

# THE FACTS ABOUT FOOD

DECEMBER 2013

## WELCOME NEW FOOD SAFETY TEAM



Happy New Year from your new Food Safety Team (from left to right): Ross Lytle, Patty Olsen, Dayna Hernandez, Jim Zimny, (Program Manager), Paul Giuntoli and Dave Zollweg.

We are wishing Bonnie Petek a “Happy Retirement”. Our long time Food Program Manager has decided to spend more time at home tending her garden and her grandchild. Good luck to her in this new chapter of life.

Jim Zimny was promoted to Food Safety Program Manager last July. Jim has over 20 years of experience working in the Environmental Health Division at Kitsap Public Health District. He also has many years experience working as a line cook.

Dayna Hernandez joined us in July. Dayna has a Bachelor of Science degree from Western Washington University. Her past experience includes ten years in the food service industry.

## POWER OUTAGE AT A FOOD ESTABLISHMENT

The time to plan for an emergency is before one happens. These guidelines can help retail food businesses know what to do before, during, and after a power outage so they can protect their customers from foodborne disease and minimize product losses.

The biggest food safety concern is the condition of potentially hazardous food such as meats, eggs, dairy products, cooked vegetables, and cut melons. Potentially hazardous foods are usually moist, non-acidic, perishable foods and must be kept at temperatures below 41°F or above 135°F for safety.

### Before a Power Outage:

- Consider having an electrical generator available during a power outage. It will need to be big enough to operate the electrical equipment in your facility, and its installation and use must be coordinated with your power company for safety.
- Investigate potential sources for a refrigerated truck to be used during a power outage.
- Think about creating an “emergency menu” of foods that can be served with minimal preparation and without additional cooking.

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- Have a phone that plugs directly into a phone jack and does not require any additional power.
- Keep a list of emergency phone numbers, including the Kitsap Public Health District. Our phone number is (360) 337-5235.

#### **When a Power Outage Occurs:**

- Keep track of the time the outage begins.
- Stop using gas or solid fuel cooking and heating equipment if the exhaust hood and make-up air systems stop working. Using this equipment without proper ventilation can lead to a dangerous build-up of toxic fumes that may cause injury or death.
- Throw away any foods that are in the process of being cooked but have not yet reached their final cooking temperature.

*Note:* A power outage of 2 hours or less is not considered hazardous to food that was being held under safe conditions when the outage began.

#### **ACTIONS THAT CAN KEEP FOOD SAFE FOR SEVERAL HOURS:**

##### **Cold Potentially Hazardous Foods:**

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- If practical, group packages of cold food together. Keep raw meats away from other kinds of food.
- Cover any open display refrigerators and freezers, especially vertical displays.
- Surround food with ice.

*Caution:* If you use dry ice to cool food, it may cause an unsafe build-up of carbon dioxide in enclosed spaces.

##### **Hot Potentially Hazardous Foods:**

- Do not put hot food in refrigerators or freezers.
- Use canned chafing dish fuel under food on electric steam tables to help keep potentially hazardous food over 135°F.

##### **Stop preparing food if:**

- Food cannot be kept at safe temperatures.
- There is no hot water.
- There is not enough water pressure.
- You cannot wash, rinse, and sanitize utensils properly.
- There is not enough light for employees to work safely.

##### **After Power is Restored:**

- Check the internal temperature of all hot and cold potentially hazardous food.
- Decide to either keep or throw away potentially hazardous food, as shown in the tables below.

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- If cold foods were grouped together to keep them cold, space them out again so they will cool more quickly.

**What to do with Potentially Hazardous Food:**

<b>Cold Foods</b>			
Hours Power is Out	Cold Food Temperature		
	45°F or below	46°F to 50°F	51°F or above
0-2	OK	OK	OK
2-4	OK	OK	<b>X</b>
More than 4	OK	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>

OK = Food may be sold, as long as it was 41°F or less when the power went out. Immediately cool food to 41°F or less.

