



Starting or Re-locating your business in Atwater, CA

What you should know about:

- Zoning Clearance
- Business Licenses
- Building Permits
- Backflow Prevention Devices/Water Meters
- Signs
- City Utility Services
- Helpful Contact Information

This handout is designed to assist existing and new business owners and operators to better understand some of the City requirements for obtaining a business license and conducting business in Atwater.

•Zoning Clearance•

Before starting or moving a business the owner should consult the City Planning Department to determine if the business type or use is consistent with the City zoning ordinance. Consulting the Planning Department before signing a lease or purchase agreement is a simple way to avoid potential delays and costs if your selected location is not allowed.

A business license will not be issued for any relocating or new business that is not in accordance with the City zoning ordinance.

For further assistance, please contact the Planning Department at (209) 357-6340.

•Business Licenses•

The Atwater Municipal Code identifies a business as professions, trades, and occupations (including home based businesses), both for profit and non-profit.

The Atwater Municipal Code requires that all businesses (new or relocating) procure a business license prior to carrying out business transactions. A business license is non-transferable; it is approved only for the location submitted on the application. It is unlawful to operate within the City without a license and offenders may be fined.

In order to obtain a business license, the applicant can file an application at <https://atwater.bizlicenseonline.com>, pay the appropriate fees, and meet all other requirements as per the City Municipal Codes. The applicant can also complete a paper application, which can be obtained at www.avenuinsights.com.

For annual license fees or additional information, please contact Avenu at (866) 240-3665 or visit our website at www.avenuinsights.com. You can also email us at muniblsupport@avenuinsights.com for further assistance.

•Building Permits•

A business owner must schedule an On-site inspection with the Building Department and the Fire Department before a business license and/or certificate of occupancy can be issued. This applies to new, relocating and change of ownership of an existing business.

The inspections will determine if the facility and business type meet applicable Building and Fire Code requirements. A building permit may be required for renovations, improvements, or other actions to meet code compliance as determined by the Building and/or Fire Officials.

Any identified conditions must be corrected and the permit fees paid prior to the business license or certificate of occupancy issuance before the business can open.

For additional information on permits and fees, please contact the Building Department at (209) 357-6343.

•Backflow Prevention Devices and Water Meters•

These devices are required by City ordinance on all commercial buildings and/or individual tenant spaces. Before a new business license can be issued, a backflow device and water meter must be installed and certified by a licensed plumbing contractor.

Building and Encroachment permits may be required for installation of these devices. Permit fees will be based on the value of the work being completed.

Building and spaces with backflow devices and water meters must have them re-certified annually.

For further information, please contact the Engineering Department at (209)357-6338, Public Works Department at (209) 357-6370, and Building Department at (209) 357-6343.

•Signs•

The Atwater Municipal Code states that it is unlawful for any person to erect, locate, alter or relocate any sign without first obtaining a Sign Permit from the Planning Department. A building permit may also be necessary. Fees will be based on the value of the work being performed.

The Atwater Municipal Code prohibits the use of temporary signs, portable signs, and other displays (i.e. banners, streamers, flags, "a framer sign," balloons) for advertising purposes. Temporary and portable signs are allowed for special promotional activities only, permitted on a limited basis. Additionally, only a single display may be used at one time. A sign permit is required for all temporary and portable signs and may be obtained through the Planning Department.

Temporary signs are typically limited to a total of 45 days per calendar year, but no longer than 15 consecutive days at any one time. Portable signs are limited to a total of 60 days per calendar year. Temporary and portable signs are not allowed within the public right of way (i.e. sidewalks and streets).

Advertising flyers placed on cars, telephone poles, trees or other locations are not allowed under any condition.

For further information, please contact the Planning Department at (209) 357-6340.

•City Utility Services: Water, Garbage, and Sewer•

The Atwater Municipal Code requires that new and relocating businesses subscribe to City services. These services include garbage pickup, sewer, and water. In some tenant spaces, sewer and water may be provided through master meters or by well and septic systems. In these situations, individual businesses may not be required to subscribe to City services except for garbage collection.

However, if substantial improvement costs are required to septic and well systems, the business may be require at the City Engineer's discretion to connect to City Services.

For additional information on the City utility fees, availability, and other requirements, please contact the Finance Department-Utility Division at (209)357-6310 or 357-6313.

City of Atwater Business License Check List

The City of Atwater Building Division conducts business license inspections for new and renewal business licenses. The following checklist is meant to help guide and does not include all code-related issues that may be seen on site during an inspection. The list is for perspective and existing business(Es) to help facilitate a rapid turnaround for a business license issuance.

****Notice:** All Commercial/Industrial structures built in or after 1992 must meet accessibility requirements as per the State Attorney General's Office Mandate** All other commercial and industrial structures built before 1992 must do their utmost to comply.

