

Retail Food Establishments Top Ten Permitting Obstacles that Spell Delay

Welcome to the retail food service industry in the State of South Carolina. We are excited to partner with you in your new venture and would like to ensure that you get your permit as soon as possible. To that end, we have prepared a [Quick Guide for Planning a Retail Food Establishment](#) and compiled a list of the top 10 obstacles prospective permit holders encounter as they prepare for their preliminary site inspection. The obstacles noted are consistently observed throughout the state and frequently cause permitting delays. Our hope is that by highlighting them, you will be able to avoid these obstacles and breeze through the permitting process.

#1 Ensure that you have adequate lighting.

Food preparation areas require minimum lighting of 50 foot-candles (540 lux) that is shatter-proof and/or protected. This is to ensure good visibility and food safety should a bulb break.

#2 Gaps around sinks, at counter junctures, in cove base, between floors and walls can't be cleaned properly.

It may seem silly, but you can't clean what you can't get to. Gaps create space for decaying food particles to grow pathogens and attract pests. Sealing gaps ensures that your cleaning methods are effective, and your environment does not harbor food safety inhibitors.

#3 Dual check, back flow preventers on food equipment keep contamination out.

Local building codes require check valves when connecting to water systems. However, water safety does not end there. While many sinks use air gaps to prevent back pressure and back siphonage, ice machines, coffee makers, and drink machines must be protected as well. Dual check, back flow preventers are needed to ensure that your consumable products remain contamination free.

#4 Self-closures on doors and service windows prevent pests.

Keeping nature out of your kitchen is a priority. Doors and windows that close automatically help keep flying and crawling visitors from entering your space.

#5 Smooth and easily cleanable walls and ceilings are key.

While the aesthetics of exposed brick and wood are appealing – busy food service areas collect dust and grime on porous surfaces. The materials used for walls and ceilings must be considered in the cleaning plan and be made smooth and easy to clean.

#6 The size of your sinks and drying rack matter.

All food preparation equipment must be washed, rinsed, sanitized, and dried for safety. Making sure that your largest pots, sheet pans, and Cambros fit in the sink and have a place to dry before stacking for storage is crucial.

#7 National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) certification is required for cooking, holding, and cleaning equipment.

NSF is a non-profit organization with a staff comprised of engineers, microbiologists, toxicologists, chemists, and public health experts who verify the safety standards for equipment used in food preparation. From refrigeration units to dishwashers and a multitude of items in-between, the NSF stamp ensures that your properly maintained equipment is capable of meeting food safety standards.

#8 Equipment must be properly installed.

For cleaning purposes, large equipment must be sealed to the floor or have a 6" gap beneath.

#9 Hot water must be hot.

Water heaters come with variable temperature settings, and they are often set too low. Dish machines have specific settings as stated on their data plate. These minimum water temperature settings must be met for them to function properly. Water at hand sinks must reach 100°F to assist in the removal of grease and pathogens from hands.

#10 Food trucks must adhere to the same regulation as stationary kitchens.

Food trucks can be a great culinary adventure, but it is important to remember that the same rules apply.