



## **Guide for New Business Owners**

Welcome to the City of Imperial Beach!

We are a business-friendly community. City staff are available to assist new business owners and encourage new business within the city.

### **Steps to Starting a Business in Imperial Beach**

1. Determine that Imperial Beach is the correct jurisdiction. Any business or individual conducting business within the City, including all rental properties, are required to have a business license certificate.
2. Before purchasing or leasing a business location confirm your business will comply with City zoning, building and sign regulations.
3. Determine a business name and file a Fictitious Business Name Statement with the County of San Diego as applicable.
4. Determine the legal composition of the business (sole proprietorship, etc.).
5. Obtain any special Insurance, Licenses, or Permits for specific business types from the appropriate County or State agency.
6. Obtain a Federal Identification Number and the necessary information to file your state and federal income, state, and employment taxes.
7. Complete an Imperial Beach Business License Application. Make sure you are applying for the correct business license type.
8. Obtain a Signage permit for your business signs.
9. Refer to the Contact List at the end of this guide for resources available to help you throughout the process.

## **1. Determine that Imperial Beach is the Correct Jurisdiction**

Check the proposed address for your business to verify that it is located within the boundaries of Imperial Beach. Please note that any business or individual conducting business within the City, including all rental properties, are required to have a business license certificate. This includes businesses licensed in another jurisdiction but conducting business in Imperial Beach.

The issuance of a Business License does not supersede the zoning or building regulations of the City. It is highly recommended you verify compliance with City Zoning and Building Codes before applying for a Business License. It is the business owner's responsibility to ensure the entity meets all applicable zoning and building codes before conducting business. If you are contemplating construction work at your business, you may need a building permit. If your business is found to be in non-compliance with zoning or building codes, you may receive a citation and/or your Business License may be rescinded without refund.

## **2. Confirm City Zoning, Building and Sign Regulations**

**Zoning** - Prior to signing a lease or contract contact the City's Planning Department to confirm the type of business you plan to operate complies with all zoning regulations of the desired location. Any business proposing to locate within a commercial/mixed-use zone should be in conformance with an allowed use located on the Land Use Table per IBMC Section 19.23.010 ([link](#)) or Section 19.25.020 if the business would locate in the commercial/recreation-ecotourism zone ([link](#)). Note that should your proposed business be located within a residential zone, it is required to comply with the Home Occupations requirements per IBMC Section 19.74.020 ([link](#)). Any businesses proposing to operate as a Home Occupation must include/describe how the proposed business is meeting the requirements in the business license application. For rental business licenses, if you are seeking to rent the unit(s) for a term less than 30 consecutive calendar days, this would be considered a short-term rental (STR). STRs are not permitted within residential zones and are only allowed within commercial/mixed-use zones with approval of the HOA where applicable and subject to various operation standards.

**Prohibited, Restricted, and Regulated Businesses** - Thrift Stores are generally prohibited with few exceptions. Several business types, including but not limited to: Bars or Liquor Stores, Auto Body Shops, Boarding Houses, Tattoo and Body Piercing Establishments, Palm Reading and Fortune Telling, Short-term Vacation Rentals, Adult Bookstores, Tobacco Stores and Churches are prohibited in certain zones or subject to certain zoning, conditional use permits, or other restrictions. Additional regulations are also required for Solicitors, Peddlers, and Transient Merchants.

**Building Use** - Prior to signing a lease or contract for the business, you should contact the City's Building Department to confirm the desired use of your proposed building meets all applicable building codes. (As an example, restaurants, schools, meeting places have specialized building requirements that must be met prior to operation of your business). Building modifications or construction at your business may require a building permit.

Under federal and state law, compliance with disability access laws is a serious and significant responsibility that applies to all California building owners and tenants with buildings open to the public. Prior to signing a lease or contract, you may request a report or inspection certificate from a Certified Access Specialist (CASp) for the premises being leased, if available, from the property owner. For more information on the benefits of engaging the benefits of a CASp, please refer to the [Division of the State Architect](#).