A Building Permit is required for any new electrical, plumbing, air conditioning, commercial heaters, walls, etc prior to business licenses inspection.

1. "Exit" signs are compliant (either lighted with battery backup or UL 924 approved photo-luminescent or self-luminous). The signs shall be installed above each EXIT door. Ref CBC 1101.4.
2. Tactile/Braille (Grade 2) "Exit" sign shall be installed on the strike side of the exit door(s). They shall be installed 48" minimum above finished floor. Ref CBC 1117B.5.7.
3. **"THIS DOOR TO REMAIN UNLOCKED WHEN BUILDING IS OCCUPIED"** sign with 1" letters shall be installed on the egress side or adjacent to the emergency egress (exit) door(s). Ref CBC 1008.1.9.3(2.2).
4. Door hardware on "EXIT" doors are of approved "shall have a shape that is easy to grasp with one hand and does not require tight grasping, tight pinching, or twisting of the wrist." Ref CBC 1133B.2.5.
5. Electrical system will be tested to ensure safety by testing outlets, looking for any open or unsafe wiring issues, also make sure that any electrical service panel is properly installed and breakers are marked for use in permanent marker, no clutter/debris or merchandise is blocking service panels, keeping a 36" deep by 36" wide clearing and nothing above panels. Ref CEC 110.26 (A)(1) A BUILDING PERMIT IS REQUIRED FOR ANY NEW ELECTRICAL TO BE INSTALLED.
6. Aisles width: minimum 36" (may need more dependent on occupant load served and if seating is installed.) Ref CBC 1017.2.
7. Minimum width of egress is 36" or as occupant load x .3 determines. Ref CBC 1005.1.
8. All sales counters are accessible—no more than 38" in height. Ref ANSI 904.4.3 Check Writing Surfaces. Where provided, check writing surfaces shall comply with Section 902.3 (28" min – 34" max above floor).
9. All plumbing is up to code and safe, i.e. water heaters have two approved seismic straps, gas lines are in good shape, sink drain lines/water lines are installed correctly and without leaks. A BUILDING PERMIT IS REQUIRED FOR ANY NEW PLUMBING TO BE INSTALLED.
10. All restrooms will be checked for accessibility compliance.
11. If business has its own parking area(s) it will be checked that the proper amount of accessible parking stalls are in place and approved signage and markings are also in place. Accessible parking spaces to be 9'0" wide with adjacent 5'0" wide aisle on passenger side. Perimeter of access aisle to be painted blue. Within border hatched lines at 36" on center. "NO PARKING" to be painted in each access in 12" high letters. Ref CBC 1129B.3.1.
12. There is a certified portable fire extinguisher(s) located in conspicuous locations where they will be readily accessible and immediately available for use and shall not be obstructed or obscured from view. Max travel distance to extinguisher(s) is 75 feet. Also mounted to wall no higher than 5 feet to the top of extinguisher(s). Ref CFC 96.3(1), 906.5, 906.6, 906.7 & 906.9.1.
13. If there is a fire sprinkler system within the building or suite then it will be checked for certification status, and that all sprinklers are unblocked (18" clearance below head) and positive condition of sprinklers is verified.
14. Verify that no structural issues are present within the proposed business or main building.

***This list does not encompass all code related items that may be found during an inspection. It is only meant to give the prospective business owner a positive step forward to know what to expect during a business license inspection.

Please contact your Atwater Building Division with any questions or concerns at:

(209) 357-6346

Or by email building@atwater.org

•Helpful Contact Information•

City Departments:

Police:	Emergency:	911	Fire:	Emergency:	911
	Non-Emergency:	(209) 357-6396		Non-Emergency:	(209) 357-6396
	Business:	(209) 357-6384 or 6385		Business:	(209) 357-6352
Building:	Business:	(209) 357-6343	Planning:	Business:	(209) 357-6340
	Inspections:	(209) 357-6344			
Engineering:	Business:	(209) 357-6338	Public Works:	Business:	(209) 357-6370
Finance:	City Utilities:	(209) 357-6310 or 6313	Business Licenses:		(866) 240-3665
			Free Online Filing:	https://atwater.bizlicenseonline.com	
			Website:	www.avenuinsights.com	
			Email:	muniblsupport@avenuinsights.com	

Other:

Merced County Clerk: Statement	(209) 385-7502	Fictitious Business Name
Merced County Health Department:	(209) 381-1100	Environmental Health
Merced County Public Health:	(209) 381-1010	Medical, Health Permits, etc
State of California Employment Development: employees	(209) 726-5451	StateTax ID, with
	(800) 852-5711	State Tax ID, without employees
State of California Dept. of Consumer Affairs: License	(800) 321-2752	Contractor/Handyman State Board, www.cslb.ca.gov)
ABC (Alcohol Beverage Control):	(559) 248-4219 or (209) 948-7739	
Internal Revenue Service (IRS):	(800) 829-1040	Federal Tax ID Number
Merced County Dept of Commerce, Aviation & Economic Development:	(209) 385-7686	
State Board of Equalization:	(800) 400-7115	Seller's Permit

