

Wells County Health Department

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Bluffton, IN 46714-1955

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Thinking about starting your own retail food business?

Before you get started:

1. Read over the retail food establishment sanitation and construction requirements. There are many important things to consider before planning out your operation. Private homes may NOT be used as retail food establishments. If you are thinking about starting a retail food business from home, it must be completely separate from your house and may not be for personal use at any time.

The Retail Food Establishment Sanitation Requirements IAC 410 7-24 can be found online at http://www.in.gov/isdh/regsvcs/foodprot/food_laws.htm . The Wells County Health Department has information regarding these requirements, and is located in the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, 223 W. Washington Street, Bluffton, IN 46714, phone 260-824-6489.

If you have an idea for a facility, please submit your intentions in writing for a formal response from the Health Department. A determination of whether or not the proposed operation and facility are acceptable can not be made without reviewing the layout of the facility, and the details of the operation.

2. Contact the Wells County Area Plan Commission (APC) to find out if the proposed physical structure for your business will be allowed, and if you need to obtain a building permit. The APC office is located in the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, phone 260-824-6407.

3. Commercial onsite sewage disposal systems (i.e., septic systems) are regulated by both the Wells County Health Department, and the Indiana State Department of Health. If you plan to put in a septic system for your facility or use a residential septic system already in place, contact the Sanitary Engineering Department of the Indiana State Department of Health, either by email at engineering@isdh.state.in.us , or by phone at 317-233-7177. Information regarding requirements for commercial onsite sewage disposal systems may be found at <http://www.in.gov/isdh/regsvcs/saneng/> . You will also need to contact the Wells County Health Department regarding County permitting procedures.

4. Once you have developed a plan for the facility, begin following the proper permitting procedure. You must file for a plan review through the Department of Homeland Security -Division of Fire and Safety either by mail or by filing online. Applications can be found at <http://www.in.gov/dhs/2754.htm> . Proposed plans, including mechanical schematics, finish schedule, and intended menu must also be submitted to the Wells County Health Department for review. IAC 410 7-24, Section 107 states that the operator of the retail food establishment shall notify the regulatory authority with intent to operate at least thirty (30) days prior to registering under the rule. The Health Department cannot make a determination about whether or not the facility will meet Food Code requirements until all applicable information regarding the operation is submitted.

It is your responsibility to contact the appropriate agencies to ensure compliance with each. In order to be approved for a permit, the establishment must be in compliance with all applicable Fire, Building and Zoning codes.