

Food Business Fit-Out Guide



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Fitting out a food business

If you're planning to fit out a new food business or renovate an existing one, our Council team is here to help you navigate the requirements and set your business up for success. This guide is a great place to start, providing the key standards you'll need to meet, along with helpful information to support your fit-out process.

Introduction

This guide provides essential information on fitting out a commercial food premises. It is primarily intended for proprietors of commercial food businesses, but may also be useful for builders, architects, and project managers involved in the construction or renovation of such premises.

The first section of the guide outlines the standards that must be met under the Food Act 1984, Chapter Three of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, and guidance from the Department of Health in Victoria. Specifically, the guide is aligned with Standard 3.2.3 – Food Premises and Equipment of the Food Standards Code - <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/food-standards-code/legislation#chapter3>.

The document is divided into two main parts: Requirements, which outline the mandatory standards that must be met, and Suggested Guidelines, offering practical recommendations to support effective design and compliance. This includes useful tips and considerations to help ensure compliance and achieve a functional and efficient food premises.

If you have any questions about what is in these guidelines, please contact the Environmental Health team for further support.

As noted in Food Safety Standard 3.2.3:

The standard applies to all food premises, food transport vehicles and associated equipment, fixtures and fittings used by food businesses (as per definitions in Standard 3.1.1 clause 1). It applies to existing premises, new premises, domestic premises used for commercial purposes, temporary premises and mobile premises. Obligations on food businesses are the same regardless of the type of premises, except for exemptions that may be granted under specific clauses (e.g. domestic and temporary premises may be granted exemptions regarding hand washing facilities). There is no prescribed list of specifications for the design and construction of food premises, equipment, fixtures or fittings to meet the standard. Food operations vary in size and complexity and what is considered appropriate and adequate for a business's food premises and food transport vehicles will depend on the operations.

Premises and Equipment Requirements

Floor Surfaces

For new fit outs, the floors in a food business will want to be:

- Appropriate for the area (fit for the space)
- Easy to clean
- Unable to absorb grease, food particles or water
- Laid so there is no ponding of water
- Unable to provide places for pests to live and hide.

Product	Suitable?	Comments
 Ceramic Tiles with flush Epoxy Grouting.		Tiles can chip or crack over time and it can be difficult to replace on tile. Invest in a good grout cleaner and brush.
 Sealed Quarry Tiles.		See comments above.
 Polished Concrete.		Make sure good quality products are used because sometimes this type of flooring can bubble and flake. It can wear easily in high traffic areas.
 Epoxy Resins.		Can wear easily in high traffic areas or where heavy equipment is used.
 Carpet.		Carpet may be laid in customer areas, but consider how it will be cleaned.
 Floorboards.		Floorboards can only be used in customer areas.
 Poly Vinyl Sheeting (a.k.a. PVC or Vinyl).		When choosing a poly vinyl floor, it is important to install a commercial product suited for food businesses. Must be laid on level ground to be effective.
 Laminated Thermosetting Plastic Sheeting.		A durable plastic that is lightweight and moisture resistant.
 Stainless Steel (Non-slip).		Sometimes used in walk-in cool rooms and freezers. This can be hard to clean.

Walls

For new fit outs, the walls in a food business will want to be:

- Fit for the space
- Durable
- Easy to clean
- Unable to provide places for pests to live and hide.

Things to Consider when choosing wall materials

- Walls in food preparation areas should be sealed, unable to absorb grease, food particles and water.
- What are the food handling activities of the area i.e. will the wall be subjected to heat from cooking equipment?
- How will the walls be cleaned?
- Will the walls withstand damage from equipment such as large baking trays or trolleys?
- What maintenance will be required?
- Is a splashback required?

Ceilings

For new fit outs, the ceilings in a food business will want to be:

- Fit for the space
- Durable and sealed
- Unable to provide places for pests to live and hide.

Product	Suitable?	Comments
 Painted Plasterboard.		This is the most common ceiling surface found in food businesses.
 Ceiling Tiles.		Tiles are not sealed, are not easy to clean and move out of place creating entry points for pests.
 Warehouse Ceilings.		<p>Warehouse ceilings can be difficult to keep clean, so a suspended ceiling may be required.</p> <p>Discuss further with an Environmental Health Officer to determine suitability based on your business activities.</p>
 Other.		If the product meets the AS 4674-2004 Standards and are sealed and easy to clean, then it is suitable for a food business. For example, coated steel in cool rooms and factories.