**X** = Food may be unsafe and may not be sold.

<b>Hot Foods</b>		
Hours Power is Out	Hot Food Temperature	
	130°F or above	129°F or below
0-2	OK	OK
2-4	OK	<b>X</b>
More than 4	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>

OK = Food may be sold, as long as it was 135° or more when the power went out. Immediately reheat to at least 165°F. After reheating, hold at 135°F or more, or immediately cool to 41°F or less.

**X** = Food may be unsafe and must be discarded.

**Reopening:**

If you voluntarily closed your facility, the following conditions should be verified before you resume food preparation and/or sale of potentially hazardous food:

- All unsafe potentially hazardous food (according to the charts above) has been discarded. If there are any questions about the safety of specific foods, contact your local health department.
- Hot and cold potable running water is available for handwashing and dishwashing.

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- All equipment and facilities are operating properly, including: lighting, refrigeration, hot holding, ventilation, and toilet facilities.
- Refrigerators are 41°F or less.
- Electricity and gas services have been restored.
- All circuit breakers have been properly reset as needed.

*Note:* If your facility was closed by the Kitsap Public Health District, it must remain closed until that agency gives you official approval to reopen.

### **Disposal of Food:**

- WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!
- If food must be thrown away, document the type and amount of food and the reason for disposal, so that you can provide the information to regulators and your insurance company.
- Small amounts of food to be thrown away can be treated with a cleaning product (such as bleach) so that they will not be eaten, and placed in the outside garbage bin.
- To throw away large amounts of food, contact your garbage disposal company or your local land-fill operator for disposal instructions.

If you have questions about the safety of specific foods, contact the Kitsap Public Health District.

## **PROFITABILITY AND FOOD SAFETY**

As food establishments try to control costs, sometimes the decisions that are made directly impact food safety.

Neglecting Equipment or Facilities Maintenance: Some food establishments pinch pennies in areas where they cannot afford to. If your refrigeration units don't hold temperature, do you ignore this and risk a foodborne outbreak? If someone is sick or dies from your food, how do you expect to increase sales with such negative publicity?



Sick Employees Preparing or Serving Food: Some operators will just settle for a warm body; regardless of whether the person is infected or are showing symptoms of diarrhea or vomiting. I understand that people need to work to support their families; however, there are other options besides risking a foodborne illness outbreak.

Reducing Labor Hours: Cutting staff has been a tactic used since the beginning of time. When this is done too aggressively, it affects morale and may also hurt customer service. In some circumstances, trying to do the right thing (like properly cleaning and sanitizing equipment) will get the employee counseled as a consequence of taking too much time.

Elimination of Training or Certification Programs: More often than not, training gets kicked to the curb when it comes to cutbacks. Having just one employee as a certified food manager in an operation where hundreds may be responsible for serving food is just not enough.

Rolling the dice with food safety will eventually catch up to habitual offenders. With the CDC estimating that 1 in 6 Americans contract a foodborne illness each year, the odds are high. Profits and managing the bottom line should never risk the consumer's health. Unfortunately, this lesson often gets learned a little too late.

## TALKIN' CHICKEN...

Let's face it – in the U.S., we eat *a lot* of chicken. It's an inexpensive, easily-available source of protein. It's at home in almost every type of cuisine; and it's versatile (ask any parent of small children how handy chicken nuggets are). Roasted, deep-fried, stir-fried, baked, or broiled, it's one of our most important sources of protein. However, with the amount of chicken we eat every year, also comes the greater risk of getting a foodborne illness from undercooked, or otherwise improperly prepared chicken.

