFTER THAT, YOU WILL BE ON THE ROUTINE UNANNOUNCED INSPECTION SCHEDULE.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO REOPEN AN EXISTING RESTAURANT?

THE PROCEDURE FOR REOPENING AN EXISTING RESTAURANT IS SIMILAR TO THE ABOVE PROCEDURE. IF THE FACILITY CONTINUES TO SATISFY ALL OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE RULES, (i.e. THE SAME SIZE, THE SAME MENU, AND THE SAME EQUIPMENT) AND EVERYTHING IS CLEAN AND OPERATIONAL, A PERMIT TO OPERATE MAY BE ISSUED. HOWEVER, IF ANY OF THIS CHANGES BUT THERE ARE NO ISSUES THAT REPRESENT A THREAT TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH, A TRANSITIONAL PERMIT MAY BE ISSUED, UPON REQUEST, FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED 180 DAYS. THIS ALLOWS THE ESTABLISHMENT TO OPERATE WHILE CORRECTING NONCRITICAL ITEMS, SUCH AS CLEANING, PAINTING, REPLACING DUMPSTERS, ETC.

HOW CAN A RESTAURANT HAVE A GRADE OVER 100%?

A RESTAURANT MAY BE REWARDED WITH A TWO POINT BONUS FOR VOLUNTARY FOOD SERVICE MANAGER TRAINING IN FOOD SAFETY. 15A NCAC 18A .2606 GRADING (b) STATES: AN ESTABLISHMENT SHALL RECEIVE A CREDIT OF TWO POINTS ON ITS SCORE FOR EACH INSPECTION IF A MANAGER OR OTHER EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBLE FOR OPERATION OF THAT ESTABLISHMENT, AND WHO IS EMPLOYED FULL TIME IN THAT PARTICULAR ESTABLISHMENT, HAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED IN THE PAST THREE YEARS A FOOD SERVICE SANITATION PROGRAM APPROVED BY THE DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH. THEREFORE, A FOODHANDLING ESTABLISHMENT THAT SCORES A 100 ON ITS ACTUAL SANITATION INSPECTION MAY POST A SCORE OF 102 WITH THE TWO POINT BONUS.

HOW DOES THE GRADE SCALE RUN?

THE NUMERICAL GRADE RANGE OF 90 TO 100 REPRESENTS THE LETTER GRADE "A". 80 TO 89 IS A "B" AND 70 TO 79 IS A "C". ESTABLISHMENTS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO OPERATE UNLESS A GRADE "C" OR ABOVE IS MAINTAINED. THE POSTED GRADE CARD REFLECTS THE CONDITIONS FOUND ON THE DAY OF THE INSPECTION.

DOES THE RESTAURANT KNOW WHEN IT WILL BE INSPECTED?

NO...THE INSPECTIONS ARE UNANNOUNCED

CAN I WORK OUT OF A MOBILE FOOD UNIT OR PUSHCART?

YES; HOWEVER THERE ARE SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS. A MOBILE FOOD UNIT OR PUSHCART MUST BE PERMITTED AS SUCH AND WORK IN CONJUNCTION WITH A PERMITTED COMMISSARY OR PERMITTED FOODHANDLING ESTABLISHMENT IN ORDER TO PREPARE AND SALE FOOD TO THE PUBLIC. THERE ARE RESTRICTIONS ON THE TYPE AND SOURCE OF FOOD SERVED ON MOBILE FOOD UNITS. A PUSH CART IS ONLY ALLOWED TO PREPARE HOT DOGS, BUT FOODS PREPARED AND PACKAGED IN A PERMITTED ESTABLISHMENT MAY BE SOLD FROM THE CART, AS LONG AS IT IS NOT ALTERED AND REPACKAGED. AN EXAMPLE WOULD BE VENDOR OPENING A PREWRAPPED HAMBURGER AND ADDING MUSTERD, CATSUP, ETC.

HOW CAN FOOD BE LEGALLY PREPARED AND SOLD IN A MALL PARKING LOT?

NORTH CAROLINA GENRAL STATUTES REQUIRE THAT ANY ESTABLISHMENTS THAT PREPARE AND SERVE FOOD FOR PAY BE PERMITTED BY THE LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT. THIS WOULD INCLUDE PERMITTED MOBILE FOOD UNITS AND PUSHCARTS, AS DESCRIBED ABOVE. HOWEVER, THERE ARE EXCEPTIONS TO THIS STATUTE, WHICH ALLOW FOOD PREPARATION AND SALE WITHOUT BEING PERMITTED WHEN CERTAIN CONDITIONS ARE MET. FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS THAT FALL INTO THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES ARE EXEMPT FROM THE PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS:

- INCORPORATED AS A NONPROFIT CORPORATION
- EXEMPT FROM FEDERAL INCOME TAX
- POLITICAL COMMITTEES

THESE FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS ARE ONLY ALLOWED TO OPERATE NO MORE FREQUENTLY THAN ONCE A MONTH FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED TWO CONSECUTIVE DAYS.

