



[Food Establishments & Hotels](#)

DIA regulates food businesses such as restaurants, bars and taverns (including those that only serve beverages), cafeterias, delicatessens, catering operations, mobile food units, farmer's markets, temporary food events, hotel breakfast bars, vending machines, grocery stores, convenience stores, bakeries (including home bakeries), food processing plants, and food warehouses. DIA also regulates hotels, motels, and inns (including bed-and-breakfast inns). If you are interested in any of these licenses, please find additional information and a link to apply for a license below.

Please note:

- A license cannot be issued for a home family kitchen, with the exception of a home bakery license.
- The Alcoholic Beverages Division also regulates the sale of beer, wine, and liquor.
- The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship regulates slaughter and processing facilities in Iowa that produce products for wholesale within the state of Iowa, as well as dairy farms, processors, and transporters, and commercial animal feed and pet food.

Check out our latest video on how to apply for a temporary food establishment license!

Expired food and lodging licenses

Governor Reynolds had extended pandemic-related emergency proclamations since summer 2020. As part of these proclamations, license renewal payments were deferred and late fees suspended. However, the last proclamation extending these fee suspensions expired July 25, 2021, and now any outstanding **expired food and lodging licenses must be renewed and are subject to late fees.**

Any license that is more than 60 days overdue must be renewed using a paper form. The website is unable to process these renewals.

If you have any questions, please email DIA at FCS-licensing@dia.iowa.gov. Include your business name, physical address, and license number in the email.

If your business has closed permanently, please contact the office at the same email address listed above with the name of your business, physical address, and license number so that DIA may close your account.

-
- -
 -
 -
 -

Alcoholic beverages licensing

-
-
-
-
-

Meat & poultry regulation

- -
 -
 -
-

-

[Dairy industry regulation](#)

-

-

-

-

-

[Commercial animal & pet food](#)

Applying for a food license

DIA's online food licensing system allows those operating food and lodging establishments, food processing operations, and food-related events in Iowa to easily complete license applications and renewals online.

License renewals can be made online **providing the license is not more than 60 days overdue**. New license applications can also be made online. Both Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) AND credit/debit card payments are accepted. There is a \$1 transaction fee for bank transfers and a 2.5 percent transaction fee for credit and debit cards.

Please note: New applications and renewal applications that do not include the previous year's gross sales will pay the maximum license registration fee.

Licensing guides are available for each license type. For general instructions on submitting a license application for a new business, please [view our guide for new food licenses](#).

