

Important Rule Changes to the NC Food Service Sanitation Rules

The purpose of this handout is to inform food service establishment owners and managers of the upcoming changes to the current *Rules Governing the Sanitation of Food Service Establishments* 15A NCAC 18A .2600. These revisions and additions were derived from the 2009 FDA model food code to allow for more science-based regulatory inspections in NC. The following are just a few of the changes that will directly affect current food safety procedures and should be given top priority when training food service employees.

The Five Key Risk Factors repeatedly identified in foodborne illness outbreaks:

Improper holding temperatures

Inadequate cooking

Contaminated equipment

Food from unsafe sources

Poor personal hygiene

COLD HOLDING

Cold holding units, including prep top units, will be required to maintain a temperature of 41°F or below. The 41°F or below requirement will be phased in over a six year period (1/1/2019).

COOLING OF POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS FOODS

Potentially hazardous foods must be cooled from 135°F to 41°F within a total of 6 hours as follows:

- From 135°F to 70°F within 2 hours,
- From 70°F to 41°F within 4 hours

BARE HAND CONTACT WITH READY-TO-EAT FOODS (RTE)

Food handlers will not be allowed to touch RTE foods with their bare hands to prevent contamination of food that is not cooked or food that will not be cooked again before serving. The use of utensils such as deli tissue, spatulas, tongs, single-use gloves, or dispensing equipment will be required.

MANAGER AND OPERATOR FOOD SAFETY KNOWLEDGE

The person in charge (PIC) must demonstrate to the regulatory authority his or her food safety knowledge by passing a test that is part of an accredited food safety training program to become a certified food protection manager;

- The current 12-hour course requirement will no longer be required.
- On-line course training will be accepted.
- Exams must be proctored and a passing score must be achieved to become certified.
- The two-point bonus will go away.
- Certification through an accredited program must be renewed every five years.

CONSUMER ADVISORY

If an animal food such as beef, eggs, fish, lamb, pork, poultry or shellfish is served or sold raw, under-cooked, or without otherwise being processed to eliminate pathogens, the permit holder shall inform consumers of the significantly increased risk of consuming such foods by way of a disclosure and reminder, using brochures, deli case or menu advisories, label statements, table tents, placards or other effective means.

EMPLOYEE HAND WASHING AND PERSONAL HYGIENE

- Food handlers must wash their hands and exposed portions of their arms in the following situations:
 - Immediately before food prep, working with clean equipment and utensils, and unwrapped single-service / single-use articles;
 - After using the toilet;
 - After coughing, sneezing or using a tissue;
 - After eating, drinking or using tobacco;
 - In between working with raw food and RTE food;
 - Before putting on gloves to prepare food;
 - After handling soiled equipment or utensils;
 - After caring for or handling service or aquatic animals;
 - As often as necessary to remove soil and contamination to prevent cross-contamination when changing tasks; or
 - After performing other activities that contaminate the hands or arms.
- Food handlers must not wear fingernail polish or artificial nails when working with exposed food unless single-use gloves are worn.
- Food handlers may not wear jewelry on their arms and hands except for a plain ring, such as a wedding band during food preparation.
- Food handlers must only eat, drink or use tobacco products in designated areas to prevent the contamination of exposed food, clean equipment, utensils and linens, and other items needing protection.

DATE MARKING

All ready-to-eat (RTE), potentially hazardous foods prepared on-site and held in refrigeration for more than 24 hours must be marked with the date of preparation or with the date that indicates when the food shall be consumed, sold or discarded.

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EMPLOYEES WITH ILLNESS

Food service employees must report to the manager or owner when they are sick with an illness that is transmitted through food.

- Food service employees must inform the PIC if they experience the following symptoms:
 - Vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - Jaundice
 - Sore throat with fever
 - An infected lesion or infection on the hands, wrists, or exposed areas of the arm
- Food service employees must inform the PIC if they have been diagnosed by a health practitioner with any of the following illnesses:
 - *Norovirus*
 - *Hepatitis A*
 - *Shigella*
 - Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli*
 - *Salmonella typhi*
- Food service employees must inform the PIC if they have been exposed to, or is the suspected source of a confirmed outbreak of the following:
 - *Norovirus* within the past 48 hours of exposure
 - Shiga Toxin-Producing *E. coli* within the past 3 days
 - *Salmonella* within the past 14 days
 - *Hepatitis A* within the past 30 days
- The manager shall make sure that a food service employee who reports to work sick with any of the above symptoms or who has been exposed or diagnosed with any of the above illnesses shall be excluded or restricted from work.