

**COMPENDIUM OF CHAPTER 420-3-22  
RULES FOR FOOD ESTABLISHMENT SANITATION**

Subject: Plan Review of

All construction must comply with the applicable building, plumbing, fire and health codes. A final inspection from the Health Department is required before opening. This final inspection will not be conducted until all the other agencies have given their final approval.

The Standard Plumbing Code is the authority recognized by the Mobile County Health Department. This department defers to this authority in all matters concerning the installation of plumbing, e.g. the number of restrooms to be provided (at least one must be installed), the installation of both hot and cold water at dumpster pads and can washes, the size of sanitary sewer drains, etc. A water heater with a minimum capacity of 30 gallons must be provided. A grease trap must be installed in establishments where the cooking process produces grease. The size of the grease trap will be determined by the plumbing inspector except that a grease trap with a minimum capacity of 1000 gallons is required with on-site sewage systems.

In the event the food service establishment is not being connected to public sewer and will be utilizing an onsite sewage disposal system, final system approval must be completed prior to requesting an opening inspection. Final approval of the onsite sewage system will require an engineer's certification and may require the processing of a covenant to the property deed through probate court. Additional information regarding system construction or installation requirements may be obtained by contacting the Health Department's onsite sewage program at (251) 634-9802.

If well water is to be used, a permit must be obtained from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management.

A three-compartment, stainless steel sink must be installed for washing, rinsing and sanitizing utensils. Each compartment must be of sufficient size to completely immerse the largest utensil used. This sink must be equipped with two drain boards or one drain board and one dish table or two dish tables. A two-compartment, stainless steel sink with one drain board may be installed in stores determined to be limited food service.

A utility sink must be installed for disposing of chemical and cleaning waste and for cleaning mops. Where practical and if approved, the utility sink may be combined with the can wash. The latter must be constructed of concrete with a six-inch curb and hot and cold water with a drain to the sanitary sewer.

An area must be provided for the proper storage of mops, brooms, buckets and other cleaning equipment and chemicals. Insecticide storage must be separated from chemical storage either by space or partition.

An adequate number of handsinks must be located in or adjacent to restrooms and convenient to all food preparation, food service and utensil washing areas. Each must be provided with hot and cold water through a mixing valve and each must have dispensers for individual, disposable, hand towels and soap. Handsinks can be used for no other purpose than the washing of hands and must be conveniently located within easy walking distance (12 to 15 feet) from any preparation or service area. A handsink must be located adjacent to the warewashing sink. Access to handsinks cannot be obstructed by equipment, doors or barriers. A trash can must be conveniently located near each sink.

Splashguards must be provided for handsinks and other sinks if the possibility exists for contamination of any food preparation, utensil washing or food or utensil storage areas.

A suitable facility must be provided for washing trash containers and garbage cans. This facility must be provided with hot and cold water and a drain through a grease trap to the sanitary sewer (Standard Plumbing Code). It must be curbed at least four inches to contain wastewater within the facility and be large enough to accommodate the largest garbage container on the premises.

A dumpster or compactor must be stored on material such as concrete or machine-laid asphalt and curbed at least four inches to contain wastewater. The area must be sloped to at least a three-inch drain connected to the grease trap and provided with hot and cold water (Standard Plumbing Code). The dumpster pad may be combined with the garbage can wash provided that it is constructed large enough to easily accommodate the can wash procedure. The drain on the dumpster pad should be placed in a back corner to facilitate clearing the drain of leaves and trash.

Should garbage cans be used in lieu of a dumpster, these must be stored on concrete or machine-laid asphalt. Garbage cans must be adequate in number and size for the amount of garbage generated and must have tight-fitting lids.

Used grease containers must be stored on concrete or machine-laid asphalt. The dumpster pad may be designed large enough to accommodate the used grease container.

The walls and ceilings in food preparation and service areas, waitress stations, equipment and utensil washing areas, restrooms and vestibules, walk-in refrigerators and freezers, storage rooms or any other areas containing equipment that may produce heat or moisture, must be smooth, light-colored, easily cleanable and nonabsorbent. The wall and ceiling finishes must be durable enough to endure repeated washings. Only epoxy, oil-based or polyurethane paints are acceptable. No exposed studs or joists are permitted in these areas, under bars or in cabinets.

Durable, vinyl wall covering, if used, in restrooms, service areas, etc. must be smooth (no raised pattern), light-colored and have no intricate print that would obscure dirt.

All unfinished wooden surfaces such as shelving and cabinets must be sealed or painted to provide smooth, light-colored, nonabsorbent surfaces. Only epoxy, polyurethane or oil-based paints are acceptable.

Floors in walk-in refrigerators, freezers, dressing rooms, locker rooms, restrooms and vestibules, food preparation and service areas, waitress stations and warewashing areas must be constructed of smooth, durable materials such as sealed concrete, quarry tile, terrazzo, ceramic tile, durable grades of linoleum, vinyl composition tile or plastic tile. The juncture between the walls and floors shall not present an open seam of more than 1/32 inch. Floors that are water-flushed must be coved at the floor to wall juncture.

