

Food for thought

Summer 2023

A newsletter for Fairfax County food establishment owners and operators and their employees

Summer is HERE Check and Monitor Your Refrigerators

This time of year, the temperature outside goes up and often the temperature in the kitchen goes up, too. This can put a strain on the refrigeration units in the kitchen. Most refrigerators are designed to run best at room temperatures BELOW 85°F. What are you doing to keep refrigeration properly maintained in your food establishment? Is your food stored at 41°F or less to prevent the growth of foodborne bacteria? Here are three steps to help keep your refrigerators cold and the food at the safe temperature:

- **Service refrigerators and freezers ahead of the hot summer season:** If a refrigerator reads 41°F two hours before opening, it is doubtful that it will keep that temperature during the busy lunch rush. Set the temperature at 35° to 37°F when the refrigerators are not in use. Check refrigerator temperatures first thing in the morning. If refrigerators are set at the correct temperature, they should keep food at 41°F or less, even during busy times of business.
- **Ensure all refrigerators have a built-in temperature gauge or an internal thermometer:**

Refrigeration units under and across from the cookline can be a challenge because they may have to work harder to maintain 41°F. Check temperatures throughout the day. A temperature log is a good active managerial control that can be used to track refrigerator and food temperatures during the day. Your area inspector can help you set up a temperature log, if necessary. If food temperatures are going up, adjust the refrigerator setting and temporarily move the food to a refrigerator that will cool the food quickly and keep the proper temperature.

- **Refrigerate food right away.** When food is delivered, put it in the refrigerator quickly. When left unrefrigerated, the food temperature will quickly move into the “danger zone” (41° - 135°F). In the “danger zone,” foodborne bacteria can grow more quickly and possibly make people sick.

Proper refrigeration and temperature control of foods are important steps in reducing the risk of foodborne illness. ■

Active Managerial Control Award



Congratulations to all the food service operators who have been recognized with an Active Managerial Control award. During their recent inspections, there were no violations cited and it was observed that good active managerial controls were in place.

See pictures and read details about how they are reducing the risk of foodborne illness in their food establishment on the Health Department website: www.bit.ly/AMC-Awardees

If you have questions on how to be nominated for an active managerial control award please speak to your area Environmental Health Specialist.

The Health Department STAMP of Approval



The Fairfax County Health Department's recognition program, Safety Through Actively Managing Practices (STAMP), is for restaurants that meet standards of food safety excellence.

Contact your inspector if you have any questions or would like help with your application. Food service operators can learn more about the STAMP program and apply for it by visiting: www.bit.ly/3Q6CFgS



Temporary Food Establishment Permits

Temporary Food establishments are usually operated at fairs, carnivals, festivals, or similar events.

A Temporary Food Establishment is a type of food establishment that operates for a period of no more than 14 consecutive days in conjunction with a single event or celebration, including carnivals, fairs, festivals, and other events. *A Temporary Food Establishment* includes at least one of the following:

- A food establishment with a current and valid Permit to Operate issued by the Fairfax County Health Department. No fees assessed for Fairfax County facilities.
- A restaurant with a food establishment permit or license issued by a health jurisdiction other than Fairfax County that is participating as a food vendor.
- A firm that is under an inspection program conducted by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS).
- A gourmet food vendor who offers unpackaged samples of their product to the public. See sampling guidelines at: www.bit.ly/3DNEIzb
- A mobile food truck that is NOT registered with Fairfax County Health Department.
- A demonstration cooking booth where samples are offered to the public.
- A restaurant that donates or sells food to a 501c3 organization.
- An organization that does not meet tax-exempt status (501c3), whether sponsoring or participating as a vendor in an event.

Application and Fees:

Applications for a TFEP must be received at least 10 days prior to the event. There is a \$40 fee assessed for the first application of the calendar year. Fairfax County permitted food establishments and organizations that meet tax exempt status (501c3) are not assessed a fee.

For more information visit the Fairfax County Health Department website at www.bit.ly/43N1xND. You can also contact the Health Department at 703-246-2201 if you are not sure if your operation meets the definition of a temporary food establishment. ■

What to do During an Electrical Outage

An electrical power outage will affect the safe storage of refrigerated and frozen foods. Perishable food such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk, and eggs that are not kept properly refrigerated or frozen may cause illness if eaten. To protect these foods from spoiling, follow these guidelines:

- **Keep a digital dial, or instant-read thermometer** inside refrigerators and freezers to accurately monitor the temperatures until power is restored.
- **Refrigerator and freezer doors must be kept closed as much as possible to** maintain the cold temperature. The refrigerator will keep foods cold for 2 to 4 hours if it is unopened.
- Full freezers will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours if the door remains closed. These times may vary depending on the age of the unit, temperature setting, and amount of food that is inside the refrigerator.
- Foods that are above 41°F for more than 2 hours must be discarded.

- **Do not trust your sense of smell.** Food may be unsafe even if it does not smell bad.
- **Thawed food** may be used if it is still below 41°F or it may be re-frozen if it still contains ice crystals or is below 41°F. Partial thawing and refreezing may reduce the quality of some food, but the food will remain safe.
- **Follow the Golden Rule of food safety, “When in Doubt, Throw it Out,”** for any foods that you are not sure have stayed at a safe temperature.
- **In the event of a power outage, the establishment should voluntarily close. Notify the Health Department of the closure by calling 703-246-2201, TTY 711.**
- When the electricity comes back on, contact the Health Department at 703-246-2201 to let them know that the establishment has re-opened. ■

Do You Have the REQUIRED Permits?

Did you know that you need permits and licenses from the following departments to sell food to the public?

1. Food Permit from the Fairfax County Health Department
2. Zoning permits for selling on a public or private property
3. Solicitor’s License from Fairfax County Department of Cable & Consumer Services

For more information, please call:

Fairfax County Health Department at 703-246-2201

Fairfax County Department of Planning & Zoning at 703-324-1313

Fairfax County Licensing Department at 703-324-5966 ■



Reggie and Cody invite you to check out the food inspection reports!

www.bit.ly/3YakPvx