City of Atwater Fire Department Inspection Form

699 Broadway, Atwater, CA 95301

Phone: (209) 357-6352 Fax:(209)357-6336

Inspection Date:	Business Phone:	Inspection Complete? Yes No
Business Name:	Business Address:	
Emergency Contact Name/Position/Phone:		
Property Owner Name/Phone:		
Inspected by:	Responsible Party:	

The basic items identified by the inspector as INFR are infractions of the California Fire Code. Recheck Date: _____

All infractions shall be corrected immediately. A brief explanation of the items noted below can be found on the next page.

This report shall not be construed as permission to violate laws, ordinances or the CFC.

OK	N/A	INFR	CORRECTED	1. Exits
				a. Remove unapproved locks or latches from exit doors. Flush mount surface bolts not allowed. (CFC 1028.2)
				b. Unlock all exit doors during business hours. Open-able without a key or special knowledge. (CFC 1008.1.8.3)
				c. Remove obstructions from exits and exit pathways. Aisles to exits shall not be blocked. (CFC 315.2.2, 1028.3)
				d. Repair or maintain exit doors and hardware. Exit doors shall not be blocked or rendered unusable. (CFC 1028)
				e. Remove combustible storage from beneath exit stairs. (CFC 315.2.4)
				f. Provide approved exit signs. Visible to occupants & indicate path of egress (CFC 1011.1, 1011.5.1)
				g. Repair lighted exit signs or emergency lighting. Illuminate the path of egress during power failure. (CFC 1011.4)
				h. Provide lighting for exits and exit pathways. Shall be maintained operational. (CFC 1006.1)
				2. Fire Protection Access & Equipment
				a. Provide __extinguisher(s) of a min. _____rating. Tagged by a licensed agency. (CFC 906)
				b. Mount extinguishers where readily available. More than 4' and less than 5' from floor. (CFC 906.7 thru 906.9)
				c. Post signs where extinguishers are not visible. (CFC 906.6)
				d. Portable extinguishers are due for annual maintenance. Inspected & tagged. (NFPA 10, CFC 906.2)
				e. Post address numbers so they are visible from the street. Numbers shall contrast with background. (CFC 505.1)
				f. Remove obstructions & maintain fire lanes. Provide ready access for firefighters. (CFC 503.1.1 & 503.4)
				g. Maintain access to and operation of fire protection equipment. (CFC 508.5.2, 508.5.4 & 508.5.5)
				h. Fire protection systems are due for maintenance or certification. (CFC 508.5.2)
				i. Provide and maintain smoke detectors in operating condition. (CFC 907.2.6.3.3, NFPA 72)
				j. Install approved protective covers on fire department connections. (CFC 912.3.1)
				3. Fire Separations
				a. Remove obstructions from fire doors & maintain proper operation. (CFC 703.2)
				b. Seal unapproved openings in fire barriers. Maintain continuity of fire barriers. (CFC 703.1, NFPA 80)
				c. Keep attic and scuttle covers closed & ceiling tiles in place (CFC 703.1, NFPA 80)
				4. Housekeeping
				a. Remove or store rubbish, waste material, oily rag in approved containers. (CFC 304.1, 304.3.1, 304.3.2, 315.2)
				b. Clean grease fillers and hood/duct system over cooking equipment. (CFC 904.11.6.3)
				c. Maintain min 18" clear space below sprinkler heads to ensure proper operation. (CFC 315.2.1)
				d. Maintain min 24" clear space below ceiling in non-sprinkler areas.(CFC 315.2.1)
				e. Boiler, mechanical & electrical rooms shall not be used for storage. Maintain 30" min. clearance. (CFC 315.2.3)
				f. Move the dumpster at least 5' from building or overhangs; applies to containers 1.5 cu ft & larger. (CFC 304.3.3)
				g. Post & enforce "No Smoking" signs where conditions make smoking a hazard. (CFC 310)
				h. Chain compressed gas cylinders in an upright position, provide protective caps. (CFC 3003.5.2 & 3003.5.3)
				5. Flammable Liquids
				a. Storage of 10 gallons or more shall be in an approved cabinet except retail displays. (CFC 3404.3.4.4)
				b. Use only approved safety cans for portable liquid dispensing—not to exceed 5 gallons. (CFC 3405.2.4)
				c. Discontinue the use of Class I liquids for cleaning—except for Dry Cleaning Establishments. (CFC 3405.3.6)
				d. Store liquids away from exits and exit pathways including retail displays. (CFC 3404.3.3.3)
				e. Discontinue pouring from containers greater than 5 gallons. (CFC 3405.2.4)
				6. Electrical
				a. Discontinue use of extension cords in lieu of permanent wiring. Must be unplugged when not in use. (CFC 605.5)
				b. Each outlet box shall have a cover faceplate or fixture canopy. (CFC 605.6)
				c. Maintain min 36" clearance in front of electrical panel. Min 30" wide & 78" high. (CFC 605.3)
				d. Maintain wiring in good condition & protect from damage. Exposed wiring must be in conduit. (CFC 605.1)
				e. Discontinue use of non-approved multi-plug adaptors. Not for use with high-energy appliances. (CFC 605.4)

