

Snow Cone Shop CONVENIENCE STORE DAY CARE CENTER  
SEAFOOD SHOP Candy Store Bar/Lounge  
Bakery Nut Shop CANDY APPLES Cotton Candy  
Restaurant Sandwich Shop Delicatessen ICE  
CREAM PARLOR Coffee Shop CATERING  
Specialty Cakes Fruit and Vegetable stands  
SCHOOLS Concession Stands Cookie Shop Snow  
Cone Shop SEAFOOD STORE DAY  
CARE CENTER  
Candy Store Nut Shop CANDY APPLES Cotton Candy  
Restaurant Bar/Lounge In Bakery Nut Shop CANDY  
APPLES Cotton Candy Restaurant Delicatessen ICE  
CREAM PARLOR Sandwich Shop CATERING  
Coffee Shop Specialty Concession Stands  
Fruit and Vegetable stands SCHOOLS Cookie  
Shop Snow Cone Shop CONVENIENCE STORE DAY CARE CENTER  
SEAFOOD SHOP Candy Store Bar/Lounge Bakery  
Nut Shop CANDY APPLES Cotton Candy Restaurant  
Delicatessen ICE CREAM PARLOR Sandwich  
Shop CATERING Coffee Shop Specialty Cakes  
Concession Stands Cookie Shop Snow Cone Shop  
SEAFOOD SHOP CONVENIENCE STORE DAY CARE CENTER  
Sandwich Shop CATERING

**Starting A  
Food or Lodging  
Business  
In  
Mobile County,  
Alabama**



**Mobile County Health Department  
Inspection Services  
Department of Food and Lodging**

MCHD (Rev. April 2009)



Please log on to:  
[www.mobilecountyhealth.org/](http://www.mobilecountyhealth.org/)  
inspection services for rules and more  
information.

