



RESTAURANT OWNER RESOURCE — FREE GUIDE

LA Restaurant Plumbing Compliance Guide

Pass Your Health Inspection Every Time

Plumbing violations are among the top reasons LA County restaurants fail health inspections — and they're entirely preventable. This guide covers exactly what inspectors look for, the maintenance schedule that keeps you compliant, and who to call when something goes wrong.

- 1 LA County Environmental Health plumbing requirements at a glance
- 2 Grease trap maintenance schedule (by seating capacity)
- 3 Backflow preventer requirements and annual testing
- 4 7 plumbing issues that fail LA health inspections most often
- 5 Pre-inspection checklist — what to verify the week before
- 6 Emergency contacts checklist for your kitchen

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Inspection Failure Costs

A single failed health inspection can close your restaurant for 1–14 days. Lost revenue plus re-inspection fees typically run \$5,000–\$25,000. Prevention costs a fraction of that.

Section 1 — LA County Environmental Health Requirements

LA County's Department of Public Health (LACDPH) grades restaurants A–C. Plumbing violations can add critical points to your score and trigger closure. Here's what the code requires at a glance.

REQUIREMENT	CODE REFERENCE	FREQUENCY	WHO ENFORCES
Grease trap/interceptor maintenance	LA Plumbing Code §710	Per schedule below	LACDPH + Sanitation
Backflow prevention device	LA DWP Regulation 11	Annual test + report	LA DWP
Hot water at all sinks (min 120°F)	California Retail Food Code §114163	Maintained at all times	LACDPH
3-compartment sink plumbing	Cal Code §114099	Functional at all times	LACDPH
Hand wash sinks — accessible, running water	Cal Code §113953	Operational at all times	LACDPH
No cross-connections (backflow risk)	Cal Plumbing Code §603	Continuous compliance	LACDPH + DWP
Sewage disposal — no overflows	Cal Code §114197	Zero tolerance	LACDPH + LACSD
Adequate floor drains in cooking areas	LA Plumbing Code §411	Clear and functional	LACDPH

Section 2 — Grease Trap Maintenance Schedule

Grease traps must be pumped before reaching 25% capacity (solids). LA County Sanitation District can issue compliance orders and fines for overloaded traps. Use this schedule based on your seating capacity and volume.

RESTAURANT TYPE / SEATS	TRAP SIZE	RECOMMENDED PUMP FREQUENCY	SIGNS IT NEEDS SERVICE NOW
Small café / under 30 seats	25–50 gal	Every 4–6 weeks	Slow drains in kitchen sinks
Mid-size / 30–75 seats	50–100 gal	Every 2–4 weeks	Grease odor from floor drains
Full-service / 75–150 seats	100–500 gal	Every 1–3 weeks	Backup at 3-comp sink or floor drain
High-volume / 150+ seats	500–1,500 gal	Weekly or bi-weekly	Inspectors can smell it at the door
Underground interceptor (any size)	1,500+ gal	Monthly minimum; test quarterly	Effluent turbidity exceeds limits



LA County Sanitation Fines for Grease Violations

Grease discharge into the sewer can result in fines from \$1,000 to \$25,000 per incident under the LA County Sanitation District's FOG (Fats, Oils, Grease) ordinance. A pumping log is required — keep records for at least 3 years for inspection.

Section 3 — Backflow Preventer Requirements

LA DWP requires every commercial food service establishment to have a **reduced pressure zone (RPZ) backflow prevention device** on the main water connection. This prevents contaminated water from back-flowing into the public supply.

Annual testing is mandatory. Testing must be performed by a LACDPH-certified backflow tester. Your test report must be filed with LA DWP within 30 days of the test.

Annual

Backflow Test Deadline

Your device tag shows the test due date. Missing the deadline triggers a DWP compliance notice — and potential water service interruption. Schedule 60 days before due date.



Secondary Backflow Locations

In addition to the main RPZ, LACDPH may require secondary backflow preventers on: ice machine water lines · coffee/espresso machine lines · spray hoses at 3-comp sinks · carbonated beverage dispensers (CO₂ systems require special check valves)

Section 4 — 7 Plumbing Issues That Fail LA Health Inspections

These are the most common plumbing-related violations cited by LACDPH inspectors in Los Angeles County restaurants. Each one is preventable with proper maintenance.