Poultry (including chicken, turkey, and other fowl) can quite often be contaminated with illness-causing bacteria such as *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, and *Clostridium*. Poultry accounted for the highest percentage (21%) of all foodborne illnesses during the period of 1998 – 2008. Let's take one particular type of bacteria, *Salmonella*. Poultry was responsible for 30% of all *Salmonella* cases during that period (also the largest culprit among food categories). Couple that with **25%** of *Salmonella* outbreaks resulting from eggs, and we get about 55% of all *Salmonella* outbreaks resulting from poultry or poultry products. Poultry was the second-leading cause (31%) of *Clostridium perfringens* outbreaks, after beef (41%).

To be fair, "poultry", as we alluded to before, includes turkey and other fowl. The National Chicken Council (yes, there is such a thing) estimates that chicken amounts to 80 – 84 percent of the average per capita consumption of all poultry in the U.S. So even if you adjust the "poultry" figures accordingly, it still amounts to chicken accounting for a big proportion of foodborne illnesses cases in the U.S. every year.

We can't emphasize enough the importance of proper cooking – minimum 165° F for at least 15 seconds. You need to be checking cooking temperatures every time you cook chicken. You should never get into the habit of just "eyeballing it".

As with any potentially hazardous food (PHF) proper cooling is also critical. It is essential to get all potentially hazardous foods cooled as quickly as possible. Large items, such as roast chickens and turkey breasts, can be cut up for faster cooling. Smaller pieces of chicken need to be cooled in shallow (2") pans, just like any liquid or semi-solid food item. The big plastic tubs, that are so often used for this purpose, are too deep for the chicken pieces to cool quickly. In the case of chicken pieces, such as the deep-fried pieces that will be used in stir-frys, **do not assume that you're safe just because they will be cooked again in another step.** It's not always the bacteria themselves that cause the illness. If the chicken pieces are not properly cooled, and *Clostridium perfringens* manages to grow significantly, the bacteria can form toxins in the chicken. Even if the *bacteria* are killed in the next cooking step, the *toxins* remain, and can cause a foodborne illness.

Contrary to what you may have heard it is not necessary to wash raw chicken. It will do little to minimize the bacteria that are inherent in the chicken, and you run the risk of splashing contaminated chicken juices to other surfaces.

We often see workers in food service establishments chopping up several boxes of raw chicken at a time, usually after a shipment has been received. It's important to prepare chicken, or any other PHF, in small batches. Do not keep more chicken out at room temperature than can be chopped within about a half an hour. Leave the rest in the refrigerator until you are ready to proceed to the next batch. The raw chicken that you're chopping should get above 41° F for as little time as possible.

For the best cooking results poultry should be completely thawed before cooking. It cooks more evenly. Defrost it in a refrigerator or under cold running water. Thawing in the microwave is OK if it's going straight to cooking. **Never defrost poultry, or any other PHF, at room temperature!** After preparing raw poultry, always wash, rinse, sanitize, and allow to air dry all sink basins, counter tops, cutting board surfaces, and all utensils. Any of these areas used in thawing and preparation before cooking are now likely contaminated with potentially deadly bacteria.

So go ahead, cross the road, and put chicken on the menu tonight...and remember how important it is, to you and your customers, to handle that chicken safely!

## IS YOUR BUSINESS AT RISK FOR AN OUTBREAK?

The spread of germs from the hands of food workers to food is an important cause of foodborne illness outbreaks in restaurants. In fact, it caused 89% of outbreaks in which food was contaminated by food workers. Proper hand washing can reduce germs on workers' hands. It can also reduce the spread of germs from hands to food and from food to other people. Proper hand washing can also protect your business.

The Washington State Retail Food Code requires that hands be washed before:

- Making food, and
- Putting on gloves to make food.

The Washington State Retail Food Code also requires that hands be washed after:

- Eating,
- Drinking,
- Using tobacco,
- Coughing,
- Sneezing,
- Using tissue,
- Preparing raw animal products,
- Handling dirty equipment, and
- Touching the body (such as scratching your nose).



Improving food worker hand washing practices is critical. But first we need to know about current practices. The Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) Environmental Health Specialist Network (EHS-Net) program interviewed and watched food workers to collect data on these practices.

