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Change of Ownership – Retail Food FAQs

1. What is a retail food facility?

A Retail Food Facility includes any business or entity that sells or gives food (or beverage) to the public (e.g., customers, students, patients, inmates, homeless or needy). This includes restaurants, markets, farm stands, farmers' markets, bars, snack bars, school or staff cafeterias, detention facility kitchens, caterers, production kitchens, commissaries, cottage food, charitable feeding, temporary events (e.g., fairs, festivals), skilled nursing and hospital kitchens, and mobile food (food trucks, ice cream trucks, food carts).

2. Are health permits transferable?

No. A new owner of a retail food facility must obtain his or her own health permit prior to commencing operations.

3. What is the process for obtaining a health permit for an existing retail food facility?

The new owner must first apply for a facility evaluation. Environmental Health will then conduct an evaluation of the facility and proposed operation to determine if it complies with applicable laws (e.g., equipment, ventilation, lighting, finishes, etc.). At the conclusion of the evaluation the applicant will either be approved for a health permit or provided a list of required corrections or upgrades necessary to get a permit.

4. What is the next step if the ownership change is approved?

Once the ownership change is approved by Environmental Health, complete a "Health Permit Application: Food Facility and Public Pool" and pay the permit fee and then the facility or business can commence operation. You will be mailed a Placard Pending to post in a conspicuous location. After your first routine inspection, this placard will be replaced with a placard based on the result of the inspection.

5. What if the ownership change is not approved?

You will be given a list of corrections or upgrades that are necessary before approval for a health permit. Once this work is done, contact Environmental Health to arrange for a reinspection. If the work requires an Environmental Health plan review, submit plans to Environmental Health and obtain plan approval prior to commencing the work.

6. Will a plan review be required?

Possibly. Some corrections require a plan review and approval prior to commencing the repairs or upgrades. For example, if a hood system installation or modification is necessary. If you have any questions or are not sure if a plan review is required, contact us at planreview@cchealth.org or (925) 608-5500.

7. Can I rely on past inspection reports regarding an ownership change?

Past inspection reports provide some information but should not be completely relied upon. The facility evaluation done for ownership changes focuses on issues that may not always be captured during a routine inspection.

8. Are there other agencies I should contact?

Contact the local city regarding business licenses and other requirements related to an ownership change. Some fire departments also perform ownership change inspections. Other agencies that might be involved:

California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control – If beer, wine, or spirits are sold.
<https://www.abc.ca.gov/>

California Department of Food and Agriculture – If a soft-serve machine is in use or if meat products will be smoked, cured, or dried.

<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/>

California Department of Public Health – Food and Drug Branch – If the wholesale or business-to-business sales are done.

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DFDCS/Pages/FoodandDrugBranch.aspx>