



## FAQs ABOUT CONSUMER HEALTH PROTECTION

### Q. Where are the offices of Environmental Health located?

- A.** Environmental Health's Central Office is located in Rm 42 of the Health Department building in Salinas at 1270 Natividad Road, near the corner of Laurel Drive. The Central Office has inspectors that cover North Monterey County, including the city of Salinas, Spreckels, Toro Park, Marina, Castroville, South Watsonville, Aromas and Prunedale.

The King City Branch Office is located at 620 Broadway, Ste N, in King City. This office has inspectors that cover South Monterey County, including Chualar, Gonzales, Soledad, Greenfield, King City, Jolon, San Lucas, San Ardo, and areas south to the county line.

The Monterey Branch Office is located at 1200 Aguajito Road in Monterey across the courtyard from the Monterey County Courthouse. This office has inspectors that cover Seaside, Del Rey Oaks, Pacific Grove, Monterey, Carmel, Carmel Valley, Big Sur and the coast south to the town of Gorda.

Regular office hours are Monday through Friday, 8 am to 5 pm. We are closed for National Holidays, including the Friday after Thanksgiving and the weekday before December 25th.

### Q. How do I file a complaint with your department?

- A.** Complaints may be made by phone, US mail, or in person. Mail or phone calls should be directed to:

#### **Monterey County Health Department / Environmental Health / Consumer Health Protection Services**

<b>1270 Natividad Road, Rm 42 (or)</b>	<b>1200 Aguajito Road, Rm 103 (or)</b>	<b>620 Broadway, Ste N</b>
<b>Salinas, CA 93906</b>	<b>Monterey, CA 93940</b>	<b>King City, CA 93930</b>
<b>(Phone 831-755-4508)</b>	<b>(Phone 831-647-7654)</b>	<b>(Phone 831-385-0573)</b>

Please be prepared to give us the specific nature of the complaint, where it occurred (name and address of a business), when it occurred, and who was involved. Complaints should not be made anonymously — your name and phone number are useful in case additional information is needed to properly investigate the complaint and to provide you with a response. *However, all complaints are handled in strict confidence for the protection of the complainant.*

### Q. I don't agree with a decision made by an employee of Environmental Health. What can I do about it?

- A.** Environmental Health Specialists and other employees of Environmental Health are well trained and motivated to respond professionally to public health issues by enforcing State and local laws.

However, if you disagree with a decision made by an Environmental Health employee, please ask the employee for a more detailed explanation of the reasons for making the decision. This is also your opportunity to provide the employee with information that may not have been considered at the time the decision was made. Frequently such a conversation results in a mutual understanding of the issues involved and any subsequent actions that may be necessary.

If you continue to disagree with the decision, it is always appropriate to talk to the employee's immediate supervisor. All Environmental Health employees are instructed to give you the name and phone number of their immediate supervisor upon request. This information is also available in the "Contact Information" link listed under each Service's section on [Environmental Health's internet website](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth) ([www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth)).

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You may wish to speak to the supervisor by phone, or you may request an appointment with the supervisor to assure that all relevant facts that will result in the protection of public health and safety are being considered in the decision making process.

Further recourse can be sought by appealing to either of the two Environmental Health Assistant Directors and/or the Director of Environmental Health. All Environmental Health employees will provide you with the name and phone number of the Assistant Directors and the Director upon request. This information is also available in the "Contact Information" link listed under each Service's section on [Environmental Health's internet website](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth) ([www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth)).

## Food Safety Program

### Q. How do I obtain a food permit for my restaurant or other food establishment?

A. An application and fee must be submitted to the Environmental Health Department (EHD) office, *and the permit must be received*, before opening. If the food establishment is new or undergoing remodeling, plans must be submitted to the EHD before the application for a permit can be approved. Permit fees and plan check information are available on line at [Food Safety: Permitting & Inspection of Food Facilities](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth/consHealth) ([www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth/consHealth](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth/consHealth)).

### Q. What does the inspector do when he or she goes out to a restaurant or other food facility? Does the facility know the inspector is coming?

A. The inspector has many things to do when conducting an inspection. Primarily, he or she inspects the food facility to determine if it complies with the requirements of the California Health and Safety Code and, more specifically, the California Retail Food Code. Sometimes an inspection is confined to a specific problem resulting from a complaint, and at other times the inspection may be very comprehensive. All inspections are conducted with the intent to observe conditions which may contribute to food-borne illness. All problems noted during the inspection are brought to the attention of the management and violations are required to be corrected.

The food facility does not usually know when a routine inspection or complaint investigation will be conducted. Follow-up and permit inspections may be scheduled in advance.

### Q. I've heard a lot about getting sick from meat that is undercooked. How well cooked does meat need to be, and how can someone know when it is actually "done?"