Lighting

For new fit outs, the lighting in a food business will want to be:

- Adequate Brightness
- Durable
- Easy to clean
- Positioned to avoid shadows and dark areas
- Emergency lighting should be installed to maintain safety if power fails.

Product	Suitable?	Comments
 <p>Shatter-Proof Fluorescent Globes.</p>		The internal glass may shatter, but it is contained within the globe.
 <p>Fluorescent Light Fitting / Cover.</p>		<p>These are commonly seen in food businesses.</p> <p>Over time, these covers can fall off or break and can be difficult to replace.</p> <p>They can also fill up with dead insects and need to be removed for regular cleaning.</p>
 <p>Downlight.</p>		<p>Downlights sit flush with the ceiling, which assists with cleaning.</p> <p>Most downlights are made with a plastic cover, however some older styles still contain glass which may not be suitable in a food business.</p>
 <p>Decorative Light Fittings.</p>		<p>Decorative light fittings usually contain glass, which poses the risk of breaking.</p> <p>They also have a tendency to harbour dirt and grease, and are not always easy to clean.</p> <p>Discuss further with an Environmental Health Officer to determine suitability based on your food business activities.</p>
 <p>Glass Light Globe.</p>		Glass globes without light covers have the potential to break and can cause a contamination and safety issue.

Things to Consider when choosing lighting

- Lighting must be bright enough for staff to safely and effectively carry out food handling, preparation, cooking, and cleaning.
- Lighting should allow clear visibility to detect dirt, contamination, or spoilage.
- Decorative lighting in food service areas requires Council approval—liaise with the Environmental Health Officer (EHO) before installation.

Food Preparation Surfaces

For new fit outs, the food preparation surface in a food business will want to be:

- Easy to clean
- Unable to absorb grease, food particles or water
- Unable to provide places for pests to live and hide.

Things to Consider when choosing food surfaces

- Amount of preparation space required
- Size of benches
- Incorporated storage such as an under-bench fridge or sandwich bar

Product	Suitable?	Comments
 Stainless Steel.		Durable and easy to clean.
 Wood.		Wooden bench tops, even when sealed, are not suitable in a food business as they are not durable.
 Laminate.		<p>Laminate bench tops are suitable, but can show signs of wear-and-tear over time.</p> <p>It is common for the edge strips to peel or chip, exposing the chipboard underneath.</p>

Sinks

A food business can never have too many sinks. It is important that each sink has a designated use, this is to reduce the chances of cross-contamination. All sinks should be connected to sewer or a septic tank system and must be connected to hot and cold water.

Hand Wash Basin

It is critical for a food business to have hand wash basins. Where food is being handled there should be an easily accessible hand wash basin nearby. As a rule of thumb, a hand wash basin should be within 5 metres of a food handling area. Hand wash basins that are not easily accessible include those located behind doors, in another room, below a bench, blocked by equipment, or in a hard-to-reach spot. If your food business has multiple food handling areas, then you may be required to install multiple hand wash basins.

Hand wash basins must be connected to warm, potable water between 20 and 40 degrees Celsius, and be large enough so staff can effectively wash their hands. Sinks must also have suitable taps. These could be:

- Single-lever mixer taps
- Knee operated levers
- Foot operated taps
- Electronic sensor taps.

Double Bowl Sink

A double bowl sink is required for effectively cleaning and sanitising equipment. If you plan to install a commercial dishwasher, then you will only need one sink instead of a double bowl. A double bowl sink must be connected to hot and cold water and be large enough to wash your largest piece of equipment.

Dishwasher

If you are installing a dishwasher, you should contact the manufacturer to make sure the dishwasher's temperature cycles reach a temperature hot enough to sanitise equipment. As an example, a dishwasher that washes at 60 degrees Celsius and rinses at 82 degrees Celsius.

If you have a dishwasher, then you can install a single sink for cleaning as opposed to a double bowl sink. There may be exemptions to this, where a double bowl sink should still be installed - such as when you have items that cannot go through the dishwasher and must be hand washed. Domestic dishwashers are not suitable for commercial food business and may only be approved for small-scale home-based businesses.

