

THE FACTS ABOUT FOOD

NOVEMBER 2012

100% CLUB AWARD RECIPIENTS

October 2012 was the month that various local food service establishments were acknowledged for their exceptional food safety practices for the 2011 – 2012 permit year. There are over 500 food establishments currently permitted by the Health District that are categorized as a restaurant and were considered for the 2012 awards. The restaurant category contains the quick service restaurants, full service restaurants and take-out establishments that include supermarket delis.

This award was given to food establishments that are categorized as restaurants. To become eligible for the award the following criteria had to be met:

1. The restaurant must have received a score of 100% on the last two consecutive routine inspections with actual food preparation observed, and excluding high priority routine inspections.
2. The restaurant must not have a record of confirmed or suspected food-borne illness history during the past year.
3. The restaurant must not have a record of Health District closure due to an imminent health hazard during the past year.
4. The restaurant must be on an approved water source and an approved on-site sewage system.
5. The restaurant must not have any complaint that was confirmed to be a violation during the past year.
6. The restaurant must not have had other critical food safety issues noted by the inspector during the past year.

182 restaurants met the criteria. The list of those receiving the award was released to the media in October.

Congratulations to those who received an award for your exceptional attention to safe food handling practices. Keep up the good work!

2013 FOOD WORKER CLASS SCHEDULE

The Online Food Worker card program is a huge success. There is a drastic reduction in the number of people who attend our in-person classes. The updated in-person 2013 Food Worker Class schedule is enclosed with the newsletter or find it on our website at kitsappublichealth.org. The new schedule begins January 1, 2013.



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FOOD SAFETY



Some studies show that 59% of foodborne illnesses are traced to restaurant operations. In Washington State, estimates for the years 2007 - 2009 indicated that 75 % of outbreaks were associated with restaurant meals. The number one contributing factor in local foodborne illness outbreaks during the period studied was poor handwashing practices. The 2011 Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates indicate “that each year roughly 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) gets sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die of foodborne diseases.”

Fortunately, you and your employees can have a significant and direct impact on reducing foodborne illness by being proactive, instead of reactive, in implementing effective training and active managerial control practices.

Ask yourself the following questions to help gauge your ability to “actively manage” food safety risks in your facility:

1. Are managers in your establishment certified food safety managers?
(e.g. ServSafe, NEHA certificate, NRFSP certificate)
2. Do all employees who handle food receive formal food safety training?
(computer classes, Washington State Food Workers Card, food safety videos)
3. Do you have specific staff members who create procedures to address any food safety concerns identified and assign a specific person to carry out each task?
4. Does the person-in-charge monitor the safety procedures implemented to determine if they are being followed?
5. Does the person-in-charge verify that your procedures are actually controlling the risks that you identified?
6. Does the person-in-charge review records and change your procedures if necessary to ensure food safety?
7. Does the facility have a written employee illness policy?
(Are employees given paid sick leave?)
8. Do you purchase food from approved sources?
9. Does the facility conduct and document daily food safety procedures?
10. Does the facility frequently document food temperatures?
(e.g. receiving, initial cook, hot and cold holding, cooling, and reheat temperatures)
11. Does the facility have and use the appropriate types of thermometers such as a thermocouple, digital or dial stem for the type of food being prepared? Does the facility have a thin probe food thermometer for testing thin foods like meat patties and filets?
12. Does the facility monitor proper handwashing and glove use?
13. Does the facility test and document sanitizer concentration and usage?
14. Are food contact surfaces washed, rinsed and sanitized as necessary?
15. Are the premises, non food-contact surfaces and equipment cleaned at appropriate intervals to eliminate excessive buildup of food soils and grease?

If you cannot answer yes to the questions in the self-assessment then it is time to develop and implement procedures and ongoing training that will effectively control the food safety risks in your food service establishment.

