

Public Health – Seattle & King County
RISK LEVELS AND PERMIT CLASSIFICATIONS
Effective July 18, 2005

The following information is provided to assist you in determining what food permit to apply for and obtain. Permits are now based on risk levels determined by type of food and preparation steps. The more complex the menu and preparation of foods, the higher the risk level, which in turn relates to more frequent inspection of your establishment. This information will help you determine your risk level and permit classification when you are filling out your application for a permit.

Risk Level 1 - This risk level is assigned to a permit that allows limited preparation steps of potentially hazardous foods, such as hot dogs, and includes sectioning of melons, heating of individually pre-packaged ready-to-eat foods for immediate service, and preparation of espresso and/or blended drinks. It also includes cold holding of commercially pre-packaged ready-to-eat foods, such as sandwiches, but does not include hot holding of food. Mobile cart operations with espresso are included in this risk category as are mobile trucks with frozen foods or meat. These types of operations are inspected once a year.

Risk Level 2 - This risk level is assigned to a permit that allows food processing steps such as receiving, storing, preparing, cold holding, and serving potentially hazardous foods. It does not include hot holding of food. It includes limited preparation steps, such as baking bread, frying donuts, and grilling or toasting sandwiches for immediate service. Examples of this type of operation include on-site baking, making smoothies with raw ingredients (fruit, eggs, etc.), cooking waffle cones or cake mixes. Grocery stores with pre-packaged raw meat, poultry, or seafood are also included. These operations receive one routine inspection and one educational visit each year with the exception of schools which receive two routine inspections.

Risk Level 3 - This risk level is assigned to a permit that allows operations with complex food preparation steps, including thawing, cutting, cooking, cooling, cold holding, reheating, hot holding, and serving of potentially hazardous foods. It includes all operations that provide cooking or hot holding of foods, including meat and seafood markets and mobile trucks. These operations receive two routine inspections and one educational visit each year.

Permit Classification (PE) numbers are listed on the back of the application form and, depending on your level of risk, your classification number will be determined accordingly. General Food Service categories (formerly Restaurants, Food Processors and Taverns) are based upon seating and the risk level involved. Classifications are also listed for bakery operations, caterers, grocery stores, meat/fish markets, bed and breakfast operations, schools, non-profit organizations, etc. Each of these categories has a risk level of 1, 2, or 3 attached to it based upon the type of food service provided.

Note - Owners of small grocery stores with no more than 2 checkout stands and no more than 12 seats, shall only have a single permit and pay a single fee in the highest applicable risk category (i.e. a deli with a separate meat market).

Please feel free to contact your local district Environmental Health Office for assistance in determining your permit classification and risk level.