

California
CERTIFIED FOOD HANDLER LAW
Requirements for Retail Food Facilities

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Food Safety is everyone's business. It's important to you as the operator of a retail food establishment so that your customers will continue to patronize your business. It's important to the public so that they will enjoy the security of knowing that dining out is safe. And it's important to public health officials because our job is to work with you in the interest of ensuring that all food is safe to eat.

A new California law (California Uniform Retail Food facilities Law §113716) will require that most retail food facilities which handle unpackaged food of any kind employ a person who is certified in food safety. Certification in food safety simply means that you or at least one of your employees will be required to have a basic knowledge as to the causes of food borne illness and its prevention, pass an approved examination, and possess a valid certificate in food safety.

What is a Certified Food Handler (CFH)?

A CFH is an owner, operator or any other employee who has supervisory responsibility for the preparation of food or oversight of the operation and who has a valid CFH Certificate issued by one of the five approved food safety certification examination providers.

What would happen if there is no CFH employed at my facility?

As of January 1, 2000, if neither you, as the owner, nor someone in your employ is a CFH, your permit to operate may be suspended and you will have to close your food establishment until you become a CFH or hire one.

What would happen if the CFH left my employ?

State Law allows 60 days for you to then become a CFH or hire one in a position of supervision.

Does my food establishment require a Certified Food Handler?

All food establishments which prepare, handle or serve unpackaged food are required to have a CFH in their employ.

This includes:

- * Restaurants and most markets
- * Caterers
- * MFPU's
- * Ice cream and yogurt shops
- * Bed and Breakfasts

This does not include:

- * Liquor stores which sell only prepackaged foods (do not make their own ice).
- * Mobile food facilities (eg, hot dog carts)

- * A bar which only sells beer in cans and bottles
- * Retail market which sells only prepackaged foods and does no food preparation
- * Temporary Food Facilities

What is the cost to take the CFH examination and receive a certificate?

The law states that a least one of the approved exams must be available for no more than \$60. This cost limit, however, does not include additional training which may be needed in preparation for the exam.

When do I need to be certified and for how long is the CFH certificate valid?

You must be certified by December 31, 1999. The CFH certificate is valid for three years. If your food operation opens after December 31, 1999, you will have 60 days to have a CFH in your employ.

Can one person serve as the CFH for more than one facility?

No, a CFH may only serve as the CFH for one facility, except in the case of several facilities in one location under single ownership.

What are the responsibilities of the CFH?

The Certified Food Handler is responsible for the safety of the food preparation and service. This includes ensuring that all employees who handle, or have responsibility for handling unpackaged food of any kind have sufficient knowledge to ensure the safe preparation and service of the food.

Does the CFH need to be present at the food facility at all times?

No, the need only be employed by the facility. Then Environmental Health inspector will require verification that the CFH is employed by the facility.

Do I need to post the CFH Certificate or send it in to Environmental Health Services?

No, but the **original** must be kept on file at your food facility at all times.

How do I become a Certified Food Handler (CFH)?

There are three ways to become a Certified Food Handler in the State of California:

1.) Complete a CFH Training Course and successfully pass the approved certification examination offered by a provider of one of the following exams:

- * National Restaurant Association (ServeSafe®)
- * Professional Testing, Inc.
- * National Assessment Institute
- * Chauncey Group International
- * Dietary Managers Association

2.) Some providers may offer the exam without having to take the food handler course. You must, however, be very knowledgeable and experienced in food protection in order to pass this exam without first having taken the course.

3.) If you currently hold a CFH certificate from one of the approved providers, your certificate may still be valid. If more than three years have passed since the date of issuance, you will need a new certificate.

How do I contact a provider of a State approved certification exam?

You may contact one of the approved CFH exam providers by telephone or e:mail. There are also numerous companies and agencies which administer the approved exam as well as provide training in preparation for the exam.

How long is an approved CFH course?

Most approved courses are at least 8 hours and some are 16 hours. Several of the Community College courses are 36 to 42 hours.

Where are Certified Food Handlers training courses held?

CFH training classes are scheduled by the course providers and are offered throughout the Sacramento County area. Contact the CFH Training Providers for the location of a training near you.

Will CFH classes be held on weekends and evenings?

Many of the CFH Training Providers will offer classes during evenings and weekends. Some CFH Training Providers may even offer classes in the late evening or early morning hours if there is a demand for the training.