**Sign Permit** - All business signs must be approved and permitted by the City. To obtain a Sign Permit, a Signage Plan or a Comprehensive Signage Plan must be submitted to the City Planning Department to verify that the design is consistent with the zoning requirements (IBMC Chapter 19.52 Signs). After approval of an Administrative Sign Permit Plan, a building permit is generally required to review and approve the proposed installation. Temporary signs (30 days or less) must also be approved and permitted by the City Planning Department. No new signage should be installed without the approved permits. For more information on Zoning, Building and Signage see the Imperial Beach Municipal Code Chapter 19.52, Signs online ([link](#)). It is also recommended to contact City Planning staff at (619) 628-1356 for signage and zoning inquiries or City Building staff at (619) 651-5041 for building code and permit related inquiries. You can also e-mail [communitydevelopment@imperialbeachca.gov](mailto:communitydevelopment@imperialbeachca.gov) for general inquiries.

### **3. File a Fictitious Business Name Statement with the County of San Diego**

The name you choose for your business is very important. If the name you choose is your own legal surname and a one-word description (such as John Smith Roofing) then you are not required to register a fictitious business name. If you choose a business name that does not meet these parameters (such as JS Expert Roofing) **and** your business is not registered with the state, then state law requires you to file a Fictitious Business Name Statement with the County of San Diego within 40 days of first transacting business.

You can file your Fictitious Business Name Statement at:

**County of San Diego, Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk's Office**  
590 3rd Ave Chula Vista, CA 91910  
(619) 237-0502

For more information see the County Assessor website at: <https://arcc.sandiegocounty.gov>

### **4. Determine the legal composition of the business (sole proprietorship, etc.)**

Several legal structures exist in the state of California. Your choice of legal structure will affect your income taxes and personal liability. Most businesses start as a Sole Proprietorship or a General Partnership and are generally the least complicated. Limited Partnerships, Limited Liability Partnerships, Corporations and Limited Liability Companies must register with the Secretary of State. You should contact your own accountant or attorney for advice and assistance in determining the best legal structure for your business. For more information see:

**Secretary of State - California Business Portal**  
(916) 324-6769

<https://www.sos.ca.gov/business>

**5. Obtain any Special Insurance, Licenses or Permits for specific business types from the appropriate agency**

**Workers' Compensation Insurance** - In California, every employer is required to carry insurance to cover the cost of occupational injuries and illnesses if they have employees (other than the business owner). If you have employees (even if you have only one part-time employee) it is mandatory to have workers' compensation insurance. You must complete a Workers' Compensation Declaration Form as part of the Business License application process with the City of Imperial Beach. For more information on Workers' Compensation, contact an insurance agent or:

**State Compensation Insurance Fund**

9444 Waples Street, San Diego, CA 92121

(858) 552-7000

<https://www.statefundca.com>

**Special Licenses and Permits** - The business activity type chosen determines the licenses and permits needed to operate a business legally. Some of the more typical special permits or licenses include those for being a reseller of goods, selling alcohol, selling food, selling goods by weight or volume, daycare services, construction, real estate services, or working with hazardous materials.

To view a list of more than 200 State regulated Occupations and Professional Services that require a special license or permit see the State Department of Consumer Affairs website at: <https://www.dca.ca.gov>

**Sellers Permit** - Businesses selling tangible personal property in the state of California need to apply for a Sellers Permit from the:

**State Board of Equalization**

15015 Avenue of Science, Suite 200

San Diego, CA 92128-3434

(858) 385-4700

<https://www.cdtfa.ca.gov>

**Selling goods by weight or volume** - Businesses engaged in selling goods by weight or volume must register the devices with the County Agriculture, Weights, and Measures Office.

**County of San Diego - Agricultural, Weights and Measures Department**

9325 Hazard Way Suite 100

San Diego, CA 92123

(858) 694-2739

<https://www.sdcawm.org>

**Public and Environmental Health** - Business engaged in selling or handling food products, operating a pool or spa, handling hazardous materials, underground storage tanks, medical wastes, x-ray equipment, or waste handling must obtain a permit with the County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health.

**County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health**

5500 Overland Ave Ste 110 & 210  
San Diego, CA 92123  
(858) 505-6700, Fax: (858) 505-6848  
<https://www.sdcdeh.org>

**6. Obtain a Federal Identification Number and the necessary information to file your state and federal income, sales, and employment taxes**

**Federal Employer Identification Number** - The EIN, also known as a Federal Tax Identification Number, is a nine-digit number that the IRS assigns to business entities. The IRS uses this number to identify taxpayers that are required to file various business tax returns (Income, Social Security, Medicare). Employers, sole proprietors, corporations, partnerships, non-profit organizations, trusts and estates, government agencies, certain individuals and other business entities use EINs. Federal Employer ID numbers can be obtained by completing form SS-4 on-line or calling:

