



PROCEDURE FOR OBTAINING A CANNERY LICENSE



California law requires that a canner of certain acidified foods and/or thermally processed low-acid canned foods (LACF) must obtain a Cannery License, issued by the California Department of Public Health, Food and Drug Branch (FDB), prior to initiating processing operations.

The first step is to have the product evaluated to determine whether it is an acidified food or LACF, and whether a Cannery License will be required. The evaluation is performed by the University of California Laboratory for Research in Food Preservation (UCLRFP) under contract with FDB. Initial sample testing and evaluation is paid for out of a fund established by licensed California canners, for the purpose of determining whether the products must be packed under a valid Cannery License. Therefore, the canner is not assessed a fee for the initial product evaluation.

- For LACF products refer to “Steps for Submission of Low-Acid Canned Food (LACF) Products” and “How to Complete the Request for Official Sterilization Process Form”.
- For acidified food products, refer to “Steps for Submission/Re-submission of pH Samples (Acidified Foods)” and “How to Complete the Request for pH Control Form”.

Upon conclusion of the evaluation, the canner will receive a letter (called an S-Letter or official process letter) from FDB. The letter will indicate whether the product is an acidified food or LACF that must be packed under a Cannery License.

Important Note – if the S letter indicates that a Cannery License is not required, a valid Processed Food Registration (PFR) will be required for manufacture, packing, and/or holding (storing/warehousing) of the product. You can learn about PFR requirements, and obtain an application form from the CDPH website

The process for obtaining a Cannery License is described below:

1. Obtain a Cannery License application form.
2. Submit the fully completed application form and a check or money order, made payable to **Department of Public Health**, to the address identified on the application.
3. All canneries are required to comply with the requirements specified in the Cannery Statutes (H&SC Section 112650 et seq), California Code of Regulations (Title 17, Section 12400 et seq), and Title 21, Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) Part 108. Additionally, canners of acidified foods must comply with Title 21 CFR Part 114, and canners of LACF must comply with Title 21 CFR Part 113.
4. If the acidified food or LACF contains fish or fishery products, the canner will also be required to meet the federal Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) regulations specified in Title 21 CFR Part 123.

5. A pre-licensing inspection will be conducted in order to determine whether the cannery is operating in substantial compliance with the applicable laws and regulations. Please refer to “The Cannery Pre-Licensing Inspection” for details.
6. Once the cannery has successfully completed the pre-licensing inspection, the Cannery License will be mailed to the canner. The Cannery License is valid for two years beginning on July 1st and ending on June 30th.
7. Subsequent to issuance of the Cannery License, there are specific requirements that canners will need to follow throughout the timeframe that the cannery is operating. For information about cannery operational requirements, please refer to the law and regulations referenced above and “Cannery Release Inspections and Retort Operator Exams”