

Time as a Public Health Control

[Chapter 246-215-03530 Washington Administrative Code](#)

The Washington State Retail Food Code allows the use of time limitations, rather than temperature, to control the growth of pathogens in certain foods. Used correctly, time can be used to ensure food displayed or held outside of temperature control does not become unsafe. However, if time is not properly monitored, food may become unsafe to eat.

Time as a public health control may be used in the following situations:

- Working supplies of foods that will be cooked and served immediately after cooking, such as raw hamburger patties, pizza ingredients, and pizza toppings.
- Foods that are ready to eat and sold for immediate consumption, such as trays of cooked rice or meats, dairy products removed from refrigeration for customer use, or individually portioned sides/samples of foods.

Time as a public health control ***cannot be used*** for the following situations:

- Foods that are not intended to be consumed immediately, such as a rotisserie chicken at a grocery store.
- As a backup for failing or misused hot/cold holding equipment. Time as a public health control must be intentional and documented.

Required documentation:

- A written procedure outlining how employees will achieve the conditions listed above for using time as a public health control. This procedure **must** be prepared in advance, maintained in the establishment, and made available to the inspector immediately upon request.

How to use time as a public health control:

- Before foods can be held under time-as-control, hot/cold foods must have an internal temperature greater than 135°F or less than 41°F, respectively.
- When a ready-to-eat food held at ambient temperature, such as uncut tomatoes or canned tuna, is rendered time/temperature controlled for safety (TCS) by cutting or removing packaging, it must be 70°F or less before entering time-as-control. Additionally, these items may not exceed 70°F for the duration that they are under time-as-control.
- All foods on time-as-control must be marked to identify a discard time that is no more than 4 hours from the time food was removed from temperature control.
- Once food is under time-as-control, it **must** be cooked and served, served at any temperature (if ready-to-eat), or discarded within 4 hours. Food on time-as-control is **never** permitted to be saved for later use.
- All other food safety practices must be followed prior to placing food under time-as-control (proper cooling methods, cooking temperatures, handling practices, etc.)



KITSAP PUBLIC
HEALTH DISTRICT

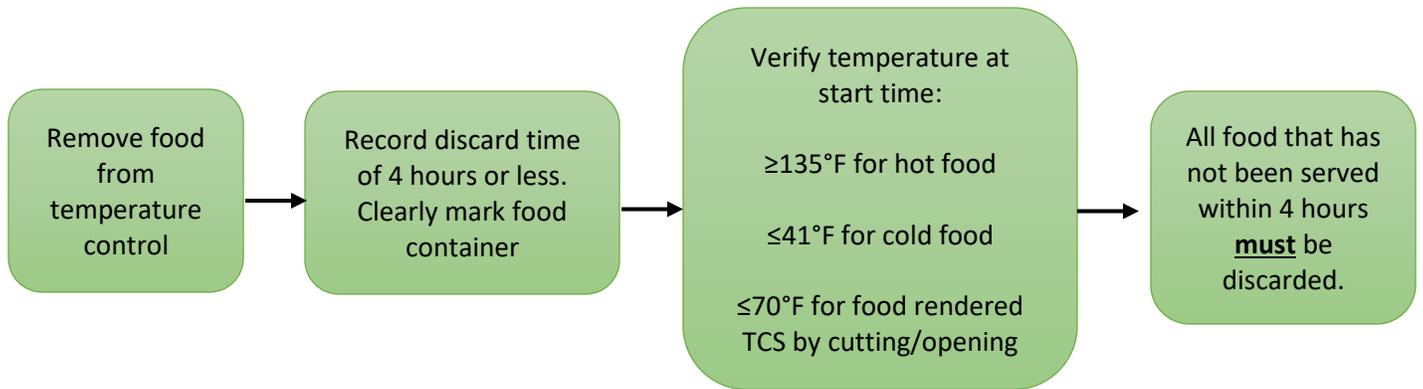
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Time as a Public Health Control: **Example Procedure**



[**Example Establishment**] located at [**Establishment Location**], will handle the following foods under a “time as a public health control” procedure (**make sure to list all foods that will be held under time-as-control**):

- Cooked rice, held at ambient temperature (used in burritos).
- Raw shell eggs, used in omelets.
- Whipped cream filled pastry, kept in unrefrigerated display case.
- Fresh Pico de Gallo.

The following are example procedures for the example foods listed above. Your establishment may use any combination of time keeping and labeling methods to meet the requirements of time-as-control.

Cooked rice

1. Prepare rice in rice cooker.
2. Place rice in serving pan on preparation table. Measure temperature to verify 135°F or higher.
3. Write discard time of 4 hours from when food was taken off of the heat on a sticker and place on pan.
4. Discard all remaining rice at labeled time, **including** unsold burritos containing 4-hour rice.

Raw shell eggs

1. Remove desired quantity of eggs from refrigeration. Verify refrigeration temperatures are 41° or lower.
2. Write a discard time not exceeding 4 hours in a clearly visible location on the carton. Use eggs as needed to prepare omelets.
3. All eggs must be cooked and served or discarded by the specified discard time.

Whipped cream filled pastry

1. Remove pre-made whipped cream pastries from refrigeration. Measure temperature to verify 41°F or lower.
2. Place pastries in display case. Write a discard time of 4 hours from time pastries were removed from refrigeration on parchment tray liner or on the display glass using a dry-erase marker.
3. Discard all remaining pastries at the time written on the liner or display case.

Fresh Pico de Gallo

1. Pull whole tomatoes from dry storage.
2. Dice tomatoes and add to mixing bowl. (Note: Cutting tomatoes renders them to be a time-temperature controlled for safety food). Start an electronic timer for the 4-hour discard time and place it where it can be easily monitored by food employees. Mix in other raw Pico ingredients.
3. Measure temperature of Pico to verify a starting temperature of 70°F or lower. Monitor temperature frequently to ensure food does not warm above 70°F at any point.
4. Discard any remaining Pico when the 4-hour timer goes off, **including** unsold food items topped with this salsa.