



## Mecklenburg County Health Department

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### North Carolina Food Service Sanitation Rule Changes

On September 1, 2012, significant changes to the *Rules Governing the Sanitation of Food Service Establishments* 15A NCAC 18A.2600 will be in effect for all food service establishments in North Carolina. The most critical changes impacting food service establishments are summarized below.

#### The 5 Major Risk Factors of Foodborne Illness:

- Improper holding temperatures
- Inadequate cooking
- Contaminated equipment
- Food from unsafe sources
- Poor personal hygiene

#### IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS:

**“Cut leafy greens”** means fresh leafy greens whose leaves have been cut, shredded, sliced, chopped, or torn. This product must meet cold holding parameters.

**“Person in charge”** or **“PIC”** means the individual present at a food establishment who is responsible for the operation at the time of inspection. A PIC must be present during inspections to demonstrate food safety knowledge through certification and active managerial control.

**“Potentially hazardous food”** (time/temperature control for safety food) means a food that requires time/temperature control for safety (TCS) to limit pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin formation. TCS foods include the following: (1) an animal food that is raw or heat treated, (2) a plant food that is heat treated or consists of raw seed sprouts, cut melons, cut leafy greens, cut tomatoes or mixtures of cut tomatoes\*, or garlic-in-oil mixtures\*. Please note that TCS will take the place of the term “potentially hazardous food” (PHF).

\*Which are not modified in a way so they are unable to support pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin formation.

**“Ready-to-eat food”** (RTE) means food that is in a form that is edible without additional preparation.

#### COLD HOLDING

Cold holding units, including prep top units, will be required to maintain a temperature of 41°F or below. This requirement will be phased in over a six-year period.

#### BARE HAND CONTACT WITH READY-TO-EAT FOOD (RTE)

Food handlers will not be allowed to touch RTE foods with their bare hands. The use of utensils such as tongs, scoops, deli paper, single-use gloves, etc., will be required to handle food which will not be cooked, or cooked again before serving.

#### DEMONSTRATION OF FOOD SAFETY KNOWLEDGE

The PIC must demonstrate food safety knowledge by passing a test that is a part of an accredited food safety training program to become a certified food protection manager. Facility operators must comply with this change by January 01, 2014.

On line training will be accepted; however, exams must be taken at a proctored location. Training must be renewed every five years. There will no longer be 2 points awarded for having food safety training.

#### DATE MARKING

RTE TCS foods, once opened or prepared, and held more than 24 hours are required to be labeled. The label can state the date the item was opened/prepared, or the last date it can be used or sold. These products must not be held for more than 7 days when held at 41°F or less, or 4 days when held between 42°F – 45°F\*.

\*During the six year phase-in period.

Examples include: luncheon meat, cut leafy greens, and in-house prepared items.

## CONSUMER ADVISORY

When food such as beef, eggs, fish, lamb, pork, poultry, or shellfish is served or sold raw, undercooked, or without processing to eliminate pathogens, an advisory must be posted informing the consumer(s) of the significant health risk involved when consuming such food. Advisories shall include a disclosure of the food item and one of 3 reminders - see below. This information shall be included in the menus or posted on placards, table tents or other effective means that will serve as a visible notice of these health risks.

A Consumer Advisory must contain the following:

Disclosure such as: \*This item is served using raw or undercooked ingredients - PLUS 1 of the following reminders must be included:

1. Written information about the safety of this item is available upon request OR
2. Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood shellfish or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness OR
3. Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood shellfish or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness, especially if you have certain medical conditions.

## EMPLOYEE HAND WASHING AND PERSONAL HYGIENE

Food handlers must wash their hands and exposed arms as often as necessary to remove soil and prevent contamination from any source.

Food handlers may not wear fingernail polish or artificial nails when working with food unless single-use gloves are worn. Food handlers may not wear jewelry on their arms/hands, including medical ID bracelets. Only a plain wedding band is allowed.

When food handlers eat or use smokeless tobacco, it must be in designated areas away from food preparation, food storage and clean utensil/equipment storage.

Smoking is prohibited in food service establishments and bars in North Carolina.

## EMPLOYEE HEALTH POLICY

Food service employees must report to the PIC if they are experiencing 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 when they are sick with an illness that is transmitted through food. They must also 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 are 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 PIC is responsible for ensuring that a food service employee who reports to work sick with any of the listed symptoms, or who has been exposed to or diagnosed with any of the listed illnesses is excluded or restricted from work.

Food service employers may use the following Food and Drug Administration (FDA) website to find the following helpful information:

### Employee Health and Personal Hygiene Handbook:

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/RetailFoodProtection/ucm266434.htm>

**Questions...?** Or for a complete list of all the impending changes, contact the Mecklenburg County Health Department at: (704) 336-5100 or visit our website: <http://envhealth.charmeck.org/>