January 23, 2008

Food temperature safety

Potentially hazardous foods need to be tested to make sure they are not in the ***Danger Zone*** (temperatures between 41 degrees F and 140 degrees F). Facilities are expected to have documented evidence that they are monitoring food temperatures.

Proper food temperatures techniques are addressed in Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) Food Sanitation Rules, Chapter 333, Division 150 through 157.

Food temperature logs

When food sits in the Danger Zone, bacteria can grow fast and produce toxins that make highly susceptible individuals sick. The time food is held between 41 degrees F and 140 degrees F may not exceed ***two hours***.

Potentially hazardous foods are those that germs can grow in easily. Food like meat, fish poultry, milk, re-fried beans, cooked rice, baked potatoes, food product containing mayonnaise and cooked vegetables. These are all foods that are moist and have the protein needed for germs to thrive. Germs grow well on these foods at warm temperatures.

Following are a few examples of potentially hazardous foods and how hot they must be to be safe. They can be hotter, but they must be at least this hot to kill germs:
● Rare roast beef: 130 degrees F
● Pork, beef, steak, lamb, seafood and eggs: 145 degrees F
● Hamburger and all ground meats except poultry: 155 degrees F
● Poultry and stuffing: 165 degrees F (Stuffing should be cooked outside of poultry)
Potentially hazardous foods should not be held more than 30 minutes on the steam table prior to food services (beginning of tray line). Reheating for hot holding shall be done rapidly.

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Hot foods are to be tested in the middle of the pan, without the thermometer touching the bottom of the pan. Always remember to sanitize the thermometer before checking food temperatures and between uses. Temperatures of potentially hazardous foods are to be measured at the beginning of tray line for every meal. Temperatures for each food item tested must be documented on a log.

The above information was adapted from the Oregon Department of Human Services and the Oregon Department of Agriculture food handler outcomes booklet.

Food safety resources

In an effort to minimize the risk of foodborne illnesses, The Oregon Department of Human Services, Foodborne Illness Prevention Program has developed the *Food Safety, Your Self-Training Manual.* This 48 page training manual can be downloaded from the DHS website at www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/foodsafety/manual/shtml.

This easy to read manual addresses the different aspects of food handling such as how to manage employee illness, hand washing, preventing foodborne illnesses, temperature control etc… Throughout the manual there are study questions that test staff knowledge in safe food handling. The manual can also be downloaded in Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Vietnamese languages.

FDA Food Code and other food safety resources include:
- www.fda.gov
- www.foodsafety.gov
- www.fightbac.org

Action required

Facilities should review their policies and procedures regarding food handling and revise according to the current standards. Evidence of implementation could include hazardous food temperature logs, observation of proper food handling techniques, including the monitoring of cooking and holding temperatures for hazardous foods, length of time foods are allowed to stay in the temperature *Danger Zone*, and reviewing personnel records to ensure that appropriate staff have food handler's cards. Policies and procedures may be reviewed at time of survey to determine if they have been implemented appropriately.

Administrator Alert - continued

Reference

OAR 411-054-0030 (1) (a), Tag C 240
RCF OAR 411-054-0200 (6) (e), Tag C 535
ALF OAR 411-054-0300 (6) (e), Tag C 635