A. Foods that contain ground beef need to be cooked until the internal temperature is 157° Fahrenheit (F). Pork must be cooked until the internal temperature is 155°F. Poultry must be cooked until the internal temperature is 165°F.

Measuring the internal temperature with a metal-stemmed probe thermometer is the only safe way of determining when the product is done. Relying on the color of the meat juices is not a reliable way of determining that the meat is actually "done."

### Q. I've heard about the "danger zone" - what is that, exactly?

A. The "danger zone" for food preparation and storage is the temperature range where bacteria grow quickly. Generally, *the "danger zone" is between 41°F and 135°F.*

### Q. How cold do I need to keep my refrigerator? How can I be sure it's cold enough? And how long can food "keep" in the refrigerator?

A. Your refrigerator should be kept between 35° and 41°F. The only sure way to determine the actual temperature of the refrigerator is to measure it with an accurate thermometer. Do not rely on a refrigerator's thermostat

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control "number" as a reliable indication of temperature. There are several types of refrigerator thermometers on the market.

The length of time that foods stay fresh depends on the type of food and the temperature of the refrigerator. One good rule of thumb is, "**When in doubt, throw it out!**"

## Q. What if I think I got sick from eating at a restaurant?

**A. All suspected food poisoning complaints should be reported.** You should call the health department as soon as possible in order for an Environmental Health inspector to complete a thorough and timely investigation. Be sure you have the restaurant's name and street address before calling, the time and date of your visit, and a 72 hour history of other foods you have eaten. Consult with your doctor if your symptoms are severe or if you want a definitive diagnosis.

## Q. Can I prepare food for sale from my home?

**A. No.** All food sold or given away to the public must be prepared and stored at an approved commercial food establishment.

## Q. How do I obtain a veterans exempt permit?

**A.** This exemption is in accordance with section 16102 of the Business and Professions Code. If you are a veteran with an honorable discharge and can produce a copy of the form DD214 and a valid form of identification, you are entitled to a fee exemption for a health permit. This also includes temporary food facility permits. The business must be in the veterans name. The permit is non-transferrable and does not allow for the selling of alcohol for human consumption in any form.

## Q. Where can I bring my Mobile Food Truck or other Mobile Food Facility (MFF) to be inspected?

**A.** All MFFs are inspected two times each year. Inspections are conducted at the Central Office in Salinas every Tuesday morning between 8:30 am and 10:00 am. When a MFF inspection is due, owners are sent a reminder with the date, time and location of their scheduled inspection. Questions can be asked, and appointments can be rescheduled, by calling 831-755-4733. Appointments for inspections can also be scheduled at the King City Branch Office by calling 831-386-6899, and at the Monterey Branch Office by calling 831-647-7654.

## Q. Can a commissary located outside Monterey County be used?

**A. Yes.** You must obtain an inspection of the commissary from the County Health Department in which the commissary is located.

## Plan Checks for Food Facilities, and Public Pools and Spas

## Q. When do I need to submit plans?

**A.** You need to submit plans for new restaurants or other food facilities, for new public pool and spa construction, and for any remodeling of such facilities. A proposed change in the type of operation may also require a plan check. Plans must be submitted **before** any construction or remodeling begins.

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## **Q. How much is the plan check fee?**

**A.** The fee varies with the type of facility. Please see the [current fee schedule](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth/feesAllEH) on the Environmental Health website ([www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth/feesAllEH](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth/feesAllEH)).

## **Q. Is the first year's permit fee included with the plan check fee?**

**A. No.** Payment for the first annual permit fee will be billed after your establishment is permitted with a health permit.

## **Q. What are the requirements to remodel a restaurant?**

**A.** Requirements vary based on the scope of the remodel. If you have an existing facility, it is recommended that you speak to the inspector assigned to your area. The inspector can assist you with the process.

## **Q. What do inspectors want to see during the final inspection, and when do I call for an inspection?**

**A.** All equipment must be in place and functioning, including the hot water heater. The facility must be clean. A hood balance test, if a hood is present, must have been completed. Contact your inspector at least two days in advance to schedule the final inspection.

## Temporary Food Events

## **Q. What is a temporary food facility?**

**A.** A temporary food facility is a food facility operating out of temporary facilities, such as at a fair, a farmer's market or at a street festival. The temporary food facility is at a fixed location for the duration of the approved community event. Temporary food facilities must be permitted by Environmental Health.

## **Q. Do I need a health permit for temporary events?**

**A. Yes.** When food is served to the general public, whether sold or given away, a permit is required.

## **Q. Can I have a Temporary Food Facility Permit Application mailed to me?**

**A. Yes.** A [Temporary Food Facility Permit Application](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth/ConsHealth/FormsPlanCheckInfo) is also available on the Environmental Health website ([www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth/ConsHealth/FormsPlanCheckInfo](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth/ConsHealth/FormsPlanCheckInfo)).

