

Food for Thought - Winter 2008

Tobacco Age-of-Sale Enforcement (TASE) inspections were conducted in August 2007. The TASE program has motivated retailers to stop selling tobacco products illegally through merchant education and comprehensive collaboration with the Health Departments by conducting tobacco sales inspections. It is our intent to prevent access of tobacco products to minors, and our dedication is to decreasing the non-compliance rate.

There is still much work that needs to be done in the City of Englewood. The success of this program reflects the close working relationship that the NJ State Department of Health has developed with local health departments and the business community. During the first round of inspections, 6 retailers of 23 inspected failed. As a united community, Englewood can improve upon this.

Town Stationery	3 rd offense
Drug Fair	2 nd offense
Circle Auto Service	1 st offense
Englewood Bagel	1 st offense
Tiger Mart/Exxon - Route 4	1 st offense
Wides Liquors	1 st offense

Trash Disposal

Food waste and other trash, such as food packaging, can be a source of bacterial and physical contamination and can attract pests if it is not disposed of properly. There may be two types of trash cans at food establishments – inside cans near food preparation areas, and dumpsters in special areas outside. The indoor containers need to be within the food handlers' reach. However, they must not be so close to food that they create a risk of contamination.

Remove trash throughout the day as soon as each polythene liner becomes full. Tie the bag securely and take it outside to a dumpster. Always put the liners inside the dumpsters, making sure that lids are on securely to protect the trash from scavenging animals.

Never let a container or dumpster overflow, and don't leave rubbish inside food establishments overnight. It will attract pests. Keep trash containers, dumpsters, recycling containers, lids, and the surrounding area clean. Tell the employees that additional dumpsters or collections may be needed if they become full.

Always wash your hands after dealing with trash.

Ice Sanitation Facts

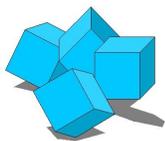


Ice is probably the fastest growing commodity in the hospitality and food-service industry. Demand is increasing all the time: Ice for drinks, for salad and fruit presentations, or for the display of fish.

Yet many in the food industry forget that ice must be treated with the same care applied to other aspects of food hygiene.

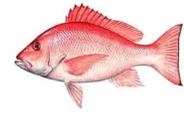
The following sanitation facts will assist in the safe handling and serving of ice.

- Wash your hands prior to handling ice. This includes a 20-second handwash with soap and water after using the restroom, sneezing or coughing, handling other foods, doing cleaning tasks or contaminating hands in any way.
- Ice machines must also be de-limed and should be professionally cleaned a few times a year. Potable water that is properly filtered at the inlet to the ice machine will keep your machine cleaner.
- Never nest multiple ice buckets. Transfer buckets should be stored inverted in a sanitary area. At the ice machine, store large ice scoops in a sanitary receptacle on the outside of the machine. Ice scoops should be made of metal or plastic.
- At the dispensing ice bin, clean and sanitize the ice bin daily and store the ice scoop in the ice with the handle up or on a clean, dry surface. Shut the cover on the bin when not in use. Never use a breakable glass as an ice scoop.
- If you fill a hopper for automatic dispensing to customers, clean and sanitize the hopper daily and keep it properly covered.
- Ice machines and ice bins must never be directly plumbed into the sewer system. There must be an “air gap” on the drain of the machine or bin. That way, the sewer system can never back-up into your ice storage units.
- If using ice for chilling sealed containers of food or beverages, do not use that ice again for human consumption in drinks.



Bottom Line Ice Safety: Clean that machine! Ice is a “ready-to-eat” food. Food workers should not handle ice with bare hands, but must always use a sanitary ice scoop, tongs, or gloves for an extra level of protection.

Seafood Safety



How to Recognize Safe Seafood

Anyone who's ever smelled rotting seafood at the fish counter has a pretty good idea of what a poorly run seafood market smells like. However, the absence of any strong odor doesn't necessarily mean that the seller is practicing safe food handling techniques.

Based on the FDA's Food Code, here are some other points to consider:



Employees should be in clean clothing and wearing hair coverings. No outerwear, ie coats or jackets should be worn.



They shouldn't be smoking, eating or playing with their hair. They shouldn't be sick or have any open wounds.



Employees should be wearing disposable gloves when handling food and change gloves after doing non-food tasks and after handling any raw seafood.



Fish should be displayed on a thick bed of fresh, non-melting ice, preferably in a case or under some type of cover. Fish should be arranged with the bellies down so that the melting ice drains away from the fish, thus reducing the chance of spoilage.



What is the general appearance of the establishment? Does it look clean? Smell clean? Is it free of flies or bugs? A well-maintained facility can indicate that the establishment is following good sanitation practices.