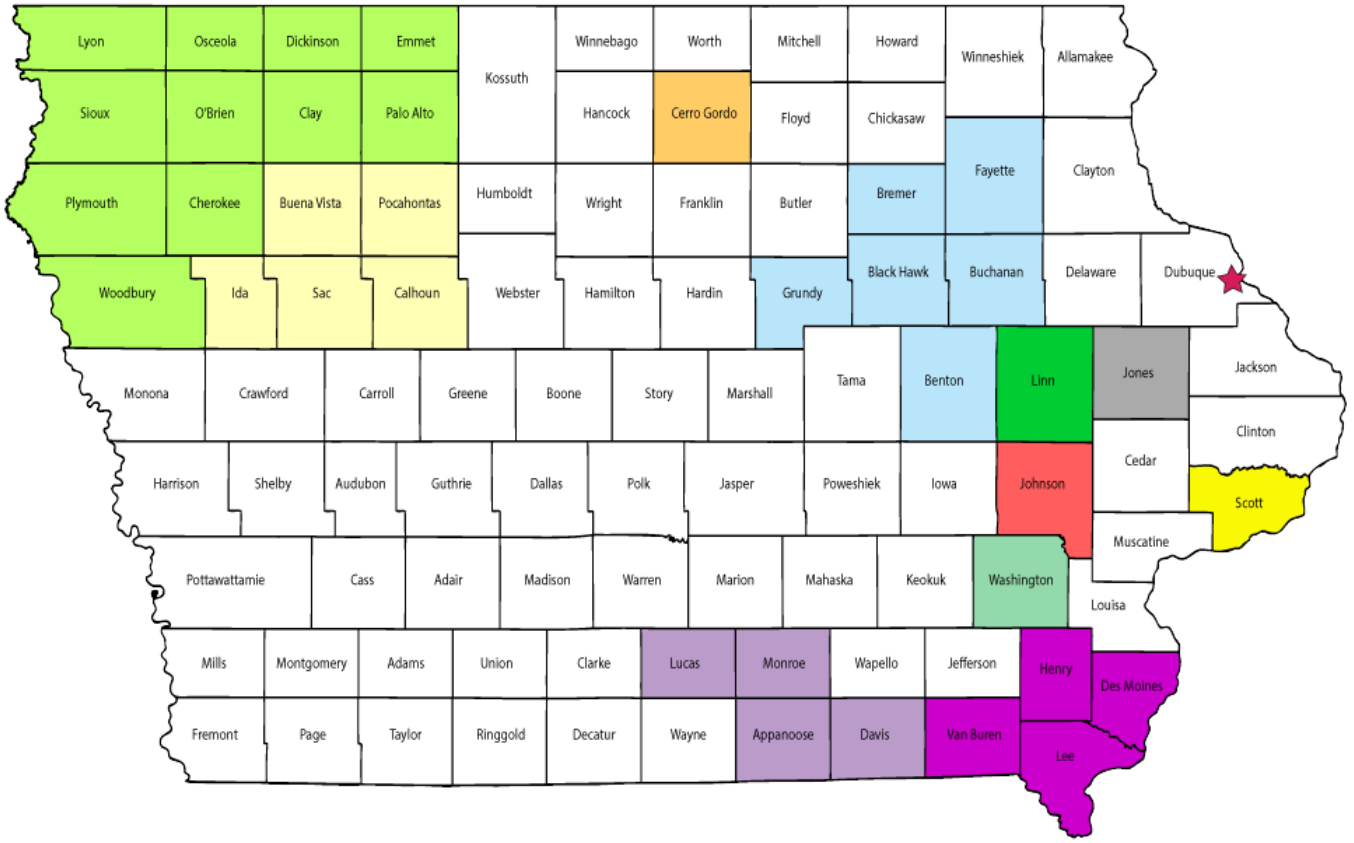
-
- All license applications must be filled out completely. Applications not completed properly will be returned and will delay processing and approval times.
 - A separate license must be applied for each location where food production, sales or service will take place.
 - Temporary food establishment licenses are nontransferable between locations or owners.
 - The approved license will be sent to the email address provided. If no email address is available, the permit will be mailed (please plan accordingly).
 - Each operator of a temporary food stand is responsible for printing their license and bringing it to the event where it must be displayed in the food stand within the public's sight.
 - Temporary food establishment and event license applications must be received in enough time to ensure that licenses can be emailed or mailed back to the vendor prior to the event.
 - Due to the high number of applications received, DIA asks that food vendors **apply at least 30 days in advance** of your event.
 - DIA cannot guarantee that your application will be processed in time for your event if these timelines are not met, or your application contains errors or misinformation. Please note that providing food without a license or permit is subject to a penalty equal to **double the license fee**.
 - When completing your application, make sure you choose the appropriate jurisdiction (see map under "Regulatory Authorities" below). Choosing the wrong jurisdiction for your license will result in a delay when processing your application.

[Apply online](#)

Regulatory Authorities

Food safety inspections and foodborne illness/complaint investigations are conducted by State employees working for the Food and Consumer Safety Bureau, as well as inspectors working for local health departments under contract to the Department of Inspections and Appeals. [See map and contact information.](#)

Image



Food Business Licenses

Event Registration

This license enables a civic, business, educational, government, community, or veterans' organization (and may include athletic contests), to host, sponsor, or coordinate a temporary event with more than 10 food vendors (except fairs, as defined in [Iowa Code Section 174.1](#), and farmers markets). An event does not include a single store's grand opening or sale (i.e., a single store cannot host an event).

Apply online via the [USA Food Safety portal](#).

Read the following Iowa Code chapters to learn more about the regulations surrounding inspections and safety for events.

- [Food Establishment and Food Processing Plant Inspections](#) - Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 481-31
- [Food Establishments and Food Processing Plants](#) - Iowa Code Chapter 137F

This application should be submitted **at least** 60 days in advance of the event.

The license is valid for the duration of the event, **not to exceed 14 days**.

Cost

One-time fee for the event: **\$50**

Requirements

[Click here for event and temporary food establishment requirements.](#)

Farmers Markets

Farmer's markets are retail marketplaces which operate seasonally, principally as a common market for Iowa-produced farm products for consumption elsewhere. These include temporary food stands

and establishments that sell potentially-hazardous foods, and excludes the sale of whole, fresh-shell eggs.

