

Food for Thought

An Update for Food Operators

JUNE 2006

City of Milwaukee Health Department
Consumer Environmental Health Division
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PAYMENTS

Fees may be mailed or paid in person, by check or money order (*made payable to the Milwaukee Health Department*), by credit card (Visa or MasterCard), or electronically at: www.milwaukee.gov/payfee.

Payments made in person are accepted between 8:00 a.m. and 4:15 p.m., Mon. through Fri. **Payments are not accepted after 4:15 p.m., or by inspectors in the field.**

HOW CAN WE REACH YOU?

During a recent increase in confirmed cases of Norovirus, an informational letter was sent to operators via fax and U.S. Mail (see next article). In the future the Consumer Environmental Health Division may send out vital, time sensitive information via fax or electronically. Do we have your **current, correct**, fax and e-mail info? Please add or update this information on the enclosed payment request.

NOROVIRUS! LOOK OUT!

All City of Milwaukee Food Operators who process or prepare food were sent a letter on May 3, 2006 from the Consumer Environmental Health Division informing them of several confirmed cases of *norovirus* associated with a number of Milwaukee food establishments. Norovirus is highly infectious!

To make sure you don't sicken your customers, please review these guidelines.

- Wash hands, thoroughly and frequently. Use soap and warm running water. A quick tap water rinse, or dip into the bleach bucket is not an effective hand wash.

- Wash raw vegetables before serving.
- **Do not allow ill employees to work.** We cannot say this often enough. Food handlers who have diarrhea or vomiting must not work in your kitchen. A food handler with a confirmed case of illness that can be transmitted through food can not return to work until a physician or the Milwaukee Health Department has approved them to return to work.
- Norovirus remains viable for a long time on surfaces. Properly clean and sanitize countertops, utensils and other surfaces in the kitchen and restrooms.

The above mentioned letter is available online at: www.milwaukee.gov/health. It can also be obtained by contacting the Consumer Environmental Health Division.

FOOD EMPLOYEE REPORTING AGREEMENT

Do you have a **Food Employee Reporting Agreement**? Do you know what one is? Under the Wisconsin Food Code, food employees are **required** to report symptoms like vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal cramps to the Person-In-Charge. Do they know this? It's your responsibility to make sure they do, and to take appropriate action when they report such symptoms to you.

The Food Code Fact Sheets from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection include a sample reporting agreement. The fact sheets and a sample reporting agreement can be obtained from their website (www.datcp.state.wi.us) or by contacting the Consumer Environmental Health Division. Don't wait. Talk to your employees about illness reporting today.



Tom Barrett, Mayor
Bevan K. Baker, Commissioner of Health
www.milwaukee.gov/health

CHANGES TO THE WISCONSIN FOOD CODE

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) publishes a model food code. This code provides practical, science-based food safety standards for grocery stores, restaurants and other retail food establishments. Many states, including Wisconsin base their retail food regulations on the federal model food code.

In Wisconsin, updates to the food code went into effect on July 1, 2005. Some of the significant changes are summarized below.

Employee Health

Workers must be *excluded* or *restricted* (terms are defined in the Wisconsin Food Code) from food preparation and service based on their signs and symptoms of a foodborne illness. A sudden onset of vomiting and diarrhea requires REMOVAL AND PROHIBITED REENTRY OF THE EMPLOYEE TO THE ESTABLISHMENT. The person in charge may remove the exclusion or restriction with guidance from the regulatory authority.

Ready-to-Eat Foods

The definition of Ready-to-Eat Food was modified to further explain the term. The definition now states that foods cooked and cooled (e.g. chili) are considered ready-to-eat, even if the item is usually reheated before service.

Food Allergens

Educational information was added to the Food Code to help operators become more aware of the health concerns surrounding food allergens, and the importance of proper ingredient labeling.

Thermometers

If thin foods such as meat patties and fish fillets are cooked, the establishment is required to have a temperature measuring device with a suitable small-diameter probe to measure the temperature of thin masses. Obtain a thin probe thermometer, if this applies to you.

The definition of utensil has been expanded to include temperature sensing probes and probe-type price or identification tags. You must wash and sanitize these following the same requirements for other utensils.

HOW TO GET THE FOOD CODE AND OTHER INFORMATION

Our website: www.milwaukee.gov/health has links to the Wisconsin Food Code and Food Code Fact Sheets. Our site also has information on temporary food stands, farmer's markets, mobile food operations, opening a food business, plan review, weighing and measuring devices, tattoo and body piercing and more.

TRAINING SESSIONS

Training your employees and staying up to date on code changes is a challenge, but you don't have to do it all alone. The Consumer Environmental Health Division inspectors offer free training sessions, at your establishment. These sessions can be tailored to the needs and demands of your operation. Contact us to arrange for a session. With advance notice, an interpreter is available for translation into Spanish.

INSPECTIONS IN THE NEWS

There is increasing media interest in the work that the Consumer Environmental Health Division performs. All inspection reports are public record and available to the media upon request. Don't be surprised if your most recent inspection is featured on the nightly news.

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