1 Hand wash sink blocked, in disrepair, or lacking hot water

The #1 cited plumbing violation. Hand wash sinks must be dedicated (no prep use), accessible at all times, stocked with soap/towels, and supply hot water $\geq 100^{\circ}\text{F}$. Inspectors test temperature.

2 Sewage backup or slow drain in food prep or warewashing area

Any sewage backup during inspection = automatic "C" grade and potential closure order. A slow drain in a wet kitchen is a critical violation risk — it demonstrates inadequate plumbing capacity.

3 Grease trap overloaded — odor detectable in kitchen

Inspectors walk through the kitchen. An overloaded grease trap produces hydrogen sulfide gas detectable by smell. This is grounds for a critical violation and immediate FOG compliance referral.

4 Cross-connection or potential backflow risk

A hose submerged in a mop bucket, a spray nozzle that can reach below the flood rim, or an unprotected water connection to equipment — all are cross-connections flagged immediately.

5 3-compartment sink drainage slow or missing air gap

The 3-comp sink drain must flow freely; a clogged drain = sanitary violation. The drain connection must have an air gap (minimum 1 inch above the flood level rim of the sink drain). Hose-to-drain connections fail.

6 Water heater temperature below 120°F at point of use

Inspectors test water temperature at hand wash sinks and 3-comp sinks with a probe thermometer. Below 120°F = violation. Causes: failing water heater, long pipe run losing heat, or high-demand with undersized tank.

7 Leaking pipes or plumbing in food storage or prep areas

Any active drip or moisture above a food prep surface is a contamination risk — automatic violation. Check under all sinks in food prep and storage areas. Soft drywall = ongoing hidden leak.

Section 5 — Pre-Inspection Checklist (The Week Before)

PLUMBING ITEMS TO VERIFY BEFORE INSPECTION DAY

- All hand wash sinks:** **HIGH RISK** test hot water temp, verify soap and towels present, confirm sink is unobstructed and dedicated to hand washing only.
- Run all drains for 60 seconds:** **HIGH RISK** if any drain runs slow, call your plumber immediately. Do not wait until inspection day.

- Grease trap smell check:** **HIGH RISK** open kitchen, stand near floor drains. If you can smell it, inspectors will too. Service immediately.
- Check under all sinks:** **MEDIUM RISK** look for moisture, active drips, or discoloration on cabinet floor. Fix any drips before inspection.
- Test 3-comp sink drainage:** **MEDIUM RISK** fill one compartment and drain; confirm drainage is brisk and air gap is in place on drain connection.
- Verify water heater temperature:** use a probe thermometer at the farthest hand wash sink. Target 120–130°F. If below 120°F, increase thermostat setting and recheck after 30 minutes.
- Check backflow device test record:** confirm your RPZ test is current (within 12 months). File is your documentation; have it on site.
- Floor drain covers in place:** all floor drains must have covers installed. A missing floor drain cover is a quick violation point.
- Ice machine water line:** inspect hose connection for drips; verify backflow protection on water supply line. No kinks or improper fittings.

Section 6 — Emergency Contacts for Your Kitchen

COMMERCIAL PLUMBING SPECIALIST

Plumb Inc

(888) 852-0055

24/7 Emergency · CA C-36 #1095692 · Health inspection prep · Grease trap issues · Backflow testing · Drain service

LACDPH FOOD FACILITY PROGRAM

Environmental Health

(888) 700-9995

Inspection questions, grade posting disputes, re-inspection scheduling

GREASE TRAP PUMPING

LA County Sanitation

(800) 238-0172

FOG compliance questions; approved hauler list for grease waste

WATER / BACKFLOW DEVICE ISSUES

LA DWP

(800) 342-5397

Backflow test report filing, water service concerns, meter questions

Commercial Plumbing Inspection — Flat Rate

Plumb Inc performs commercial plumbing inspections for LA restaurants with a written report, camera footage of drains, and grease trap condition assessment. Flat-rate pricing. Scheduled around your hours. Written workmanship guarantee on all work.

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