**Processed Food Registration (PFR)**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

# What is a PFR

## What is a Processed Food Registration (PFR)?

Processed Food Registration (PFR) is a basic license issued to firms that allows them to legally manufacture, package, label, or warehouse food in California.  The PFR provides evidence to your customers and regulatory agencies that you are licensed and inspected by the California Department of Public Health – Food and Drug Branch.

## What is the Food and Drug Branch (FDB) Processed Food Registration Program (PFR)?

Processed Food Registration (PFR) is a program that regulates general foods such as bakery products, noodles, seafood (except molluscan shellfish), fruit juices, snacks, nuts, oils, processed or packaged vegetables, candy, etc.

# The PFR Process

## What are the steps in processing my PFR application?

### **What are the steps after I submit my PFR application?**

The steps in processing a PFR application are:

* Application (including check for fees) is received by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) mailroom and delivered to the FDB via the MS Code or P.O. Box listed on the envelope.
* After the FDB receives the envelope containing the application and fees, it is given to the Cashiering Desk (CD) to log and then sent to the CDPH Accounting office for the check to be deposited.
* FDB CD gets the receipt back from CDPH Accounting stating it was deposited and the application is then forwarded to the FDB Licensing Desk (LD).
* FDB LD receives the application from FDB CD and starts screening it for completeness.
	+ If an application is deemed complete, it will be entered into the Program’s system and sent to the FDB Inspection team.
* The inspection team receives the application, and it is screened for operational details and placed in the queue to be assigned to an inspector.
* An inspector contacts the firm for a pre-registration “new license inspection.”
	+ The firm **must** tell the inspector if it’s ready for inspection (i.e., not undergoing construction, equipment set up, not undergoing a city/county plan check, or lacking required HACCP documentation when applicable, etc.).
	+ Inspection schedules are based on the priorities and workload of the assigned Food Safety Inspector.
* Once an inspection is completed, the District Office Supervisor reviews the reports and findings, and sends a disposition to the Licensing Desk.
* The Licensing Desk will generate the license, if the disposition is to issue the license, and mail out to the firm to the address provided on the application.

### **What happens after I submit my PFR application?**

Processing of an application is a multi-step process. For an application to be fully processed, it has to clear all the steps on the cashiering, licensing, and inspection sides. Once the firm is compliant with applicable laws and regulations, a disposition as to licensure is made and the firm is notified of the outcome.

Applicants should know:

* Applications are processed in the order they are received.
* Submission of an incomplete application by the firm will cause delays in processing the application.
* Until all required information on the application (including correct fees) is made available to the FDB, the application will be deficient and will not be processed.
* The owner must sign the application and complete the business operator and correspondent information at the bottom of the application.

### **Are applications processed in the order received?**

Yes. Applications are processed in the order they are received as complete (i.e., application does not have missing information and full fees paid). Deficient applications will not be placed in the processing queue until firm addresses deficiencies.

### **If I submit a complete application with correct fees, am I automatically granted registration and license?**

No. Your operation (facility on application) **must** meet and be compliant with all applicable laws and regulations before a disposition for licensure is granted. Once the licensing desk verifies your submission of application and fees is fully complete, your application will be sent for the inspection team to contact you.

## How do I check if my application and fees were received?

### **How can I verify that FDB received my application and check?**

The fastest way to know if the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) received your application is to contact your bank and confirm if your check has cleared. The FDB is unable to provide a contact person or phone number to CDPH’s Accounting Department for inquiries about checks. For more information on processing times, please see PFR Timeframe below.

### **Will I be notified that my application has been received?**

Yes. An electronic notification (from a non-monitored FDB email address) will be sent to the firm email address listed on the application. This happens after your application is entered in the Program’s system, and this automated message is the official notification that your complete application and its fees (check cashed) has been received and forwarded to the district office for a new license inspection.

### **My check was cashed, where is my license?**

A cashed check signifies the Program received your application(s), and it is being processed in the order received. Please note that due to the number of applications received, it could take up to two weeks before you receive an e-mail that states your application is moving to inspection scheduling.

# PFR Application Fees

## Is my Processed Food Registration application fee refundable?

No. Registration fees are non-returnable per California Health and Safety Code, Section 110470. On page 2 of the [Processed Food Registration application](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/CDPH%20Document%20Library/ControlledForms/cdph8610.pdf), applicants are informed fees are non-refundable.

## How is the Processed Food Registration (PFR) fee set?

The registration fee is set based on three major factors:

1. the size of the facility;
2. number of employees; and
3. your firm’s activities (e.g., manufacturing or warehousing).

## How is the Processed Food Registration (PFR) fee used?

The registration fees are received by the Food and Drug Branch, deposited into a special account, and used to cover the operational cost of the Food Safety Program inspection, compliance, and enforcement activities.