Food Preparation Sink

If your food business prepares a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables such as salads, stir fries and sandwiches, then you will need an additional sink for cleaning and rinsing these foods. Fresh fruits and vegetables can carry dirt and bacteria, so it is important that they are washed thoroughly in a separate sink.

Mop Sink

Otherwise known as cleaner's sink, a mop sink is where you can wash your mops and easily fill up and empty mop buckets. Dirty mop water requires a separate sink as it is full of dirt and bacteria that could create a major cross-contamination issue. A mop sink should have hot and cold water.

Jug Rinse / Sink

If your food business has a coffee or bar area, then it may be a good idea to install a jug rinse or small sink for rinsing milk jugs and spoons.

Storage

A food premises must have enough space to store all food and non-food items. All items must be stored in a way that is unlikely to cause cross-contamination. As an example, a cleaning chemical shouldn't be stored next to or above food items as any leaks may contaminate the food. Make sure there is enough clearance to enable you to clean under the shelving.

Items that may require additional storage areas include:

- Allergen-free food items/equipment
- Clothing and personal belongings
- Chemicals and cleaning equipment
- Tablecloths, tea towels and napkins
- Excess equipment
- Other items such as office and maintenance equipment.

For more information on storage read Division Five clause 15 of Standard 3.2.3 Food Premises and Equipment: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/food-safety/australia-new-zealand-food-standards-code>, *Food safety for food businesses | Food Standards Australia New Zealand*

Cold or Frozen Storage

Cool rooms, fridges and freezers should be large enough to safely store all potentially hazardous food on site below 5 degrees Celsius or -15 degrees Celsius for freezers. If the cool room is being used to store beverage gas cylinders, then a gas monitoring and alarm system should be installed

Things to Consider

- How much cold or frozen storage will you need?
- Shelving options and ease of cleaning and maintenance
- Is the location easy for delivery drivers to access?
- Location of external plant and equipment – motors can create noise issues

Dry Store

A dry storage area should be:

- Easy to clean
- Unable to provide places for pests to live and hide.

Things to Consider

- Number of shelf spaces and storage spaces required
- Storage for allergen-free foods, for example gluten free flour
- It is easy for delivery drivers to access
- Any containers used to store food must be a food grade standard

Note: A building permit is required for the installation of a walk-in cool room and freezer. Talk to council or visit our website for more information on Building Permits.

Shelving Options

Product	Comments
	<p>Plastic Shelf.</p> <p>Easy to clean.</p>
	<p>Metal Fridge Rack.</p> <p>Tricky to clean.</p> <p>Racks can get rusty over time, but can be treated with rust products if you are proactive at maintaining them.</p>
	<p>Powder-Coated Metal Rack.</p> <p>Tricky to clean.</p> <p>The powder-coat can wear down and peel back after time.</p>

Bins / Recycling

Storage facilities for rubbish and recycling must be:

- Large enough to store all rubbish / recycling
- Unable to provide a breeding ground for pests
- Easy to clean.

Things to Consider

- Having waste bin lids that can securely close, and lock will prevent pests and limit others from using your bins
- Bins should be screened from the public to prevent appearance and odour issues
- The area should have a drain that leads to a sewer
- If you are planning to wash bins with a hose, consider installing a tap

Note: If your external bin area is some distance from your premises, such as a communal bin in a shopping centre, it is important that you consider where the rubbish and recycling will be sorted prior to being taken out.

For more information on storage of waste, read Division Two clause six of Standard 3.2.3

Food Premises and Equipment: <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/food-standards-code/legislation#chapter3>

Ventilation

Food business must have enough ventilation to effectively remove fumes, smoke, steam and vapour from the food premises.

Things to Consider

- What activities in your food business create fumes, smoke and steam
- The amount of cooking that the business will be doing
- Power capacity of the ventilation system
- Natural ventilation versus mechanical ventilation

Mechanical Ventilation Systems

Mechanical systems including mechanical exhaust canopies, this must comply with the relevant Australian Standards and building code requirements.

Note: Installing a mechanical exhaust canopy requires a building permit.

For more information on ventilation, read Division Two clause seven of Standard 3.2.3 Food Premises and Equipment: <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/food-standards-code/legislation#chapter3>

Water

A food premises must have a suitable supply of drinkable (potable) water. A suitable supply of water is one that can provide good pressure, temperature and volume for all food handling activities carried out. This includes hand washing, food preparation, cleaning and sanitising.

