

Obtaining Licenses & Permits

When you're embroiled in the excitement of starting a new business, it's easy to ignore the need for licenses and permits. But forgetting to obtain licenses and permits could come back to haunt you.

Common Licenses & Permits

What if your business succeeds beyond your wildest dreams...then, a few years down the road, gets shut down by the county when it's discovered that you don't have the proper license or permits? Short of a shutdown, lack of a license could lead to hefty fines, restrictions on your operations, lawsuits from suppliers or employees, problems with the IRS...what a headache! This is one situation where an ounce of prevention really pays off. The following are some of the most common licenses and permits business owners may need.

- **Fictitious Name (dba):* If you have a sole proprietorship or partnership and want to operate under a name other than your own (for instance, Carol Axelrod doing business as "Carol's Collectibles"), you can choose a fictitious business name or dba ("doing business as"). The county, city or state may require you to register your fictitious name. Procedures vary; contact your county clerk's office for information.
- **Business License:* Contact your city's business license department to find out about getting a business license, which grants you the right to operate in that city.
- **Health Department Permit:* If you plan to sell food, you will need a county health department permit.
- **Fire Department Permit:* If your business uses flammable materials or will be open to the public, you may need a fire department permit.
- **Air and Water Pollution Control Permit:* Check with your state environmental protection agency to see if any state or city regulations apply to your business.
- **County Permits:* County governments often require the same types of permits and licenses as cities. If your business is outside of any city or town's jurisdiction, these permits apply to you.