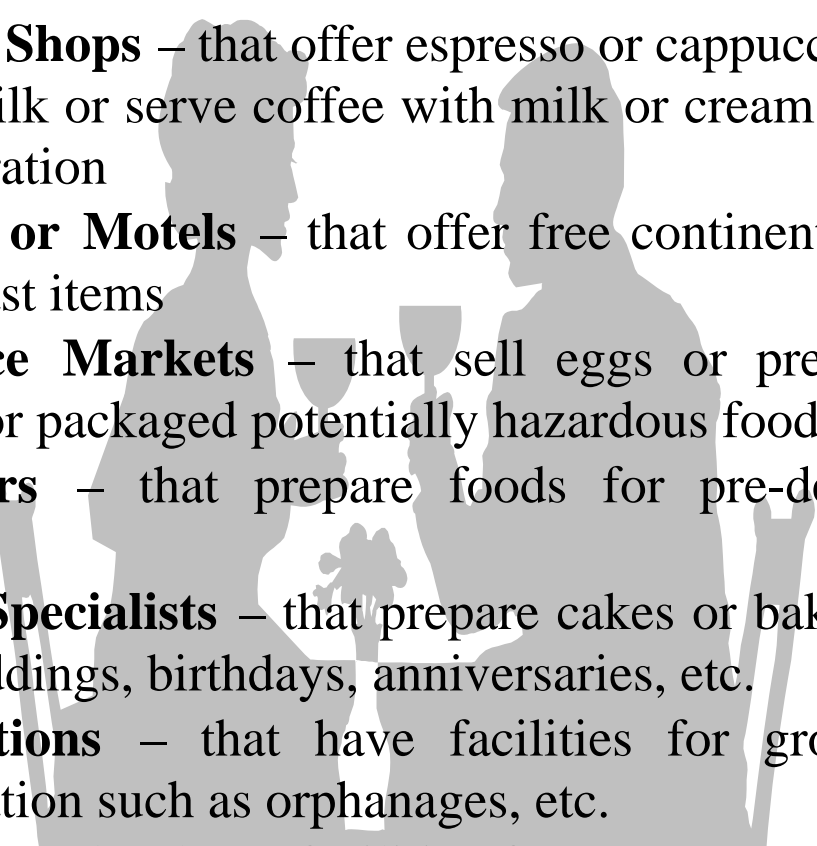
## **INTRODUCTION**

This information is intended to give a general idea and overview of Health Department construction requirements for starting a business that may require permits or operational inspections. The specific design or intended operation of an establishment may necessitate additional construction items to those described here and some limited food establishments or operations may not require every item exactly as described here. Your County Health Department will work with you on the specific construction requirements for your establishment as governed by the Rules for Food Establishment Sanitation, as well as day cares, tattoo parlors, swimming pools, spas and hotels/motels. **Construction plans must be submitted to MCHD before construction begins.**

Please contact the Mobile County Health Department, Food and Lodging Division before signing a lease on an existing building or purchasing an existing business. An environmentalist will inspect the building and advise you as to necessary changes needed to comply with the present code.

## **Businesses Requiring A Food Permit**

- **Day Care Centers** – (children and adults) that prepare unpackaged food items on premises
- **Limited Retail Food Stores** – that offer for sale pre-packaged potentially hazardous foods (milk, luncheon meats, eggs, etc.)
- **Limited Food Service Stores** – that offer for sale un-packaged food items such as hard ice cream, soft drinks from non-self dispensing ice towers, ice packaged on premises, pickles, snow cones, etc.
- **Bars or Lounges** – that serve alcoholic beverages with ice
- **Grocery Stores** – that cut and wrap meat, sell potentially hazardous foods, vegetables, etc.
- **Seafood Stores** – that sell unpackaged seafood
- **Bakeries** – that prepare and sell baked goods
- **Specialty Shops** – that offer for sale items such as unpackaged candies or candy apples, cookies, nuts, popcorn, etc.
- **Commissaries** – that service mobile food units, such as hot dog carts, hot pretzels, espresso, etc. Mobile food units are an extension of the commissary.
- **Schools (public and private)** – that prepare unpackaged food items
- **Processing Plants** – that prepare food in bulk quantities
- **Delicatessens** – that offer sandwiches, luncheon meats, etc. for sale

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- **Temporary Food Units** – that prepare unpackaged food items at special events
  - **Snow Cone Shops** – that offer flavored shaved ice
  - **Restaurants** – that prepare and sell unpackaged foods
  - **Meals on Wheels** – that prepare foods for delivery to disabled or senior citizens
  - **Charitable Kitchens** – that prepare food on a regular basis
  - **Coffee Shops** – that offer espresso or cappuccino made with milk or serve coffee with milk or cream requiring refrigeration
  - **Hotels or Motels** – that offer free continental or full breakfast items
  - **Produce Markets** – that sell eggs or prepackaged meats or packaged potentially hazardous foods
  - **Caterers** – that prepare foods for pre-determined groups
  - **Cake Specialists** – that prepare cakes or baked goods for weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, etc.
  - **Institutions** – that have facilities for group meal preparation such as orphanages, etc.
  - **Camps** – that have facilities for group meal preparation

Facilities requiring operational permits or inspections are tattoo parlors, day cares, hotels/motels, camps. Construction plans must be submitted for all of these establishments.

## THE NECESSARY STEPS NEW CONSTRUCTION

Contact all necessary agencies to determine their requirements and inform them of your plans . Building in an historic district of Mobile has quite a number of restrictions and the City of Mobile Zoning Board may not issue approval. Building on wetlands is not allowed or may require restrictions.

Submit plans to the necessary agencies:

- 1) The Mobile County Health Department, Food and Lodging Division
- 2) Onsite Sewage and Plumbing Department  
(if locating outside the Mobile city limits or in an unincorporated town)
- 3) The City of Mobile Building and Plumbing Departments
- 4) Mobile County Building Department
- 5) Building Department of incorporated towns
- 6) Fire Departments

Wait for plan approval from the Mobile County Health Department, Food and Lodging Division before beginning construction.