For more information on water supply, read Division Two clause four of Standard 3.2.3 Food: <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/food-standards-code/legislation#chapter3>

Sewage

A food business must be connected to sewer, or in unsewered areas, a septic tank system.

Grease Traps

Often the waste going into the sewer from a food business contains chemicals, grease, oils, solids and other substances. Because of this, most food businesses require a grease trap. Grease traps are managed by the local water authority through a Trade Waste Agreement. If your grease trap location is on Council-owned land, then you will need to speak to Council and apply for a Working Within a Road Reserve Permit.

Prior to registration, Council will require:

- A copy of your trade waste agreement with the Water Authority (Barwon Water); or
- Written confirmation from Barwon Water that a grease trap is not required.

For further information:

- Please contact Barwon Water on 1300 656 007 or visit www.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/water-and-waste/trade-waste; or
- Read Division Two clause five of Standard 3.2.3: <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/food-standards-code/legislation#chapter3>.

Staff Toilets

A food business must provide toilets for their staff. Staff toilets must be:

- Always easily accessible
- Clean and operate properly
- Provided with a handwash basin, warm water, soap and paper towel
- Well-lit and have good ventilation
- Designed to minimise air borne contamination (see note).

Note: To help minimise air borne contamination, a business should install an air lock, provide self-closing doors and locate the toilet outside the kitchen where possible.

Customer Toilets

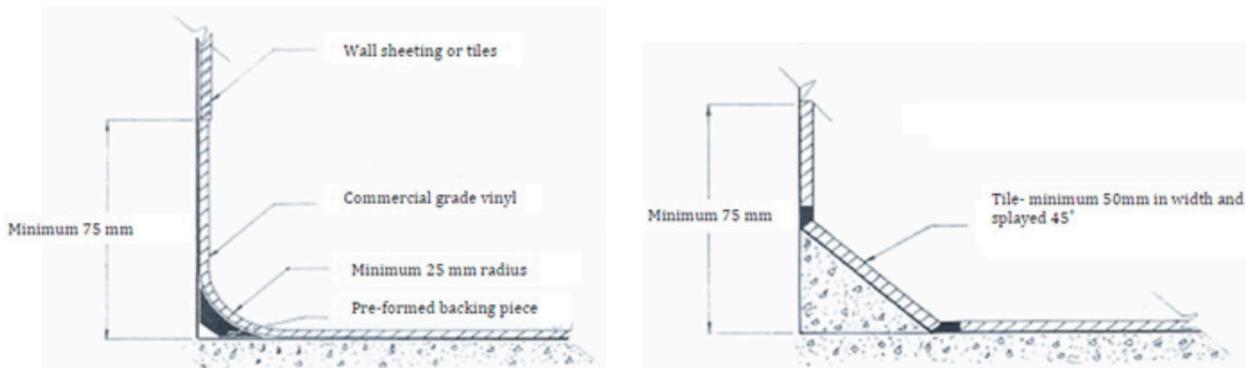
The number of toilets a food business must have, has been outlined in the Building Code. For more information you can contact Council's Building Department.

For more information on toilets, read Division Five clause 16 of Standard 3.2.3 Food Premises and Equipment - <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/food-standards-code/legislation#chapter3>.

Premises and Equipment Best Practice

Coving

It is recommended that food business install coving in food handling areas. It assists with cleaning as it can help prevent grease, dirt and food from building up in corners. Below are two examples of coving.



Floor Drains

Some businesses choose to install floor drains. This allows staff to hose down floors to assist with cleaning. If you install one, it is important the floor is graded properly (at least 1:100). Ensure joins around the drains are sealed well to prevent water leaking under the floor.

For more information on floors, please read Division Three clauses nine and ten of Standard 3.2.3 Food Premises and Equipment - <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/food-standards-code/legislation#chapter3>.

Pest Control

If you have followed this Guide, then your food business should be off to a good start in making sure your kitchen surfaces are free of cracks and crevices which will prevent pest harbourage.

Other structural considerations to have a pest-free premises include:

- Installing air curtains at entrances
- Avoiding bi-fold doors and windows
- Installing PVC door strips or fly screens on doors
- Making sure all doors and windows are properly sealed
- Installing weather strips below doors
- Installing self-closing mechanisms to external doors.