



COWLITZ COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Volume 4

THE LOADED TABLE

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FOODS RECALLS

Having noticed an increase in food recalls, many operators have asked how to get more information on these recalls. The following sites are accessible to retrieve this information:

1. www.recalls.gov
2. www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/food/recall.htm

If it's a FDA or USDA recall or a recall affecting Washington State the above websites will have information related to the recall in progress.

Recall notification is one reason we request updated contact information. In the case of a change in contact information (phone number, contact PIC, owner, email address or fax number) be sure to call or submit an updated application form to the Health Department.

FOOD WORKER CARDS

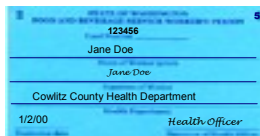
Food workers must have food and beverage workers cards (health cards) at the time they start work.

The only exception to this requirement is if the owner has a training procedure in place for new hires, documents when training took place and can produce that documentation for the Health Inspector upon request. Then the employee has 14 days from start date to obtain a food worker card.

Expired cards or cards from other states are not valid.

Tips when checking health cards

- Any new employees?
- About to hire new employees?
- Are cards all current?



If you have a large number of employees it may be helpful to have someone assigned to check the cards regularly.

Reminder - if food and beverage cards are renewed before the card expires food workers can get a 3 year card for the price of a 2 year card. If a food worker has attended additional approved training within two years of the renewal date and meets other renewal requirements there is a 5 year renewal card. Just remember to take both the current card and the training certificate with them for verification before taking the test.

APPROACHING DEADLINE:

When the new food code became effective May 2005 a new cold holding temperature also became effective. The cold holding temperature requirement was lowered from 45°F to 41°F.

There was recognition that some existing equipment may not be constructed to meet the 41°F temperature. So time was allowed for existing facilities to replace existing equipment which could meet the previous 45° F but which were not capable of holding foods at 41°F.

May 2010 is the deadline for all equipment to meet the 41°F temperature.

Any equipment that is not capable of maintaining a temperature of 41°F or less must be replaced with NSF approved or equivalent equipment that is able to maintain food at 41°F or less. If you have equipment that is unable to maintain this new temperature you have until May 2010 to have it replaced. If you have any questions/concerns about your equipment; talk with your inspector.

TIME AS A CONTROL

The Food Code allows the use of time only, rather than time in conjunction with temperature, as the public health control for certain foods. Clarification of time as a control has been provided by DOH in detail as follows:

For What Foods Can Time As A Control Be Used?

- **Working supplies of Potentially Hazardous Foods (PHF) before cooking** such as raw hamburger patties or pizza ingredients; or
- **Ready To Eat (RTE) PHF displayed or held for immediate consumption** such as catered service, food served from quick service establishments, individual samples, or food individually portioned and packaged for immediate consumption.

Facilities that serve a highly susceptible population may not use time as a control for raw eggs.

Criteria For Using Time As A Control

If time is used as the public health control, the following criteria *must be* met:

- The food must be marked or otherwise identified to indicate the time that is four hours past the time when the food is removed from temperature control;
- The food must be cooked and served, served if RTE, or discarded within the four hours; and
- Food that is unmarked, or marked to exceed a four hour limit, must be discarded.

Written procedures that ensure compliance with the time as a control provision must be prepared in advance and maintained in the food establishment. The written procedures must be available to the Regulatory Authority upon request and include cooling methods for food that is cooked and cooled prior to using time as a public health control.

Do Written Procedures Need To Be Pre-Approved By The Health Department Before Time Only Can Be Used?

Pre-approval of written procedures is not required by the Washington State Retail Food Code, although food establishments are encouraged to work with their regulatory authority to develop procedures that will meet the time as a control requirements.

What Are Acceptable Means For Identifying Food For Which Time As A Control Is Being Used?

The key is to make sure food employees and regulators can easily and accurately identify the time that food has been out of temperature control. Acceptable methods include stickers, tape, and writing on paper liners. If food is not marked or labeled, the food must be discarded.

What Is Meant By “Temperature Control?”

Food that is under temperature control must be at or below 41° F or at or above 140° F.

If A Temperature Holding Unit Malfunctions And Food Cannot Be Temperature Controlled, Can Time Be Used As The Public Health Control?

Time as a control is designed to be used under carefully controlled circumstances and with close monitoring. It is not meant as an emergency backup in case of equipment failures, improper design, or lack of maintenance.

If you have any questions regarding time as a control please contact your food inspector.

FOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Anyone interested in Committee membership please contact the Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners or visit online at http://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/commissioners/commission_boards/Boards%20&%20Commissioners.htm regarding the application form and/or process. For more information regarding the Food Advisory Committee visit the Health Department webpage.

TOP 3 CAUSES OF FOODBORNE ILLNESS OUTBREAKS

In Washington State the following three factors continue to be most frequently associated with foodborne illnesses. They include ill food workers, inadequate/improper handwashing, and bare hand contact. Each one can be avoided by increasing employee awareness and ensuring your PICs (Person In Charge) are enforcing Food Safety Regulations. What can you do to minimize risk from these factors?