Acquire **all** necessary building and plumbing permits before beginning construction.

## **EXISTING BUILDING OR PURCHASE OF EXISTING BUSINESS**

Before signing a lease on a building or purchasing an existing business contact the Mobile County Health Department Food and Lodging Division for an inspection. The building you plan to lease may require more modification than is practical or the existing business may not meet the present code and you may have to spend a great deal of money to upgrade it.

*Contact* the building inspector for an inspection of wiring, wall structure, mechanical, heating and air conditioning, etc.

*Contact* the Fire Department for an inspection to determine if the establishment meets their code.

*Contact* the ABC Board if spirits are served on or off premises.

*Contact* the City and County Business License Bureaus.

*Contact* the Tax Assessor for the City and County.

## **PLANS**

Plans are required to be submitted to the Mobile County Health Department twenty (20) working days prior to beginning construction. This will protect you from buying equipment or installing materials that do not meet Mobile County Health Department requirements. It is easy to correct problems on paper, but can be very expensive to correct problems after construction and installation.

The plans must show the proposed location of all equipment, handsinks, restrooms, storage areas, service areas, self-service areas, waitress stations, utility sink (mop sink), garbage can washing area, warewashing area with the three-compartment sink, etc. Include a site plan showing the entire lot, garbage storage area and any other significant items (for example, grease trap location and onsite sewage disposal if applicable). Include a “finish schedule” of floor, wall and ceiling coverings and a schedule of the proposed equipment, as detailed as possible. Plumbing, lighting and mechanical plans must be included.

Plans will also be required by the Mobile County Health Department Plumbing and Onsite Departments

and the Mobile County Building Department if locating in the county or by the City Building and Plumbing Departments if locating in a city or town.

(An example of a typical set of plans and finish schedule is located at the end of this document.)

## **PLUMBING/WATER SUPPLY**

All plumbing must be installed by a licensed plumber according to local Plumbing Code standards.

Enough hot water for the intended operation must be provided. Water heaters must provide enough temperature rise to furnish hot water to all sinks and garbage disposal container washing areas and allow for general cleaning. The Health Department or your local electric or gas utility can help you with the size of the water heater you need.

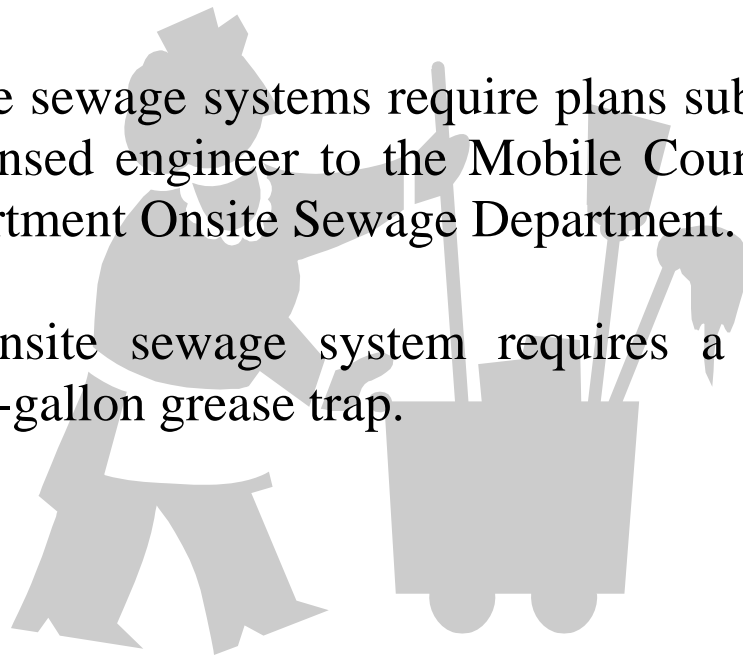
- All plumbing must be enclosed in the walls whenever possible.
- The local plumbing department will determine the size and location of the grease trap.
- Provide vacuum-breakers at each hose bibb, dishwasher, garbage grinder and CO<sub>2</sub> mixing tank or on any other piece of equipment where back siphonage may be a danger.