Apply online via the [USA Food Safety portal](#).

[View our guidelines on renewing farmer's market licenses here.](#)

Recommended time to apply is **two weeks prior to the event**, however, the application **must** be received **at least** three days prior to the intended operating date and license issued before the vendor begins operation.

Renewal applications and fees **must** be received prior to the license expiration date. Renewals can be submitted up to 60 days before the license expiration date.

Online applications and renewals are preferred, and are processed faster than paper applications.

Annual Cost

\$150 for each vendor per county. A license must be obtained for each county where the vendor wants to sell potentially-hazardous foods.

Food Processing Plants

These businesses include food processing plants and warehouse food storage locations. If an operation manufactures, packages, labels, or stores food for human consumption but does not sell directly to consumers, it falls within this category.

Apply online via the [USA Food Safety portal](#).

[View the online food processing/food warehouse license renewal guide here.](#)

Read the following Iowa Code chapters to learn more about the regulations surrounding inspections and safety for warehouse and storage operations.

- [Food Establishment and Food Processing Plant Inspections](#) - Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 481-31
- [Food Establishments and Food Processing Plants](#) - Iowa Code Chapter 137F

Application must be received **at least** 30 days prior to the intended operating date and license issued before the establishment begins operation.

Renewal applications and fees **must** be received prior to the license expiration date. Renewals can be submitted up to 60 days prior to the license expiration date.

Online applications and renewals are preferred, and are processed faster than paper applications.

Annual Cost

Based on annual gross sales of food/food products handled at the facility: **\$150-\$500**

New applications and renewal applications that do not include the previous year's gross sales will pay the maximum license registration fee of \$500.

Food Service Establishments

Food service establishments include businesses such as restaurants, bars, concession stands, tap rooms, catering operations, and commissaries. A business falls under this category if the establishment prepares food to be served in individual portions, or if it sells food intended for preparation or consumption off the premises.

This category does NOT include farmer's market food establishments, food processing plants, home bakeries, mobile food establishments (e.g., food trucks), retail food establishments (e.g., grocery stores), temporary food establishments, vending machines, or unattended food establishments.

This license may only be used on the premises for which the license was issued. A licensed establishment may set up a food stand on their own premises **without an additional food license requirement.**

Apply online via the [USA Food Safety portal](#).

- [If you only need a food service license, view this license renewal guide](#)
- [If you need a food service AND retail license, view this license renewal guide](#)

Read the following Iowa Code chapters to learn more about the regulations surrounding inspections and safety for food establishments.

- [Food Establishment and Food Processing Plant Inspections](#) - Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 481-31
- [Food Establishments and Food Processing Plants](#) - Iowa Code Chapter 137F

Application must be received **at least** 30 days prior to the intended operating date and the license issued before the establishment begins operation.

Renewal applications and fees **must** be received prior to the license expiration date. Renewals can be submitted up to 60 days before the license expiration date.

Online applications and renewals are preferred, and are processed faster than paper applications.

Annual Cost

Based on annual gross sales: **\$150-\$400**

New applications and renewal applications that do not include the previous year's gross sales will pay the maximum license registration fee of \$400.

Home Bakeries

These include home-based operations where potentially-hazardous baked goods are prepared and intended to be consumed off the premises. The prepared baked goods may be sold outside of the home or wholesaled to retailers like grocery stores and markets.

Annual gross sales of these products cannot exceed \$35,000.

The home bakery food business classification does not include:

1. A food establishment.
2. A food-processing plant.
3. A home where food is prepared for use or sales by churches, fraternal societies, charities, or other civic or nonprofit organizations.
4. A home that prepares or distribute honey.
5. A home that distributes shell eggs.
6. A home that prepares foods that are not time/temperature controlled for safety, for sale at a farmers market.
7. A home that prepares baked goods that are not time/temperature controlled for safety, sold directly from the residence. This exception does not apply to resale goods. This exception applies only to sales made from the residence in person and does not include mail order or Internet sales.

Apply online via the [USA Food Safety portal](#).

[View the license renewal guide for home bakery licenses.](#)

Read the following Iowa Code chapter to learn more about the regulations surrounding safety in home bakeries.