THERE ARE OTHER OPERATIONS THAT ARE EXEMPT FROM HEALTH DEPARTMENT REQUIREMENTS AND ARE UNLIMITED AS TO TIME OF OPERATION:

- ONES THAT PUT TOGETHER, PORTION, SET OUT, OR HAND OUT ONLY BEVERAGES THAT DO NOT INCLUDE THOSE MADE FROM RAW APPLES OR POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS BEVERAGES MADE FROM RAW FRUIT OR VEGETABLES, USING SINGLE SERVICE CONTAINERS
- ONES THAT ONLY SET OUT OR HAND OUT FOOD THAT IS REGULATED BY THE NC DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES
- FOOD THAT THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR, EITHER UP-FRONT OR IS INCLUDED AS AN ADMISSION FEE, ETC.

WHY DOES THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT NOT INSPECT BAKERIES?

ALTHOUGH MOST FOOD PREPARATION DOES COME UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT, THERE ARE SOME CATEGORIES OF FOOD THAT ARE REGULATED BY THE NC DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES. BAKED FOODS AND BAKERIES FALL UNDER THE PERMITTING AND INSPECTION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AS DOES ICE CREAM SHOPPES. THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ALSO REGULATES THE PREPARATION OF FOODS WHICH ARE PACKAGED AND SOLD AT RETAIL, SUCH AS BARBECUE, COLE SLAW, POTATO SALAD, ETC.

WHAT ARE THE TOP 10 CAUSES OF FOODBORNE ILLNESS?

- 1. FAILING TO COOL FOODS PROPERLY - HOT FOODS MUST BE COOLED DOWN AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. PLACE HOT FOOD IN SHALLOW PANS OR USE AN ICE BATH. LARGE ITEMS SUCH AS TURKEYS OR ROAST MUST BE SLICED TO AID IN COOLING, THEN PLACE IN SHALLOW PANS.**
- 2. CROSS-CONTAMINATION - THE CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF CROSS-CONTAMINATION IS PREPARING RAW CHICKEN ON A CUTTING BOARD AND THEN, WITHOUT WASHING AND SANITIZING, USING THE SAME BOARD AND KNIFE TO PREPARE SALADS.**
- 3. PERSONAL HYGIENE - PROPER HAND WASHING IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT MEANS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF INFECTION.**
- 4. IMPROPER RE-HEATING - LEFTOVERS MUST BE RE-HEATED RAPIDLY TO AT LEAST 165°F. NOTE: STEAM TABLES ARE NOT DESIGNED FOR REHEATING LEFTOVERS.**
- 5. IMPROPER HOT HOLDING - ONCE COOKED, HOT FOODS MUST BE KEPT AT 140°F OR ABOVE. (COLD FOODS MUST BE KEPT AT 40°F OR BELOW.)**
- 6. MIXING RAW FOODS WITH COOKED FOODS - A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THIS PRACTICE WOULD BE ADDING RAW EGGS TO ALREADY PREPARED EGGS ON A STEAM TABLE. ALSO, DO NOT ADD FRESHLY MADE POTATO SALAD TO A CONTAINER OF POTATO SALAD THAT IS IN USE.**
- 7. FOOD FROM UNAPPROVED SOURCES - ALL FOOD MUST BE OBTAINED FROM SOURCES THAT COMPLY WITH ALL LAWS RELATING TO FOOD AND FOOD LABELING.**
- 8. IMPROPER CLEANING - EQUIPMENT AND UTENSILS MUST BE WASHED, RINSED AND SANITIZED.**
- 9. OVER PREPPING - PREPARING MORE FOOD THAN NECESSARY. IT CREATES A STORAGE PROBLEM THAT CAN LEAD TO CONTAMINATION.**
- 10. INADEQUATE COOKING - FOODS MUST BE COOKED TO THE PROPER TEMPERATURE. USE YOUR STEM THERMOMETER (0°F-220°F) TO INSURE THAT TEMPERATURES ARE BEING MET.**

HOW DO I FIND THE GRADE OF A RESTAURANT IN FRANKLIN COUNTY?

THE GRADE CARD IS LOCATED IN A CONSPICUOUS LOCATION WHERE IT MAY BE READILY OBSERVED BY THE PUBLIC UPON ENTERING THE ESTABLISHMENT. IF THE ESTABLISHMENT HAS A "DRIVE THROUGH WINDOW," AN ADDITIONAL GRADE CARD IS POSTED THERE. WE ARE SCHEDULED TO BE INCLUDED ON THE [WRAL-TV RESTAURANT GRADE PAGE](#) IN EARLY 2007.