# PFR Multiple Locations

## Do I need to register multiple locations?

Yes, each location must have their own license.

# PFR Timeframe

## How long does it take to get a PFR license?

### **What are the typical timeframes for getting my license?**

The **approximate** timeframes are provided below. These timeframes apply to your application if it is fully filled out and the applicable fees have been submitted according to the instructions on the application.

* Application received at FDB.
* Application reviewed by FDB cashiering desk for program assignment and check sent to CDPH Accounting **(2-3 business days)**.
* Payment check is cleared by Accounting and Licensing desk notified. Licensing desk reviews application for completeness. If fully complete, the application is then transferred to the inspection team for scheduling **(up to 2 weeks)**.
	+ **E-mail sent to firm to communicate application has moved to inspection scheduling.**
* Inspection team reaches out to firm to determine readiness and discuss next steps for the inspection scheduling **(2-3 weeks)**.
* Inspection team places received applications in the queue for processing.
	+ Applications are processed in the order received.
	+ If a firm is not ready when contacted by the Food Safety Inspector, the firm’s place in the queue is not held. This is to help other stakeholders that are waiting their turn. To be sure you are ready for your inspection: a [readiness checklist guide](https://author.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DFDCS/CDPH%20Document%20Library/FDB/FoodSafetyProgram/PFR/PFRReadinessChecklist.pdf).
* Inspection completion and issuance of disposition such licensure or denial of application is contingent on FDB workload and readiness of firm (for example); therefore, processing of the application by the inspection can take a couple of weeks or span over a longer period of time.
	+ Complex operations (e.g., those requiring Juice HACCP, Seafood HACCP, Cannery) can take longer to process depending on the readiness of firm once contacted by the Food Safety Inspector.

## How can I get my PFR application processed fast?

### **When should I apply for a Processed Food Registration (PFR)?**

Businesses should submit a PFR application at least 90 days before they want to begin manufacturing or warehousing of food products. This is recommended because processing the application (from date of receipt, through inspection, and disposition) can take several weeks to complete depending on the complexity of the inspection.

### **How can I avoid delays in processing my application?**

Please make sure the application is readable, all required fields are filled out, and the application is signed. If the application is incomplete, it will be returned to your firm and cause a delay in the processing of the application.

### **Is there an option to expedite processing of my application?**

No. Processing of the application cannot be expedited. While FDB understands a firm may be eager to have its license as soon as possible, FDB is serving other stakeholders as well so to maintain fairness to all firms, applications are processed in the order they are received.

To avoid delays in processing an application, it is important that the firm/business submits a **fully completed** application without missing information. This includes fees and any required documentation.

## How long is my PFR license good for?

### **How long is the PFR license valid?**

The PFR license is valid for one year from the date of the food safety inspection.

# PFR Inspection

## What happens if I am contacted by the Food Safety Inspector and my firm is not ready?

If your firm is not ready when contacted by the inspector, this may result in delays in processing your application and your application may be closed. FDB **will not** hold your place in the queue and will move to process the application of the firm next in the queue.

# PFR Deficiencies

## If my application is deficient, will I receive a deficiency notice?

Yes. The FDB Licensing Desk will send a deficiency notice to applicants specifying the deficiencies.

# PFR Status

## Can I check the status of my application?

Yes. However, FDB cannot share information on new or renewal application status if the inquirer is not an owner and/or an approved signer/authorized individual for the business.

If requesting a status of application/renewal, and the check has cleared – please provide a copy of the front and back of the check.

Application/License status inquiries should be submitted to FDBFood@cdph.ca.gov. Due to the voluminous number of e-mails received in this inbox, please allow 2-3 business days for a response.

# PFR Renewals

## Why am I receiving a Renewal Notice?

Renewal notices are mailed from our office as a courtesyto firms approximately 60 days before the license expires. This should give the firm enough time to gather information/testing (if applicable), send forms/fees via USPS as indicated in the submission instructions and receive updated licensing within expiration dates.

Licensing renewals are processed on a flow basis as they are received in our office. Deficient applications will not be processed, and the firm will be notified about the deficiencies.

To renew the license, a firm must submit the completed application form, required documents, and fees to the address on the application form. **It is unlawful to operate without a valid license**, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code Section 112750.

## Will I receive a renewal letter if my license is about to expire?

A courtesy notice to renew a license will be sent to the firm as a reminder,
60 days before expiration. The firm is responsible to renew on time and maintain a valid license. **It is unlawful to operate without a valid license**, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code Section 112750.

# PFR Questions

## What if I have questions about my application?

Please send all questions to FDBFood@cdph.ca.gov.

## What if I have questions about my PFR application and Assembly Bill (AB) 899?

For AB 899 inquiries, send questions to FDBFood@cdph.ca.gov. Include in the email subject line AB 899 follow by subject of your question(s).