- Provide enough handsinks to be convenient and easily accessible to all food preparation and service areas, to the warewashing area and all restrooms.
- Provide hot and cold tempered water through mixing valves to all sinks.
- Provide hot and cold water for the garbage can wash and dumpster pad.
- Provide drains on the utility sink (mop sink), can wash and dumpster pad through the grease trap to the sanitary sewer. Locate the dumpster pad drain at the back or back corner of the pad and slope the pad to it.
- Provide indirect drains with proper air gaps for all food equipment requiring drainage (ice machine, ice bin, dishwasher, bain-marie, garbage grinder, etc.).
- The water supply must be from a source approved by the Health Department.
- Well water must be approved by Alabama Department of Environmental Management.

## SEWAGE DISPOSAL

All sewage, including mop water and wastewater, must be disposed of into a sanitary sewer or a Health Department-approved septic tank system.

- The Mobile County Health Department Plumbing and Onsite Sewage Department can give you specific requirements for grease traps and septic tanks in the county and the city plumbing inspectors can give you the requirements for the city in which you intend to locate.
- Onsite sewage systems require plans submitted by a licensed engineer to the Mobile County Health Department Onsite Sewage Department.
- An onsite sewage system requires a minimum 1,000-gallon grease trap.



# STRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS

## FLOORS

Floors in food and utensil handling areas, service and wait areas, storage, toilet rooms, utility sink or can wash areas, bars and self-service areas must be constructed of durable, smooth, easily cleanable material such as sealed concrete, quarry, terrazzo or ceramic tile, durable grades of linoleum or vinyl tile. Concrete floors must be smooth and sealed. Floors must be properly coved at the floor to wall junctures.

If water-flush (hose-down) cleaning is to be used, the floor must be constructed of sealed concrete or tile material, graded to drain and be coved and sealed at the floor-wall juncture and sloped to an adequate number of floor drains. Floor drains are not allowed in vinyl or linoleum floors.

Exposed, horizontal utility lines and plumbing pipes on the floor are prohibited.

## WALLS /CEILINGS

Walls and ceilings in all areas listed under “**FLOORS**” must be constructed of smooth, durable, easily-cleanable material with a non-absorbent finish, well-lighted and light colored. This includes walls under bars and in cabinets.

No exposed studs, joists or rafters, unnecessarily exposed utility service lines or pipes are allowed.

No grooved or rough material is acceptable for walls or ceilings.

Vinyl wall covering may be used in some low splash areas if it is un-textured, is not heavily patterned and is light colored.

No bare wood and no contact paper (including on shelves) is allowed.

Only oil-based or epoxy paints are acceptable.

## **DOORS**

Doors to the outside are to be self-closing and tight fitting.

Screen doors must be of durable construction, self-closing and tight fitting.

## **RESTROOMS**

Doors are to be self-closing, tight fitting and of solid construction.

Waste cans are to be provided and must be covered in the ladies' room unless covered, disposal units for sanitary napkins are provided.

The rooms are to be power-vented to the outside.

The number of restrooms will be determined by the local Plumbing Code, but at least one must be installed in the building.