### Study Purpose

This study described restaurant food workers' hand washing practices and focused on when workers washed their hands. Data was collected in 321 restaurants in six different states across the U.S. These restaurants were selected at random.

### Data Collection

State or local Health Inspectors collected the data. In each restaurant, they watched a food worker for about an hour and collected data on the worker's activities and hand washing practices. The Inspectors looked for activities where the FDA Food Code says hand washing should occur, and then noted whether workers washed their hands. Proper hand washing included removing gloves (if worn), placing hands under running water, using soap, and drying hands with cloths or paper towels.

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## Study Conclusion

Overall, food workers engaged in about nine activities an hour that should have involved hand washing. Workers washed their hands in only 27% of activities in which they should have. Hand washing rates differed by activity and are described below.

- Before preparing food: 41%
- Before putting on gloves to prepare food: 30%
- After eating, drinking, using tobacco, coughing, sneezing, using tissue: 26%
- After preparing raw animal products: 23%
- After handling dirty equipment: 23%
- After handling dirty equipment: 23%
- After touching body: 10%

These rates suggest that food workers either do not know when to wash their hands or they sometimes choose not to wash their hands.

Hand washing rates were highest before food preparation, suggesting that at least some workers may know that food needs to be protected from dirty hands.

Hand washing rates were lowest after workers touched their bodies (for example after scratching their noses). Workers may not know they need to wash their hands after touching their bodies or may think it takes too much time to wash their hands every time they touch their bodies. They also may not be aware that they are touching their bodies.

## In Summary

EHS-Net found that food workers carried out about nine activities an hour that should have involved hand washing. Workers only washed their hands in a quarter (27%) of these activities.

Restaurant management should:

- Work to improve hand washing rates, particularly after activities involving raw meat.
- Revise food preparation activities to lower the number of needed hand washings.
- Occasionally carry out observations like those done for this study to show where deficiencies in hand washing are found in your own food service establishment.

Photos and article taken and edited from the CDC's EHS-Net Hand Wash study.

More information is available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/EHSNet/index.htm>.

## 2014 FOOD WORKER CLASS SCHEDULE

The online Food Worker card program has been such a huge success that we have seen a drastic reduction in the number of people who attend our in-person classes and have updated the class schedule. The updated in-person food worker class schedule is listed below and is effective January 1, 2014. Please note the changes.

At the in-person food worker class, food safety instruction will be given prior to administering the food worker test. Bring identification and **\$10 cash** to purchase your Food Worker Card. The dates and times of classes offered are noted below. **Please call (360) 337-5235 for a recorded message to confirm testing dates and times at the following locations.**

**Port Orchard—1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month** at 8:30 a.m.

Givens Community Center  
1026 Sidney Ave  
Port Orchard, WA

**Silverdale—2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of the month** at 3:00 p.m.

Silverdale Community Center  
9729 Silverdale Way  
Silverdale, WA

**Bremerton—3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month** at 3:00 p.m. **Please call (360) 337-5235 to confirm this day, time, and class location on campus.**

Olympic College  
1600 Chester Ave  
Bremerton, WA

**Poulsbo—4<sup>th</sup> Friday of the month** at 1:00 p.m.

Poulsbo Park and Recreation Center  
19540 Front Street  
Poulsbo, WA

**Classes are subject to change because of holidays, etc., so please make sure to call ahead! (360) 337-5235.** Check the food worker class schedule on our website: [kitsappublichealth.org](http://kitsappublichealth.org).

We encourage you to take the class online or we have kiosks available Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m.—2:30 p.m. to take the online class at the Health District, if the class times don't work for you.

To obtain your food worker card online go to our website [kitsappublichealth.org](http://kitsappublichealth.org) and look under Featured Links for Food Worker Cards. This will take you to the only authorized site where you can obtain an online food worker card.