**Internal Revenue Service (IRS)**

San Diego, CA 92188  
(800) 829-1040  
<https://www.irs.gov>

**State Employer Identification Number** - Obtain a State Employer Tax Identification Number if your business will have employees (other than owner):

**Employment Development Department (EDD) – Tax Office**

10636 Scripps Summit Court, Suite 202  
San Diego, CA 92131  
(888) 745-3886  
[https://edd.ca.gov/en/Payroll\\_Taxes/e-Services\\_for\\_Business](https://edd.ca.gov/en/Payroll_Taxes/e-Services_for_Business)

**State Taxes** - For state taxes visit the California Tax Information Center website that is sponsored by California's tax agencies (Board of Equalization, Employment Development Department, and Franchise Tax Board) at: <https://www.taxes.ca.gov> or <https://www.taxes.ca.gov/doingbus.html>

Or contact:

**CA Board of Equalization**

(800) 400-7115  
<https://www.boe.ca.gov>

**EDD**

(888) 745-3886  
<https://www.edd.ca.gov>

**Franchise Tax Board**

(800) 852-5711  
<https://www.ftb.ca.gov>

**Federal Taxes** - For Federal tax information and a copy of the: Small Business Resource Guide” an invaluable tool to help business owners understand the basics contact:

**Internal Revenue Service**

(800) 829-1040

[www.irs.gov/businesses/small-self-employed](http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-self-employed)

## **7. Complete an Imperial Beach Business License Application. Make sure you are applying for the correct business license type**

All businesses or individuals conducting business within the City limits must have a current business license. This includes businesses licensed in another jurisdiction but conducting business in Imperial Beach, all rental properties including single-family homes that are rented, and businesses conducted out of a home or apartment. Applications for a Business License Certificate can be obtained from the City at [www.imperialbeachca.gov](http://www.imperialbeachca.gov).

A City Business License application is required to be filed for a new business, change of address for an existing business, change of ownership, change of business name, change of tax status and change of rental units. Once a business has a valid Business License, the City will send an annual renewal notice to the owner or billing representative using the email address on file. Applications can be submitted on the City’s website at [www.imperialbeachca.gov](http://www.imperialbeachca.gov).

Please make sure to apply for the correct business license type:

- **IB Commercial** – A business with a commercial location address located within the City of Imperial Beach.
- **IB Home Based Business License** – A business that is conducted in your home with address within the City of Imperial Beach.
- **Regulatory** – A merchant or a business subject to additional regulations. Examples include massage parlors, peddler and telemarketers, cabarets and live entertainment, or bingo games.
- **Out of City** – a business based outside Imperial Beach but conducting business within City limits.
- **Property Rental**
  - o **Single Family** – A residential rental with one dwelling on a parcel.
  - o **Duplex** – A residential rental with two dwellings on a parcel. They do not need to be attached.
  - o **Multi Family** – A residential rental with more than 3 attached dwellings on a parcel.
  - o **Short Term** – A residential rental lasting less than 30 days.

Applications can be submitted on the City’s website at [www.imperialbeachca.gov](http://www.imperialbeachca.gov).

*Note that depending on the type of business, your property may require an inspection by the City's Fire or Building staff.*

## **8. Obtain a Signage permit for your business signs**

**Sign Permit** - All business signs must be approved and permitted by the City. In general, sign size is restricted to 1 square foot of sign for each linear foot of building wall face in commercial zones and a maximum of 32 square feet in certain higher density residential zones. Window signs are generally allowed in no more than 35% of total window area in commercial zones. The following types of signs are not permitted in the City: pole signs, roof signs, balloons and inflatable signs, beacons, billboards, pennants, portable signs, animated signs, and signs with changeable copy. Applications for a Sign Permit can be submitted on the City's website at [www.imperialbeachca.gov](http://www.imperialbeachca.gov).