Remarks:

If you have any questions, please call (209) 357-6352 or 357-6724 between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday- Friday

Explanation of the Form

The purpose of this program is to promote fire safety and correct conditions which may cause or contribute to a fire. Noted infractions must be corrected to bring the occupancy up to the minimum standards prescribed by the California Fire Code (CFC) and City Ordinance.

1.
 - a. Locked exit doors make it impossible for occupants to escape safely and quickly.
 - b. Non-public exits should still be easily opened without the use of a key or special knowledge or effort.
 - c. Exit pathways free of obstructions and combustibles are essential to ensure safe rapid occupant evacuations during an emergency,
 - d. Well-maintained exit doors and panic hardware provide safe and easy egress from a building.
 - e. Combustibles stored beneath unprotected interior stairs present a fire risk that can endanger a person using that escape route.
 - f. Clearly identified exits enable occupants to quickly and safely leave the building in an emergency.
 - g. Safeguard devices, equipment, systems, conditions, arrangements, level of protection or other features shall be continuously maintained.
 - h. Well-lighted means of egress, including the exit discharge, prevent panic and provide safer egress for occupants.
2.
 - a. Extinguishers shall be provided appropriate to the types of hazards.
 - b. Proper height helps insure ease of use. Mounting helps to prevent damage and to find them in an emergency.
 - c. Where extinguishers are not clearly visible, signs help occupants find the equipment.
 - d. Annual maintenance will assure extinguishers operate properly.
 - e. Proper address is critical to help emergency personnel find your location.
 - f. Fire/emergency apparatus need access to all structures, as well as room to effectively maneuver.
 - g. Fire protection equipment must have clear access and be operational at all times to be effective in an emergency.
 - h. Safeguard devices, equipment, systems, conditions, arrangements, level of protection or other features shall be continuously maintained.
 - i. Properly installed and maintained smoke detectors are essential in alerting occupants to a fire.
3.
 - a. Fire and smoke doors should not be blocked open or obstructed. Doing so allows fire and smoke to easily travel through a structure.
 - b & c. Flame and smoke can easily travel through holes and pipe chases. This allows any fire to extend deep into the building.
4.
 - a. Certain materials, under the right conditions, can spontaneously ignite, making proper storage critical.
 - b. Regular cleaning of the hood, duct, and filters will eliminate the dangerous buildup of flammable grease.
 - c. Sprinklers are designed to require this clearance to establish their spray pattern.
 - d. Heat rises to ceilings first. Combustibles stored there will promote the rapid spread of fire.
 - e. Combustible materials in these equipment rooms often get too close to sources of heat and a fire will likely result.
 - f. Dumpsters are a common fire target for vandals. Moving the dumpster will reduce the risk of a fire spreading to the building.
 - g. Smoking in these areas is considered to be a hazard. Signs must be posted to prevent accidental ignition.
 - h. Compressed gas cylinders shall be restrained. A fall could result in a valve breaking free causing catastrophic failure.
5.
 - a. Flammable and combustible liquids could readily accelerate a fire's spread. Confine these liquids to limit the fire exposure.
 - b. Approved containers for flammable or combustible liquids are designed to prevent the escape of vapors that could ignite.
 - c. Sparks, pilot lights or other sources of heat, can easily ignite these highly volatile liquids.
 - d. The accelerating effect of flammable liquids in a fire can quickly make safe exit impossible.
 - e. Larger flammable liquid containers are difficult to handle, and their contents are easily spilled. Pumps restrict the amount likely to be discharged.
6.
 - a. Misused or abused extension cords are a ready source of heat and potential fire.
 - b. Proper wiring and covers protect people from being shocked and fires being caused by short circuits and sparks.
 - c. Access to electrical panels must be clear to allow for general inspection and emergency shutdown.
 - d. Worn or broken wiring and plugs, or non-authorized modifications, present a fire hazard.
 - e. Non-approved multi-plug adapters or the over use of any multi-plug adapter can result in overheating and a fire.