

Health Inspector

Walk into a kitchen, a pool or a tattoo shop unannounced and decide whether it is safe for the public. You carry a thermometer and the authority to close the place.

TYPICAL PAY

\$90,150

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$55k to \$135k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Restaurant kitchens, pools, schools, septic and well sites, a c...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Biology and chemistry, plus anything that makes you comfortable talking to adults who do not want you there.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
Environmental health is the direct route. Biology, microbiology, chemistry and public health degrees are widely accepted, usually with a minimum number of science credits.
- 3 Get hired as a trainee** 6 to 12 months
Health departments hire graduates and train them in-house, often with a probation period before you can inspect alone.
- 4 Registration exam** Within 1 to 2 years
Most departments require the Registered Environmental Health Specialist credential, or your state's own sanitarian registration, within a year or two of hire.
- 5 Specialize** Ongoing
Food, drinking water, wastewater, pools, housing, vector control, body art. Most inspectors end up with a program area they own.

Pros and cons

- + Government job with a pension and predictable weekday hours
- + Real authority: you can shut down an unsafe kitchen
- + You are out of the office and moving all day
- People are rarely glad to see you and some are openly hostile
- County pay usually sits below the published median for this survey group
- Hot kitchens, rodent droppings, failed septic systems and worse

Optional boosts

Registered Environmental Health Specialist. Certified Professional in Food Safety. HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) training. Body art and pool inspection training.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Occupational Health and Safety Specialists (19-5011.00)
National Environmental Health Association
Food and Drug Administration: the Food Code
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Environmental Health Services

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/health-inspector>

Good to know

The rulebook is a model, not a law

The Food Code published by the Food and Drug Administration is not binding on anyone by itself. It is a model that states, counties, cities and tribes choose to adopt, which is why the same practice can be a...

You are the outbreak's first responder

When a cluster of people get sick, environmental health specialists go into the kitchen to find the environmental cause: a cooler running warm, a sick worker, cross-contamination on one cutting board. The...



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