-
- [Home Bakeries](#) - Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 481-34

Application must be received **at least** 30 days prior to the intended operating date and a license issued before a home bakery operator may sell or distribute food in Iowa.

Renewal applications and fees **must** be received prior to the license expiration date. Renewals can be submitted up to 60 days before the license expiration date.

Online applications and renewals are preferred, and are processed faster than paper applications.

Annual Cost

Set annual fee: **\$50**

Hotels and Motels

This is a license to operate a hotel, motel, inn, or motor inn. Bed and breakfast inns are included in this license requirement.

Apply online via the [USA Food Safety portal](#).

[View the online hotel license renewal guide here.](#)

Application must be received **at least** 30 days prior to the intended operating date, and license issued before the establishment begins operations.

Renewal applications and fees **must** be received prior to the expiration date. Renewals can be submitted up to 60 days before the license expiration date.

Online applications and renewals are preferred, and are processed faster than paper applications.

Annual Cost

Based on number of available rooms: **\$50-\$150**

Mobile Food Units

These include full-service food trucks or food service pushcarts that serve pre-cooked or pre-wrapped foods that require limited assembly.

Apply online via the [USA Food Safety portal](#).

[View the mobile food unit license renewal guide here.](#)

Read the following Iowa Code chapters to learn more about the regulations surrounding inspections and safety for food establishments.

- [Food Establishment and Food Processing Plant Inspections](#) - Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 481--31
- [Food Establishments and Food Processing Plants](#) - Iowa Code Chapter 137F

Application must be received **at least** 30 days prior to the intended operating date and a license issued before the establishment begins operation.

Renewal applications and fees **must** be received prior to the expiration date. Renewals can be submitted up to 60 days before the license expiration date.

Online applications and renewals are preferred, and are processed faster than paper applications.

Annual Cost

Set annual fee: **\$250**

Retail Food Establishments

These include grocery stores or convenience stores. Some retail food establishments may also need a Food Service Establishment License; if your business is a grocery store that also serves hot, prepared meals dine-in or to-go, it needs both licenses.

This license may only be used on the premises for which the license was issued. A licensed establishment may set up a food stand on their own premises **without an additional food license requirement**.

Apply online via the [USA Food Safety portal](#).

- [If you only need a retail food establishment license, view this guide](#)
- [If you need both a retail AND food service establishment license, view this guide](#)

Read the following Iowa Code Chapters to learn more about the regulations surrounding inspections and safety for food establishments.

- [Food Establishment and Food Processing Plant Inspections](#) - Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 481-31
- [Food Establishments and Food Processing Plants](#) - Iowa Code Chapter 137

Application must be received **at least** 30 days prior to the intended operating date and license issued before the establishment begins operation.

Renewal applications and fees **must** be received prior to the license expiration date. Renewals can be submitted up to 60 days before the license expiration date.

Online applications and renewals are preferred, and are processed faster than paper applications.

Annual Cost

Based on annual gross sales: **\$150-\$400**

New applications and renewal applications that do not include the previous year's annual gross sales will pay the maximum license registration fee of \$400.

Temporary Food Establishments

Single-Event

These include food establishments operating for a period of 14 consecutive days or fewer at a fair, festival craft show, vendor show, or other events.

Apply online via the [USA Food Safety portal](#).

Watch this video to learn how to apply for a temporary food establishment license

Read the following Iowa Code Chapters to learn more about the regulations surrounding inspections and safety for food establishments.

-
- [Food Establishment and Food Processing Plant Inspections](#) - Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 481-31
 - [Food Establishments and Food Processing Plants](#) - Iowa Code Chapter 137F

Recommended time to apply is **two weeks prior to the event**, however, the application **must** be received **at least** three days prior to the intended operating date and license issued before the vendor begins operation.

Online applications and renewals are preferred, and are processed faster than paper applications.

Cost

Issued for up to 14 days in conjunction with a single event: **\$50**

Annual Temporary Food Establishments

An Annual Temporary Food Establishment License is an annual license that is valid for more than one event in the county for which it was issued. A separate license application must be submitted for each county where a vendor will operate a Temporary Food Establishment in conjunction with an event. Persons who operate simultaneously at more than one event within a county are required to have a separate license for each food stand.

This type of food business requires a Food Establishment License. You can apply for one using our [USA Food Safety portal](#).