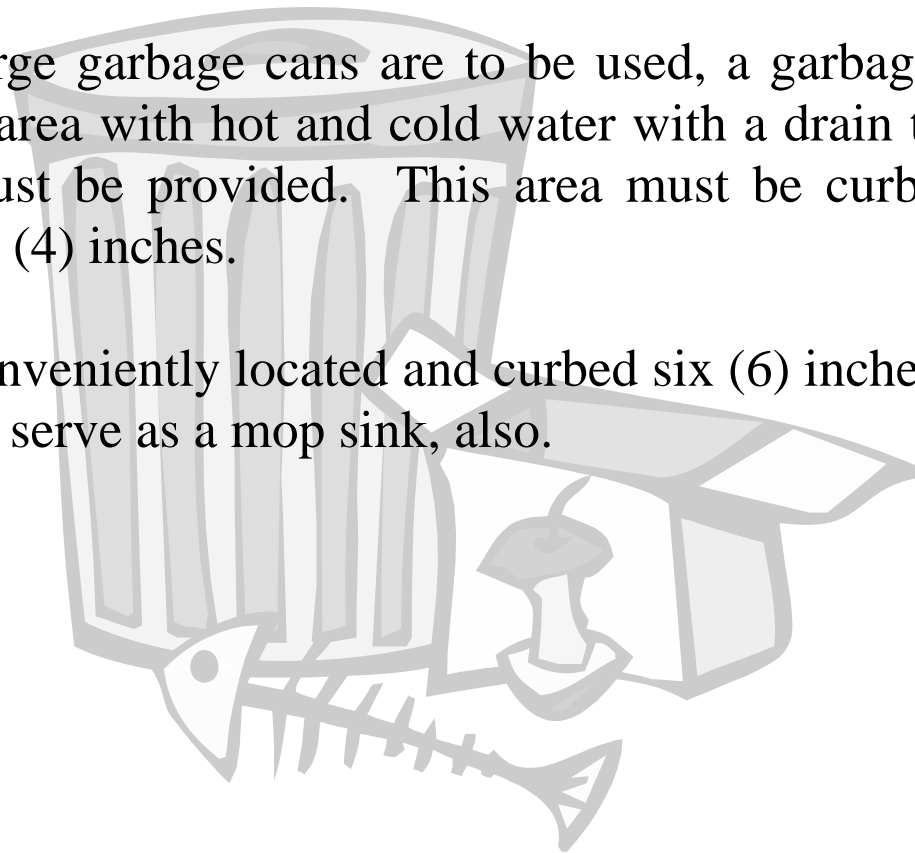
## GARBAGE

Outside garbage containers (including dumpsters) must be stored on a substantial pad of sealed concrete or machine-laid asphalt.

If a dumpster is to be used, a pad with four-inch curbing, hot and cold water and a drain to the sanitary sewer must be constructed. The drain should be placed in a corner and the pad sloped to it. This pad may also serve as a garbage can washing area if it is large enough.

If large garbage cans are to be used, a garbage can washing area with hot and cold water with a drain to the sewer must be provided. This area must be curbed at least four (4) inches.

If conveniently located and curbed six (6) inches, the latter can serve as a mop sink, also.



## **LIGHTING**

At least fifty (50) foot-candles of light on all food preparation surfaces, including cooking equipment and warewashing areas must be provided.

At least twenty (20) foot-candles must be provided in all other areas.

The lights in food handling, storage and service areas and equipment cleaning and storage areas are to be shielded.

## **VENTILATION**

All rooms, including storage rooms, are to have sufficient ventilation to keep them free of excessive heat, steam, obnoxious odors, smoke and fumes.

If greasy fumes or water condensate problem are inherent in the cooking operation, the cooking equipment must be installed under a ventilation hood, with removable filters and power-vented to the outside. This hood must be of seamless construction, preferably of stainless steel and constructed so that birds or insects cannot enter.

If a water condensate problem will be created with a mechanical dishwasher, it must have a hood vented to the outside.

Pipes and conduits must be concealed within the hood structure except pipes for the fire extinguisher system.

The hood and its installation must be approved by the Fire Marshal or Building Inspector where applicable.

## **LOCKERS/DRESSING ROOMS**

Provide enough lockers or other suitable facilities to store employee clothing and other personal belongings (coats, purses, etc.).



These facilities may be located only in designated rooms or areas containing only completely packaged food or completely packaged food-related articles.