Properly installed, trapped floor drains shall be provided in floors that are water-flushed for cleaning or that receive discharges of water or other fluid waste from equipment. Such floors shall be constructed of sealed concrete, terrazzo, ceramic tile, quarry tile or other approved materials that are durable enough to withstand large quantities of water under pressure and shall be properly coved, sealed and sloped to drain. Floor drains or floor sinks are not to be installed in any vinyl tile or linoleum floors in areas that may receive quantities of water from the preparation process, from cleaning or from equipment drainage.

If flooring materials other than those stated in the Rules for Food Establishment Sanitation are proposed, approval must be granted in writing by the Mobile County Health Department.

Equipment used in food preparation or holding or in warewashing must be indirectly drained with an air gap to prevent back siphonage. This equipment includes food preparation sinks, ice machines, ice bins, steam kettles, bainmaries, warewashing machines, etc. The three-compartment sink and vegetable sink may be exempt if approved by the local plumbing inspector.

Drains in vinyl tile or linoleum receiving drainage from equipment such as ice machines, soft drink machines, etc. must be hubbed.

Floor drains must be installed in restrooms containing wall-hung urinals (Standard Plumbing Code). This precludes the use of vinyl tile or linoleum in these restrooms.

Chases for beverage lines must be sealed.

Exposed utility lines, plumbing pipes and drain lines shall be installed in such a way that they do not obstruct or prevent the cleaning of floors, walls and ceilings and must be enclosed inside the walls, ceilings or floors whenever possible. The installation of exposed, horizontal utility lines and plumbing pipes on the floor is prohibited. Overhead, unprotected sewer or water lines in preparation, service or storage areas are prohibited except for fire extinguishing heads.

Vacuum breakers/backflow devices must be placed on all hose bibs, carbonators, warewashing machines, garbage disposals, or any equipment where back siphonage or backflow may occur or as determined by the local plumbing inspector.

The hand rinse/pre-rinse device on three-compartment sinks or warewashing machines must freely hang so that the head of the spray nozzle is far enough above the flood rim of the sink or warewashing, pre-rinse basin to provide an air gap or an in-line, backflow device must be installed on the water pipe.

Dipper wells with running water and a one-inch air gap between the end of the water line and the flood rim of the well and an indirect drain to the sanitary sewer must be installed where hard ice cream is dipped or utensils such as malt collars or other food contact utensils are stored in water.

Restrooms must be completely enclosed, have tight-fitting, self-closing, solid doors and be mechanically vented to the outside. Vestibules to restrooms are considered part of the restrooms and must meet all requirements for floors, walls and ceilings. Ladies' restrooms must be provided with at least one covered waste receptacle. The number of restrooms is determined by the local plumbing code, but at least one is required.

Food preparation areas must be separated by space or barrier from uncooked meat or seafood handling areas. Seafood handling areas must be separated by barrier or space from meat handling areas.

Storage areas must be sufficiently sized for the intended operation and shelving installed for storage at least six inches off the floor. Walk-in coolers containing chicken or other foods that might produce excessive drainage must have troughs provided to receive the drainage. An indirect drain to the sanitary sewer must be installed in this trough.

All rooms must have sufficient ventilation to keep them free of excessive heat, steam, condensation, vapors, obnoxious odors, smoke and fumes. Fumes, etc. must be mechanically vented to the outside. Commercial hoods must be seamless and have filters that can be removed for cleaning and must be installed over any equipment that produces grease-laden vapors or excessive moisture such as large warewashing machines. Hood systems must be approved by the fire department where required.

Light fixtures in food preparation and service areas, waitress stations, food and utensil storage areas, and warewashing areas must be shielded. A minimum of fifty foot-candles of light must be provided in all food preparation and warewashing areas with at least twenty foot-candles in other areas. Bars or lounges must install rheostats or other means to provide at least fifty foot-candles of light for cleaning purposes.

All outer doors must be self-closing and tight-fitting to prevent the entrance of insects and rodents.

Refrigerators should be commercial with air-flow fans and freezers must be capable of maintaining the air temperature at zero degrees (0°F). Adequate refrigeration and hot food storage facilities must be provided in order to maintain food temperatures at forty-five degrees (45°F) or below or one hundred forty degrees (140°F) or above respectively.

Equipment and food preparation surfaces must be constructed of material that will not chip, peel or crack and can be easily cleaned and sanitized.

Floor-mounted equipment, including shelving, must be provided with a six-inch clearance above the floor, sealed to the floor, or on wheels and not bound by restrictive utility or service lines. Counter-mounted equipment must be provided with a four-inch clearance above the counter, unless these items are portable equipment; portable being defined as light enough to be easily moved by one person. Equipment must be designed and installed to prevent cracks, crevices or spaces that are uncleanable or unreachable.

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Adequate areas must be provided for storage of employees' clothing and other personal items. These areas must be located in a storage area containing only packaged foods or food-service items.

Parking and driving areas must be surfaced with asphalt; concrete gravel or other approved material to minimize dust and must be graded to prevent water pooling.

Washing machines and dryers must be located in a room separated from any food preparation or storage or utensil washing or storage areas except these may be located in a room where only packaged foods are stored.

Only low-voltage insect electrocution devices may be installed. These cannot be located close to any food preparation or service area and must be no more than three feet off the floor.

Samples of proposed finishing materials should be submitted to Inspection Services for evaluation and approval prior to installation in order to avoid any possible misunderstanding regarding their suitability.