



Frequently Asked Questions on Permit Fees

1. Why is there an increase in my annual public health permit fee?

Public health permit fees were adjusted this year to cover the full cost of the inspections provided. The cost includes time to conduct an inspection, as well as the number of times per year a facility is inspected. For example, the permit fees for restaurants and food markets were adjusted based on food safety risk. "Higher risk" facilities receive three inspections per year, while "lower risk" facilities receive one inspection per year. Aligning fees to the actual costs to perform these inspections results in higher permit fees for some owners and lower fees for others.

2. How were public health permit fees determined?

The Department completed a comprehensive study to determine the actual costs to perform each service. The costs included the time to conduct the service, such as a restaurant inspection, and the number of times per year that the service was conducted. This alignment resulted in an increase in some fees, and a decrease in others.

3. What are the risk categories for restaurants and markets?

There are 3 risk categories for restaurants and markets that are defined by The Food and Drug Administration (FDA). They are "low", "moderate", and "high" risk. The permit categories for facilities are based primarily on the risk categories.

- "Low risk" restaurants and markets handle foods which are generally pre-packaged, ready to eat, or pre-cooked and require heating prior to service (e.g., theater snack bar, convenience store). These facilities receive 1 inspection annually.
- "Moderate risk" restaurants and markets prepare foods for same day service and use disposable customer utensils, such as a fast food restaurant. These facilities receive 2 inspections annually.
- "High risk" restaurants prepare, cool and reheat higher risk foods such as meat, poultry, and seafood; prepare foods such as soups and sauces for service over multiple days; or serve raw meat, poultry, and seafood such as sushi or oysters. These facilities receive 3 inspections annually.

4. When does the public health permit fee increase go into effect?

If approved by the Tulare County Board of Supervisors, the proposed adjustments will go into effect July 1, 2020

5. Do fees increase every year?

No, each fee is evaluated annually and adjusted appropriately. This may result in no change to the fee, an increase to the fee, or potentially a decrease.



6. Why doesn't the department cut costs instead of raising our fees?

The Environmental Health Division is increasing existing fees only to the extent necessary to offset actual costs and is working to identify further cost reduction efficiencies.

7. Can I pay the public health permit fee in installments?

No, the entire license/permit fee needs to be paid in full by the due date or a 10% penalty is assessed every 30 days it is late.

8. Are there things I can do to lower my bill?

Regulated businesses may receive additional fees, such as enforcement fees for code violations, especially if it requires additional inspections or enforcement actions. The best thing businesses can do to keep their bill as low as possible is to remain fully in compliance. You can also contact your assigned inspector for further questions, a list of assigned inspectors and their contact information can be found on the website at tularecountyeh.org

9. Where can I find guidance documents on applicable laws and codes, health permit applications and other resources?

The Tulare County Environmental Health website has a vast amount of information to assist in remaining fully compliant. You can even pay your bill online or file a complaint. Find us at tularecountyeh.org