Iowa Department of INSPECTIONS & APPEALS

DIA offers virtual pre-opening inspection option for new restaurants and other food businesses

DES MOINES – Today, the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) announced that it is now offering virtual inspections for restaurants, grocery stores, food trucks, home bakeries, hotels, and food storage warehouses.

During virtual inspections, business employees and food safety inspectors utilize mobile audio and video technology to work together so that DIA may assess processes and procedures, equipment, and the business' physical environment. If a facility is unable to participate in a virtual inspection, DIA food safety inspectors will complete an onsite inspection using a no-contact inspection protocol developed by the department.

At this time, the virtual option is limited to license approval inspections for new food and lodging businesses. However, DIA's food safety staff are actively working to develop a virtual inspection option for additional inspection types.

"We are committed to safeguarding the well-being of Iowans by helping to ensure the safety of the state's food supply," said DIA Director Larry Johnson, Jr. "DIA's use of virtual inspections allows food safety inspectors to verify that a business meets food safety standards while limiting potential COVID-19 exposure to inspection staff and business employees."

On March 20, 2020, DIA temporarily suspended all routine inspections of hotels, home bakeries, and food establishments, following Gov. Reynolds' issuance of a State of Public Health Disaster Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the emergency declaration, DIA has limited inspections to those related to complaints, follow-up inspections, and pre-opening inspections for new businesses.

DIA Food and Consumer Safety Bureau staff are responsible for administering and enforcing the Iowa Food Code by conducting food safety inspections at food establishments (grocery stores, restaurants, and convenience stores) and food processing plants. The purpose of the Iowa Food Code is to "safeguard the public health and provide to consumers, food that is safe, unadulterated, and honestly presented."

Iowans who wish to learn more about COVID-19 in Iowa, preventing the spread of the virus, and actions State agencies have taken should visit the Iowa Coronavirus website. For DIA-specific actions and guidance, visit DIA's Novel Coronavirus page.

The Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals is committed to protecting the health and safety of Iowans through regulation and oversight of health care, food, and gaming; application of administrative law; and investigation of Medicaid and welfare fraud.

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