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Remember, CDC indicates that “reducing foodborne illness by 10% would keep about 5 million Americans from getting sick each year.” **Keeping people healthy is your primary responsibility.** It is not just knowledge that makes the difference. It’s knowledge, application, on-going training, documentation, reviewing and changing procedures when necessary to yield the desired result. A side benefit of actively managing the food safety process is better product, less waste, happy customers and better trained staff. It might even keep you out of court!

KEEP ILL FOOD WORKERS AWAY FROM FOOD

Food workers working when sick is one of the top reasons foodborne illness outbreaks occur in Washington State. If you are throwing up or having diarrhea (loose stool), know that you could be shedding literally millions of germs in your feces every time you use the bathroom and very possibly contaminating your hands with them. Do not work when you are ill with vomiting and/or diarrhea.



The main reasons cited for working while sick included less employees on staff, getting slammed with a high volume of meals, not wanting to leave their co-workers stranded and a lack of policies requiring workers to report illnesses to managers.

As a food worker, don’t work when you’re sick, tell management when you have vomiting or diarrhea, wash your hands after going to the bathroom and don’t touch food with bare hands.

Managers educate all food workers about their responsibility to report symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, and infected wounds. Not working while ill with vomiting and/or diarrhea will cut the chances of having an outbreak from your restaurant. You will protect your business, your employees and your customers.

TEN TIPS FOR FOOD SAFETY IN RESTAURANT KITCHENS

1. **Train staff and managers.**

Ensure all your staff has an adequate knowledge of safe food handling practices.

2. **Keep those hands clean.**

One of the major causes of foodborne illness is dirty hands. Have all staff wash hands often.

3. **Wash all produce.**

Fresh produce, because it’s sometimes served without cooking, should be washed by hand to remove bacteria.

4. **Store refrigerated foods properly.**

Refrigerated foods should be stored at or below 41°F to minimize bacterial growth.

5. **Cook foods to appropriate temperatures.**

To kill bacteria, foods must be cooked to the appropriate minimum internal temperature.

6. **Sanitize food contact surfaces.**

Assure any surface that touches food is properly sanitized.

7. **Inspect it yourself.**

Walk through your operation on a regular basis to identify potential concerns.

8. **Know your local health codes.**

Knowing the rules will protect your community from outbreaks of foodborne illness.

9. **Check temperatures regularly.**

Check every two hours to see whether food is in the danger zone.

10. **Check incoming food shipments.**

Purchase foods from approved sources and know what to look for before accepting a shipment.

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THE WASHINGTON STATE RETAIL FOOD CODE IS CHANGING!

The Washington State Board of Health recently adopted changes to the State food code based on the 2009 Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code. The new Washington State food code will take effect May 1, 2013. A workgroup consisting of representatives from the restaurant industry, local health departments, the grocery industry, the public, and regulatory partners decided on all the changes to the food code.

Visit our website kitsappublichealth.org for a link to the current and new State food code.

SPECIAL PROCESSES PLAN REVIEW AND PERMIT

There are a few methods or processes that require Health District review and approval before a food establishment can begin using that special process. Please submit the Food Code Variance Request application for using the following methods or processes:

- Operating a molluscan shellfish life support system display tank;
- Smoking foods for preservation rather than for flavor;
- Curing food;
- Using food additives as a method of food preservation rather than flavor enhancement;
- Reduced Oxygen Packaging (ROP) food with only one barrier to *Clostridium botulinum*.

Starting in February 2013 you will need to submit a fee of \$218 with your application for a special process plan review. If you have already been approved for your special process, then you do not need to submit again. Beginning July 1, 2013 an additional permit will be required for your food establishment to continue to use this special process for the food you serve to the public. The fee for this Special Process permit will be \$109.

VARIANCE REQUESTS

If your food establishment would like a modification or waiver to the Washington State Food Code and a health hazard will not result, then the Health District may grant a variance. To request consideration for a variance from a section of the Washington Food Code, please submit a Food Code Variance Request application. Beginning February 2013 you will need to submit a \$109 fee with the application.

FOOD PROGRAM STAFF

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