Applications must be received **at least** 30 days prior to the first event at which the vendor intends to operate. Annual Temporary Food Establishment License applications that are not received, processed, and approved prior to operating will require **a single event temporary food license** until the annual license is approved and issued.

Renewal applications and fees **must** be received prior to the expiration date. Renewals can be submitted up to 60 days before the license expiration date.

Online applications and renewals are preferred, and are processed faster than paper applications.

Cost

Annual license for each vendor per county: **\$200**

- A separate license application must be submitted for each county where a vendor will operate a temporary food establishment in conjunction with an event.
- Persons who operate simultaneously at more than one event within a county are required to have a separate license for each food stand.

Requirements

What food can be served in a licensed temporary food establishment?

- Menu items that are listed on the temporary food establishment license application and approved prior to the event may be served in a temporary food establishment.
- All food must come from a licensed and approved source [[Food Code 3-201.11](#)].
 - A nonprofit organization's premise is not considered an approved source unless it is licensed as a food establishment or a food processing plant. If the organization does not have a licensed food establishment, food processing plant, or mobile food unit, all preparation **must be done** the day of the event within the licensed temporary food stand. Menus must be adjusted to accommodate production needs.
 - Ingredients for menu items must be obtained from a licensed and approved source such as a grocery store, a federal or state inspected meat locker, or the food stand owner's licensed food establishment or mobile food unit, or a food processing plant.
 - Menu items may be prepared in the food stand owner's licensed restaurant, food processing plant, or mobile food unit and appropriately transported to the food stand for service.
 - Menu items may be prepared within the licensed temporary food stand the day of the event. No food may be prepared prior to the event unless it is done so in the food stand owner's licensed food establishment, food processing plant, or mobile food unit and noted on the license application.
- Nonprofit organizations **may** serve packaged or unpackaged foods that do not require temperature control from any source. (**Examples:** Baked goods and fruit pies made by organization members.)
- For nonprofits wishing to sell pies that require temperature control for safety, such as cream pies, custard pies, or meat pies - these items must be prepared in or purchased from a licensed home bakery, food establishment, or food processing plant (receipts must be provided). These types of pies may only be cut within the licensed temporary food stand or in a licensed food establishment, food processing plant, or mobile food unit.

*Note: Nonprofit organizations do not include municipalities or property of a municipality.

When is a temporary food establishment license needed?

- When the temporary food stand is operating **off the premises** of a licensed food establishment (i.e., the physical facility, its contents, and the contiguous land or property under the control of the license holder) of your licensed food establishment (or for nonprofits*, off the premises of a facility regularly used by the nonprofit); or
- When a vendor serves, sells, or provides unpackaged food or beverages (including alcoholic beverages) to the public. (**Examples:** Tacos, burgers, lemonade, keg beer, mixed drinks, barbecue, pie by the slice, etc.); or
- When a vendor serves, sells, or provides commercially-prepared prepackaged food or beverages that require temperature control for safety. (**Examples:** Ice cream bars, bottles/cartons of milk, yogurt containers, etc.); or
- When a vendor serves, sells, or provides cut fruits that require temperature control for safety. (**Examples:** Cut watermelon, cantaloupe, and honeydew melons.)

When is a temporary food establishment license NOT needed?

For **for-profit** organizations:

- When a vendor is operating on the premises (i.e., the physical facility, its contents, and the contiguous land or property under the control of the license holder) of a licensed food establishment and is serving food or beverages from the establishment that are within the scope of the business (i.e., the regular menu or a menu preapproved by the regulatory authority); or
- When a vendor sells or provides commercially-prepared prepackaged food or beverages that do not require temperature control for safety. (**Examples:** Bottled sodas, packaged candy, packaged chips, packaged granola bars, etc., that are purchased from a store or food purveyor or prepared, packaged, and labeled for retail sale in your licensed food establishment or food processing plant); or
- When a vendor serves, sells, or provides whole, uncut fruits and vegetables; or
- When a vendor is operating within, and meeting all requirements of a licensed mobile food unit; or
- If a food stand is operated by a minor (i.e., a stand or other facility operated by a person or persons under the age of 18 at which food is sold directly to consumers that is not time/temperature control for safety, or an alcoholic beverage, and that operates on a temporary and occasional basis on private property with the permission of the owner of the property. (Events typically are not set up on private property.)