**City of Imperial Beach Planning Department**  
825 Imperial Beach Blvd.  
Imperial Beach, CA 91932  
(619) 628-1356  
communitydevelopment@imperialbeachca.gov

*The information provided in this guide is intended only to summarize applicable Federal, State, County and local codes and regulations. For specific information contact each agency directly or refer to their specific codes and regulations.*

## **9. Contact List of resources available to new businesses**

<b>CITY RESOURCES</b>	<b>PHONE</b>	<b>CONTACT</b>
<b>Business License Application</b> Finance Department	(619) 628-1423	<a href="https://imperialbeachca.gov">https://imperialbeachca.gov</a> buslicense@imperialbeachca.gov
<b>Zoning Regulations</b> Planning Department	(619) 628-1356	<a href="https://imperialbeachca.gov">https://imperialbeachca.gov</a> communitydevelopment@imperialbeachca.gov
<b>Sign Permit Regulations</b> Planning Department	(619) 628-1356	<a href="https://imperialbeachca.gov">https://imperialbeachca.gov</a> communitydevelopment@imperialbeachca.gov
Building Department	(619) 651-5041	<a href="https://imperialbeachca.gov">https://imperialbeachca.gov</a> communitydevelopment@imperialbeachca.gov
<b>Property Inspection</b> Fire Prevention	(619) 628-1392	<a href="https://imperialbeachca.gov">https://imperialbeachca.gov</a>

NEW BUSINESS RESOURCES	AGENCY	CONTACT
Fictitious Business Name	County of San Diego Recorder	(619) 237-0502 <a href="https://arcc.sandiegocounty.gov">https://arcc.sandiegocounty.gov</a> I want to...Fictitious Business Name
Workers' Compensation Insurance	State Compensation Insurance Fund	(858) 552-7000 10105 Pacific Heights Blvd. San Diego, CA 92121 <a href="https://www.statefundca.com">https://www.statefundca.com</a>
Sellers Permit	CA Board of Equalization	(858) 385-4700 15015 Avenue of Science, Suite 200 San Diego, CA 92128-3434 <a href="https://www.cdtfa.ca.gov">https://www.cdtfa.ca.gov</a>
Alcohol Beverage License	CA Dept. of ABC San Diego District Office	(619) 525-4064 1350 Front St. Rm. 5056 San Diego, CA 92101 <a href="https://www.abc.ca.gov">https://www.abc.ca.gov</a>
Selling Goods by Weight or Volume	County of SD - Agricultural, Weights and Measures Dept.	(858) 694-2739 9325 Hazard Way Suite 100 San Diego, CA 92123 <a href="https://www.sdcawm.org">https://www.sdcawm.org</a>
Handling Food or Hazardous Materials	County of SD - Dept. of Environmental Health	(858) 505-6700 5500 Overland Ave Ste 110 & 210 San Diego, CA 92123 <a href="https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/deh">https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/deh</a>
Federal Identification Number & Taxes	Internal Revenue Service	(800) 829-4933 <a href="https://www.irs.gov">https://www.irs.gov</a>
State Employer Identification Number & Taxes	Employment Development Department	10636 Scripps Summit Court, Suite 202 San Diego, CA 92131 (888) 745-3886 <a href="https://edd.ca.gov">https://edd.ca.gov</a>
State Taxes	State Board of Equalization	(800) 400-7115 <a href="https://www.taxes.ca.gov/doingbus.html">https://www.taxes.ca.gov/doingbus.html</a>
State Taxes	Franchise Tax Board	(800) 852-5711 <a href="https://www.ftb.ca.gov">https://www.ftb.ca.gov</a>

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES	PHONE	CONTACT
Sheriff Dept. Imperial Beach Station	(619) 498-2400	845 Imperial Beach Blvd. <a href="https://www.sdsheriff.gov">https://www.sdsheriff.gov</a>
Imperial Beach Chamber of Commerce	(619) 424-3151	<a href="https://www.ib-chamber.com">https://www.ib-chamber.com</a>
South County Economic Development Corp.	(619) 424-5143	780 Bay Blvd. #204 Chula Vista, 91910 <a href="https://southcountyedc.com">https://southcountyedc.com</a>
SCORE (Small Business Counselors)	(858) 283-1100	8825 Aero Drive, #101 San Diego, 92123 <a href="https://sandiego.score.org">https://sandiego.score.org</a>
Small Business Development Center Network	(619) 482-6391	880 National City Blvd. National City, CA 91950 <a href="https://sdivsbdc.org">https://sdivsbdc.org</a>
San Diego Gas & Electric	(800) 411-7343 electric (800) 611-7343 gas	<a href="https://www.sdge.com">https://www.sdge.com</a>
CAL-AM Water	(888) 237-1333	<a href="https://www.amwater.com">https://www.amwater.com</a>
EDCO Corp. (Trash/Recycling)	(619) 287-7555	<a href="https://www.edcodisposal.com">https://www.edcodisposal.com</a>