

LOSS CONTROL

Policyholder Training Series

Policy Training Series (PTS) Important Points:

- Health inspectors enforce food codes and educate staff.
- Critical inspection items are directly related to foodborne illness.
- Non-critical inspection items do not relate to foodborne illness, but can still be serious problems.
- Health inspectors focus on potentially hazardous foods that require precise time and temperature maintenance.
- Time and temperature records must be made available.
- Management and employees must demonstrate knowledge of health codes, food safety practices, safe food handling and preparation.
- Employee illness must be closely monitored.

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Things Health Inspectors Look For

The health inspector is not there to shut a restaurant down, but to both enforce local food codes and educate staff on proper food handling practices. Listed below are some of the things an inspector will scrutinize when examining your restaurant.

Critical Items

Critical items are those that are directly related to foodborne illness. Many counties denote these as "red" items on inspection sheets. Here are some examples of critical items:

- Observe proper handwashing.
- Make sure food is coming from an approved source.
- Ensure cooked foods are rapidly chilled in appropriate amount of time.
- Check to make sure commercial dishwashers have the correct sanitizer concentration.
- Verify that there has been no cross-contamination between raw and cooked or ready to serve products.

Non-Critical Items

Non-critical items are those that are not directly related to foodborne illnesses, but can become serious problems if not corrected. These items are usually denoted as "blue" items on an inspection sheet. Here are some examples of non-critical items:

- Labeled food storage containers.
- Current operator permit.
- Properly calibrated meat thermometers.
- Floors, walls and ceilings properly cleaned.
- Employee changing or break area is separate from kitchen.

Potentially Hazardous Foods

Health inspectors pay special attention to potentially hazardous foods. These foods require precise time and temperature maintenance to prevent bacterial growth and food related illnesses. The health inspector will meticulously check cooking, holding and storage temperatures of all meat, poultry, seafood and ready made food products to assure they are at safe temperatures. They will also ask to see records to assure you are doing the same.

Manager and Staff Knowledge:

Restaurant owners are required to know their local health codes in order to operate a commercial food establishment. Management staff must have up-to-date training on food safety practices, and employees must demonstrate knowledge of safe food handling and preparation. The inspector will ask questions to test this knowledge.

Employee Health:

When employees are sick do not let them continue to handle and prepare food. Send them home, or put them on a task where they are not handling food or utensils. Person to person contact is a leading cause of foodborne illness, and sick employees can easily transfer their germs to your customers, no matter how cautious the workers may be.

Note: This article is a generalization of the health inspection process. Please reference your local Food Code or health department for specific governing rules and procedures.
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