## **Q. Can I have a Temporary Food Facility Permit Application for the Event Organizer mailed to me?**

**A. Yes.** A [Temporary Food Facility Permit Application for Event Organizer](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth/ConsHealth/FormsPlanCheckInfo) is also available on the Environmental Health website ([www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth/ConsHealth/FormsPlanCheckInfo](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/health/EnvironmentalHealth/ConsHealth/FormsPlanCheckInfo)). It is important to note that the application and fees for this type of permit must be submitted prior to the event. The permit will be issued at the event at the time of the onsite inspection. An annual (fiscal year) temporary health permit is available upon request that can be used for multiple special events throughout Monterey County.

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## **Q. Do I need to have an enclosed food booth?**

**A. Yes.** If you only have prepackaged or non perishable food items you may have one side open.

## **Q. What kind of equipment can be placed outside the food booth?**

**A.** A BBQ or any large flame cooking device. Check with your local fire department for more information. If the local fire department requires the equipment to be outside the booth, then we will allow it.

## **Q. What is the deadline to apply for a temporary event food booth permit?**

**A.** Two weeks prior to the event.

## Swimming Pool and Spa Program

## **Q. Do I need a permit to operate my swimming pool or spa?**

**A. All public** swimming pools and spas are required to have a permit to operate issued by Environmental Health. (Private residential pools and spas are those which are intended for non-commercial use and are not used by more than three owner families and their guests. Private residential pools meeting this requirement do not require a permit from Environmental Health to operate.)

## **Q. Does Environmental Health need to be contacted before constructing, remodeling, or altering a public swimming pool or spa?**

**A. Yes.** Environmental Health must receive and review plans before any construction, remodeling or alteration of a public swimming pool or spa can begin. Fees vary depending on the type of pool or spa. Please see Environmental Health's [current fee schedule](#). *Note that contact with the local Building Department is also essential since a Building Permit may be required.*

## **Q. Do I need to contact Environmental Health before I build a fence around my public swimming pool?**

**A. Yes.** Enclosures and gates for public swimming pools and spas must meet specific criteria in order to provide maximum protection for people, especially small children. *Note that contact with the local Building Department is also essential since a Building Permit may be required.*

## **Q. An inspector from Environmental Health recently left a report documenting several problems I need to correct. What are these violations based upon?**

**A.** Your inspector is enforcing California State law. Both the California Health and Safety Code and the California Code of Regulations have sections concerning the design and operation of public swimming pools.

## Lead Poisoning Prevention

## **Q. What are the main causes of lead poisoning in children?**

**A.** The primary causes of lead poisoning in children are lead dust contamination from older deteriorating paint and dry sanding or scraping of intact paint during repainting or remodeling.

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## Q. How can I tell if my child is lead poisoned?

- A.** A blood test is the only reliable means of assessing a child's exposure to lead. Often, a child with an elevated blood lead level will exhibit no apparent symptoms. But, even low level exposure can result in lowered mental capabilities if the exposure is sustained. For more information, visit the California Department of Public Health's [Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/childlead/) website (www.dhs.ca.gov/childlead/).

## Mold Information

## Q. What are molds? Should I be concerned about mold in my home?

- A.** Molds are simple, microscopic organisms and are found virtually everywhere - indoors and outdoors. Molds can be found on plants, foods, dry leaves, and other organic material. Molds are needed for breaking down dead material. Mold spores are tiny and lightweight, and this allows them to travel through the air. Mold growths can often be seen in the form of discoloration, ranging from white to orange and from green to brown to black.

When molds are present in large quantities, they can cause allergic symptoms similar to those caused by plant pollen. If you are concerned about molds in your home, extensive information is provided by the California Department of Health Services.

Additional general information on molds can be obtained from the Environmental Health website and at the following websites:

### Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

- Biological Pollutants in Your Home <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/moldbasics.html>  
Common Indoor Air Pollutants: <http://www.epa.gov/iedweb00/biologic.html>  
Indoor Air Quality: Basics for Schools: <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/toolkit.html>

### American Lung Association:

- Indoor Pollution: Biological Agents: <http://www.lungusa.org/>

### Monterey

1200 Aguajito Rd  
Monterey CA 93940  
PHONE (831) 647-7654  
FAX (831) 647-7925

### Salinas (Central Office)

1270 Natividad Rd, Rm 42  
Salinas CA 93906-3198  
PHONE (831) 755-4508  
FAX (831) 755-4555

### King City

620 Broadway, Ste N  
King City CA 93930  
PHONE (831) 386-6899  
FAX (831) 385-0573