If employees routinely change clothes within the establishment, rooms or areas must be designated for that purpose.

These areas cannot be used for any part of the food-handling operation.

Washers may be located in a storage area where only packaged food is stored or in a completely separate room designed to house them.

## **STORAGE**

Provide enough dry storage area for the intended operation.

All items must be stored six (6) inches off the floor.

Shelving must be smooth and easily-cleanable.

Under-counter spaces cannot have open studs.

Provide an area for the storage of cleaning equipment such as mops, brooms, etc.

An area must be provided for the storage of chemicals and cleaning compounds that is separate from food and utensil storage.

Insecticides must be stored separately from cleaning items.

## PREMISES

The walking and driving surface of the exterior area must be surfaced with concrete, asphalt, gravel or a similar material effectively treated to minimize dust.

These surfaces must be graded to prevent water pooling.

## EQUIPMENT

### COOLING

Provide mechanical refrigeration adequate for the intended operation that is capable of maintaining a product temperature of about 40° F or below. ***The maximum cold food temperature allowed is 41° F.***

Refrigerators should be commercial types with an air-flow fan.

Freezers must be capable of maintaining food frozen and should hold the product at an air temperature of 0° F or below.

Each cooler or freezer must have a conspicuous thermometer for periodic (at least daily) temperature checks.

Condensate must drain into the sanitary sewer.

## HOT FOOD HOLDING

If food is intended to be held hot for an extended period of time, then the holding equipment must be capable of maintaining a product temperature of 135° F or above.

Holding equipment cannot be used for cooking or re-warming.

***Most** foodborne illnesses are due to inadequate temperature control – the refrigerator isn't cold enough, the food isn't cooled fast enough, the food isn't hot enough on the steam table and so forth. It is extremely important that your equipment, **ESPECIALLY REFRIGERATION EQUIPMENT**, can keep food within required temperatures.*

## **EQUIPMENT DESIGN AND INSTALLATION**

Each piece of equipment that is not sealed to surrounding surfaces must have enough space allowed to provide for easy cleaning underneath, on all sides and on top. (Generally six inches from the floor for floor-mounted equipment and four inches from the countertop for countertop-mounted equipment.)

Equipment that can be easily lifted by one person or is on wheels and not bound by utility connections is exempt from this requirement.

Equipment must not be designed or installed so that unreachable or un-cleanable cracks and crevices are created.

Enough aisle space must be allowed to prevent clothing from brushing against preparation surfaces and for two people to pass.

## SINKS

A commercial three-compartment, stainless steel sink of adequate size for the intended operation, with two (2) drainboards (so the utensils, pots, pans, etc. can be air-dried) must be provided. Each compartment must be large enough to immerse the largest utensils. Hot and cold water tempered through a mixing valve must be provided to all sink compartments. This sink is to be used for *warewashing* and *food preparation* only.

Handwashing sinks must be convenient to each restroom, the three-compartment sink and each food handling and serving area. These sinks are to be used for *handwashing only* and must be provided with paper towels and soap dispensers.

These sinks must be separated by at least eighteen (18) inches from other equipment or splash guards must be provided.

A curbed floor sink or other approved garbage can-wash area must be provided on premises. Hot and cold water and a drain to the sewer are required.

A floor mounted utility sink for disposal of mop water must be installed. If of proper design and location, the utility sink may be combined with the can wash.

## AFTER PLAN APPROVAL

- 1) Obtain all necessary building and zoning permits.
- 2) Begin construction.
- 3) A Mobile County Health Department Environmentalist will inspect the site at various stages to ensure the installation of approved materials and equipment.
- 4) If alcoholic beverages are to be served you must have approval of the County Commissioners, (if locating in an unincorporated area,) City Councils, the Zoning Board in the City of Mobile and the ABC Board.
- 5) The Building, Plumbing, Onsite Sewage (if not on public sewer) and Fire Department must ***“SIGN OFF”*** on all construction.
- 6) The Mobile County Health Department will give a final inspection only after all other agencies have ***“SIGNED OFF.”***

- 7) After approval by the Mobile County Health Department, applications for City and County Business Licenses may be submitted. The City of Mobile Business License Bureau and the Mobile County Business License Bureau will not issue a Business License without approval of the Mobile County Health Department. The ABC Board will not issue a license without the proper business licenses.
  