For **nonprofit** organizations*:

- When the nonprofit vendor serves, sells, or provides food or beverages on the premises (i.e., the physical facility, its contents, and the contiguous land or property under the control of the organization) regularly used by the nonprofit organization for one day per calendar week**; or
- Twice per calendar year a nonprofit organization may serve food to the public up to three consecutive days from their regularly-used premises**; or
- Twice per calendar year a nonprofit organization may serve food to the public from the premises of another nonprofit organization for one day (each time) to serve food**; or
- When operating off the premises regularly used by the nonprofit organization serving, selling, or providing only prepackaged food or beverages that do not require temperature control for safety. (**Examples:** Bottled sodas, packaged candy, packaged chips, packaged granola bars, etc. that are purchased from a store or food purveyor; or
- When operating off the premises regularly used by the nonprofit organization serving, selling, or providing prepackaged food that does not require temperature control for safety, and that is prepared and packaged by nonprofit organization members or family members. (**Examples:** Brownies, cookies, fruit pie, etc. These foods may be prepared in any clean, sanitary location and must be served in labeled packages containing the name and address of the person making the food and the common name of the food.)
- When a vendor serves, sells, or provides whole, uncut fruits and vegetables.

*Note: Nonprofit organizations do not include municipalities or property of a municipality.

**Any food or beverage that is prepared and served safely may be provided by a nonprofit organization that meets these licensing exemptions above.

Unattended Food Establishments

These include any operations that provide packaged foods or whole fruit by allowing consumers to use an automated payment system. These establishments will have controlled access not accessible by the general public, meaning that the location of the operation or the consumers using it will be limited. Examples include self-service snack bars that require payment in offices or within college campuses.

Apply online via the [USA Food Safety portal](#).

[View the license renewal guide for unattended food establishments here.](#)

Application must be received **at least** 30 days prior to the intended operating date and a license issued before the establishment begins operation.

Renewal applications and fees **must** be received prior to the expiration date. Renewals can be submitted up to 60 days before the license expiration date.

Online applications and renewals are preferred, and are processed faster than paper applications.

Annual Cost

Based on annual gross sales: **\$75-\$150**

New applications and renewal applications that do not include the previous year's gross sales will pay the maximum fee of \$150.

Vending Machines

Vending machines are defined in Iowa Food Code as self-service food devices that dispense units of food in packages when a user inserts paper money, coins, tokens, cards, or keys.

If your vending machine dispenses only prepackaged foods that are not time or temperature sensitive (like hard-coated candies, gumballs, and nuts), it is exempt from licensing requirements. Please note that vending machines that fit these criteria may still be inspected by the Department of Inspections and Appeals if they receive a written complaint.

Apply online via the [USA Food Safety portal](#).

[View the vending machine license renewal guide here](#).

- [Contractor Requirements](#) - Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 481-35

Application must be received **at least** 30 days prior to the intended operating date and license issued before the establishment operates.

Renewal applications and fees **must** be received prior to the expiration date. Renewals can be submitted up to 60 days before the license expiration date.

Online applications are preferred, and are processed faster than paper applications.

Annual Cost

Based on number of machines: **First machine is \$50, each additional machine is \$10**

Other Fees: Certificates of Free Sale & Voluntary Inspections

Certificate of Free Sale or Sanitation

Those selling products outside the U.S. will need a Certificate of Free Sale or Sanitation. The certificate indicates the particular product(s) is marketed in the U.S. or eligible for export. The first certificate costs **\$35** (both English and Spanish language versions), and each additional identical certificate requested at the same time is **\$10**.

Certificates are issued only for products regulated or inspected by DIA's Food and Consumer Safety Bureau. Payment is required before certificates are issued.

Complete the [Certificate of Free Sale Order Form](#) online. Then, either pay via credit card and submit online, or print the fillable form and mail with check/money order to DIA. Submit one order form per identical certificate request, regardless of the number of certificates needed.

Please allow **five to 10 business days** for completion. Certificates are mailed via the U.S. Postal Service. For anyone who wishes for their certificates be mailed via express mailing, a shipping label is required. If you have any questions, please contact Brian Church at [515.281.5796](tel:515.281.5796) or exportcert@dia.iowa.gov.

Voluntary Inspection Fee

Premises that are not food establishments may request an inspection. The cost for a voluntary inspection is **\$100**. [Contact us](#) with questions.

Source URL: *<https://dia.iowa.gov/food/business-licensing>*