Ill employees working¹

Do you:

- Have a written employee illness policy that all managers and employees know and understand
- Ensure that PICs are enforcing your policy and Food Code
- Review the policy on a regular basis to ensure it is current and make changes as needed
- Include it in new employee orientation
- Keep a record when employees call in sick. Try to get information of symptoms, time of first symptom and time of last symptom
- If an employee is sent home ill; how do you assess foods the employee has handled and discard all ready to eat foods that the ill employee prepared

Inadequate/improper handwashing²

Do you:

- Ensure employees know when to wash hands and reinforce handwashing
- Take time to observe handwashing practices
- Post signs to remind employees on how to wash and when
- Ensure accessibility for employees; provide adequate number of hand washing stations that are unblocked
- Supply handwashing stations with hot/cold running water and keep soap and paper towels stocked

Preventing Bare Hand contact with ready-to-eat foods³

Do you:

- Provide appropriate barriers for ready to eat foods, such as
 - Gloves
 - Utensils
 - Bakery tissues
- Ensure that washing of hands occurs between glove changes
- Ensure gloves are changed between different tasks (do **not** wash the gloves)

¹(Violation #3: Proper ill worker practices: **NO** ill workers present; proper reporting of illness...25 points: Reference *Washington State Retail Food Code Working Document* {WSRFCWD}2-201 pg 13 & 14 and 2-401.12 pg 16)

²(Violation #4: Hands washed as required...15 points *WSRFCWD* 2-301.14 & 15 pg 14 & 15 Violation #6: Adequate Handwashing facilities...10 points... *WSRFCWD* 5-205.11(a), (b) pg 55-56.)

³(Full definition of ready-to-eat foods on pg 8 of *WSRFCWD* 1-201.10(B)(70)(b); Violation #5..15 points *WSRFCWD* 3-301.11 pg 21.)

POOLING OF RAW EGGS

“Pooled” eggs refer to raw shelled eggs of four or more which have been cracked and mixed into a single container. Pooling of eggs is prohibited in the Food Code.

Except raw shell eggs may be broken and pooled by a method whereby egg shells are not immersed in the liquid portion of the eggs and **only if** the eggs are broken for **immediate service in response to a consumer's order**. (Reference Working Document 3-302.16).

Eggs may be contaminated internally with *Salmonella Enteritidis*. Eggs should be stored at an ambient temperature of 45°F or below and cooked to an internal temperature of 145°F for 15 seconds.

Egg dishes that are commonly undercooked require a consumer advisory. These dishes may include but are not limited to: eggs served sunny side up, poached or scrambled; Caesar dressing; hollandaise sauce; egg nog; ice cream; tiramisu; meringue pies and egg-fortified beverages. (Consumer Advisory information review Volume 1 Issue 1 of the Loaded Table. Back issues are available online.)

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POOLED EGGS Cont...

Food safety rules for serving eggs to a highly susceptible population are more stringent because of the increased risk for foodborne illnesses.

For Facilities That Serve A Highly Susceptible Population:

- Consumer advisories cannot be used. All raw eggs must be fully cooked before service.
- Eggs may be combined (pooled) for use in baked goods such as cake, muffins or bread.
- Except for baked goods, *no more than one raw egg* may be used in a menu item unless the eggs are combined immediately before cooking one consumer's meal, properly cooked to at least 145° F, and served immediately.
- Pasteurized eggs or egg products must be used when:
 - preparing foods that will not be fully cooked prior to service, or
 - pooling eggs for more than one consumer's meal.
 - Time as a public health control may not be used for raw shell eggs.

THERMOMETERS FOR THIN FOODS

Food thermometers must be provided and readily accessible for use to assure proper food temperatures. A thermometer with a suitable small-diameter probe designed to measure temperatures of thin food items must be provided and accessible to measure thin foods such as meat patties and fish filets.

Using a food thermometer is the only reliable way to ensure safety and to determine required "doneness" of foods. Food thermometers come in several types and styles, and vary in level of technology and price.

Digital Tip Sensitive Thermometer Digital tip sensitive thermometers are used to measure food temperatures. They have a metal stem and have digital numbers instead of a dial. The sensor is also at the tip of the probe to ensure a more accurate reading. Digital thermometers are easy to read, read temperatures quickly and are better for measuring temperatures in thin foods such as hamburger patties.

Thermometers should be checked often to make sure they read the correct temperature. Follow the instructions for your thermometer or ask your inspector during the next inspection regarding checking thermometers for accuracy or calibrating thermometers.

NOTE: Infrared Thermometers are intended only for measuring surface temperatures of food products and must not be used to measure and verify critical internal temperatures such as cooking temperatures.

IMMINENT HEALTH HAZARDS***AFTERHOURS? CALL HEALTH DEPARTMENT AT 414-5599 FOR DIRECTIONS***

Imminent Health Hazard means a significant threat or danger to health that is considered to exist when there is evidence sufficient to show that a product, practice, circumstances, or event creates a situation that requires immediate correction or cessation of operation to prevent injury based on:

- A breakdown or lack of equipment or power causing improper temperature control for potentially hazardous food;
- A lack of water or hot water preventing adequate handwashing, equipment cleaning, or sanitizing;

- An emergency situation caused by accident or natural disaster, such as fire, flood, or building collapse;
- A sewage backup or sewage contamination within a food establishment; or
- An occurrence of an outbreak of foodborne illness linked to the food establishment.

A permit holder shall immediately discontinue operations and notify the regulatory authority if an imminent health hazard may exist because of an emergency such as a fire, flood, extended interruption of electrical or water service, sewage backup, mis-

use of poisonous or toxic materials, onset of an apparent foodborne illness outbreak, gross unsanitary occurrence or condition, or other circumstance that may endanger public health.

When calling the health department to report a potential foodborne illness outbreak be prepared with contact information of those reportedly ill and the food consumed. If there is suspect food left stop serving immediately and save it for the Health Department.

If operations are discontinued as specified the permit holder shall obtain approval from the Health Department before resuming operations.