- 8) A Mobile County Business License is required for any business in Mobile County. This is in addition to a City Business License.

## **OTHER AGENCIES TO CONTACT**

### **Mobile County Area Code (251)**

Mobile County Health Department Food and Lodging Division  
690-8116

Mobile County Health Department Onsite Sewage/Plumbing  
634-9801

Mobile County Business License Bureau  
574-4800

Mobile County Building Department  
574-3507

Mobile Building and Plumbing Departments  
208-7605

Mobile Historic Development Commission  
208-7281

Mobile Architectural Review Board  
208-7281

Mobile Tree Preservation Society  
208-7091

Mobile Business License Bureau  
2087462

Mobile Zoning Board  
208-5895

The Fire Department/Fire Marshal's Office  
208-7484

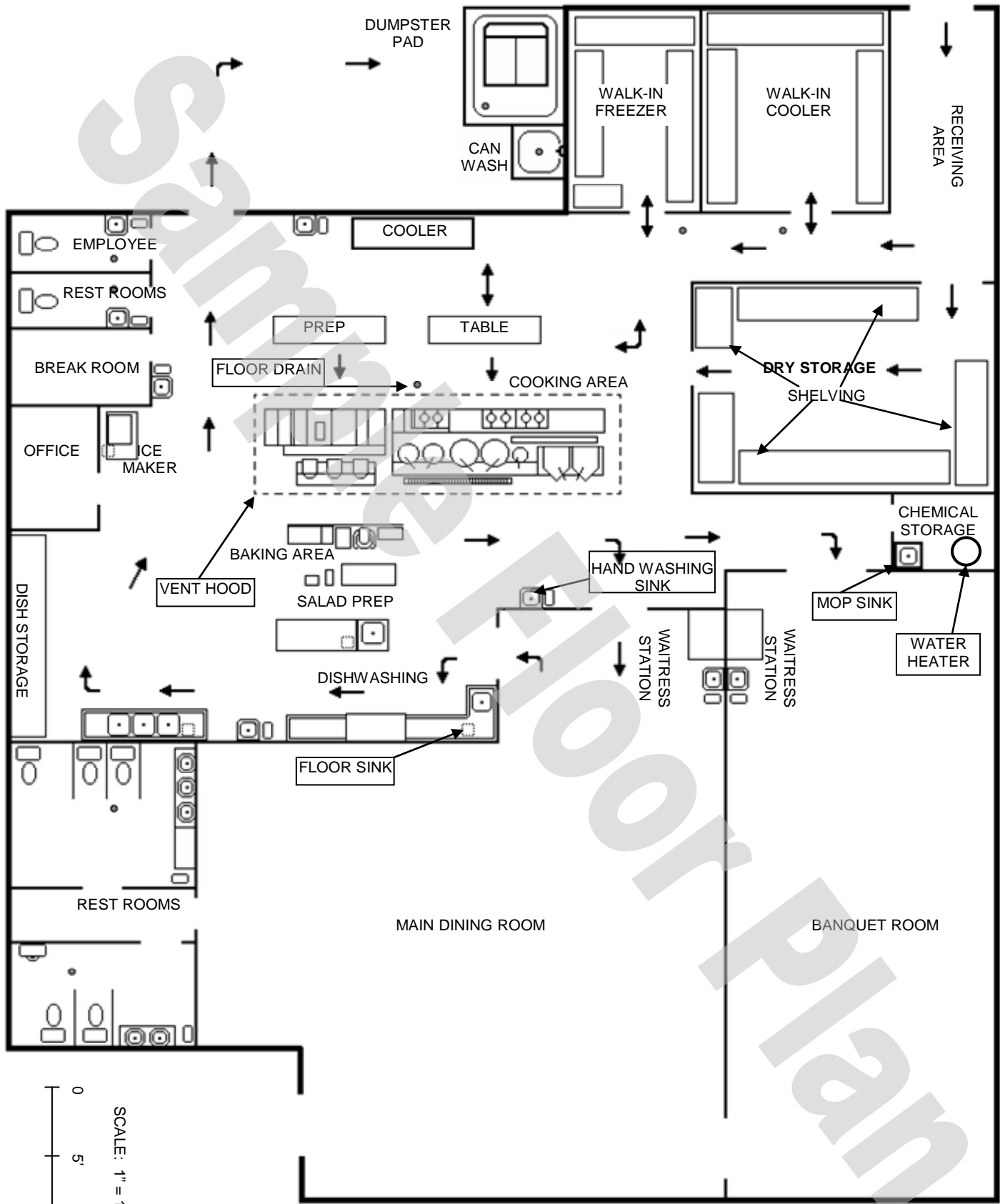
Small Business Administration  
816-3543

Alabama Department of Environmental Management  
450-3400

Alabama Beverage Control Board  
653-0015

The Chamber of Commerce  
431-8623

Your insurance company



Typical Restaurant Floor Plan

SCALE: 1" = 10'  
 0  
 5'  
 10'

| FINISH SCHEDULE            |                         |         |                        |         |                   |         |                        |         |     | NOTES:                                |  |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|------------------------|---------|-----|---------------------------------------|--|
|                            | FLOORS                  |         | WALLS                  |         | BASE              |         | CEILINGS               |         |     |                                       |  |
|                            | MATE-<br>RIAL           | FI<br>N | MATERIAL               | FI<br>N | MATERIAL          | FI<br>N | MATERIAL               | FI<br>N |     |                                       |  |
| FOOD PREP<br>AREA          | QUARRY<br>TILE          | FC      | FRP                    |         | QUARRY<br>TILE    | FC      | VINYL<br>BACKED<br>GYP | F<br>C  | FC  | Factory Clean                         | Walk-in cooler and freezer will be to manufacturer's specifications. Contractor to install |
| DRY STOR-<br>AGE           | QUARRY<br>TILE          | FC      | FRP                    |         | QUARRY<br>TILE    | FC      | VINYL<br>BACKED<br>GYP | F<br>C  | FRP | Fiber-glass Reinforced Paneling-white |  |
| WALK-IN<br>COOLER          | See<br>notes†           |         | See notes†             |         | See notes†        |         | See notes†             |         | WH  | Water heater capacity – 80 gallons    |  |
| WALK-IN<br>FREEZER         | See<br>notes†           |         | See notes†             |         | See notes†        |         | See notes†             |         |     |                                       |  |
| EMPLOYEE<br>RESTROOM       | CERAMIC<br>TILE         | FC      | FRP                    |         | CERAMIC<br>TILE   | FC      | VINYL<br>BACKED<br>GYP | F<br>C  |     |                                       |  |
| EMPLOYEE<br>BREAK-<br>ROOM | CERAMIC<br>TILE         | FC      | FRP                    |         | CERAMIC<br>TILE   | FC      | VINYL<br>BACKED<br>GYP | F<br>C  |     |                                       |  |
| JANITOR<br>CLOSET          | SEALED<br>CON-<br>CRETE |         | FRP                    |         |                   |         | VINYL<br>BACKED<br>GYP | F<br>C  |     |                                       |  |
| DINING<br>ROOM             | VINYL<br>TILE           | FC      | VINYL<br>WALL<br>PAPER | FC      | VINYL<br>COVERING | FC      | ACOUSTIC<br>TILE       | F<br>C  |     |                                       |  |