The seafood employee should be knowledgeable about different types of seafood. They should be able to tell how old the products are and explain why their seafood is fresh.

Figuring Out What's Fresh



The fish's eyes should be clear and bulge a little. Only a few fish, such as walleye, have naturally cloudy eyes.



Whole fish and fillets should have a firm and shiny flesh. Dull flesh may mean the fish is old. Fresh whole fish also should have bright red gills free from slime.



If the flesh doesn't spring back when pressed, the fish isn't fresh.



There should be no darkening around the edges of the fish or brown or yellowish discoloration.

Spotlight on a Food Borne Illness

Noroviruses

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause the “stomach flu”, or gastroenteritis in people. The term norovirus was recently approved as the official name for this group of viruses. Several other names have been used for Noroviruses, including:

- Norwalk-like viruses (NLV’s)
- Caliciviruses
- Small round structured viruses

Viruses are very different from bacteria and parasites, some of which can cause illnesses similar to norovirus infection. Viruses are much smaller, are not affected by the treatment with antibiotics, and cannot grow outside of a person’s body.

What are the symptoms caused by noroviruses?

The symptoms of norovirus illness usually include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and some stomach cramping. Additionally, people sometimes have a low-grade fever, chills, headaches, muscle aches, and a general sense of fatigue. The illness often begins suddenly and the infected person may feel very sick. The illness is usually brief, with symptoms lasting only about 1 or 2 days. In general, children experience more vomiting than adults. Most people with norovirus illness have one or a combination of these symptoms. ***Symptoms generally occur about 24 to 48 hours after ingestion of the virus, but they can appear as early as 12 hours after exposure. People infected with noroviruses are contagious from the moment of onset until 3 days after recovery.***

Norovirus illness is usually not serious, although people may feel very sick and vomit many times a day. Most people get better within 1 or 2 days.

Persons with weakened immune systems, the elderly and the very young need to increase their liquid intake to avoid dehydration. *Seek medical advice for persons in this category*

How do people become infected with noroviruses?

Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected people. People can become infected with the virus in several ways, including:

- *Eating foods or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus*
- *Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus, and then placing their hand in their mouth.*
- *Having direct contact with another person who is infected and showing symptoms (for example, when caring for someone with illness, or sharing foods or eating utensils with someone who is ill).*
- *Persons working in day-care centers or nursing homes should pay special attention to children or residents who have norovirus illness. This virus is very contagious.*

Can Norovirus infections be prevented?

- Frequently wash your hands, especially after toilet visits and changing diapers, and before eating or preparing food.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness by using bleach based household cleaner.
- Carefully wash fruits and vegetables, and steam oysters before eating them
- Persons who are infected with norovirus should not prepare food while they have symptoms and for 3 days after they recover from their illness. (Contaminated foods are to be discarded immediately.)

Using Sanitizers

Sanitizing food equipment and utensils is a critical step within the maintenance of a food establishment. There are two types of sanitizers commonly used to rid food-contact surfaces of a microorganism that can cause food borne illness, these are commonly known as 1) Quaternary ammonium compounds or “Quats” or 2) Chlorine (bleach). Food contact surfaces include: cutting boards, dinnerware (plastic and glassware), dishcloths and sponges, slicers and countertops/surfaces. Here is a brief description of the two methods regularly used within Englewood’s food establishments.

“Quats”



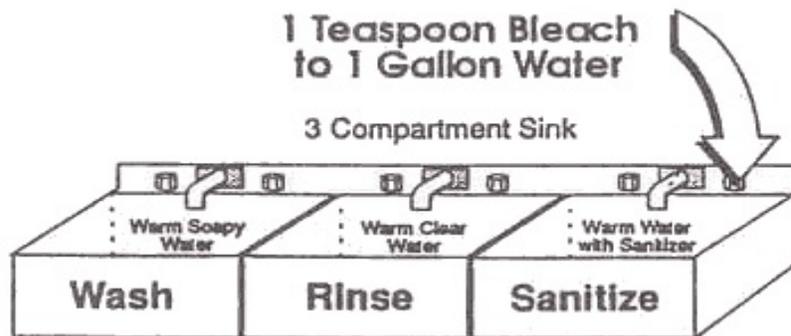
Quaternary sanitizers are used in the final rinse of either the three compartment sink set up or automatically dispensed into the final rinse in the dishwashing unit. This type of sanitizer would require a purchase from a known supplier for supplies and installation for manual or automatic dishwashing. Quaternary sanitizer strips are used to measure the concentration strength which should read as 200 parts per million (ppm)

maximum effectiveness.



“Chlorine” (Bleach)

Bleach sanitizing is the economical method used in most restaurants. Chlorine Bleach when used in its proper concentration, is effective against bacteria, yeast, fungal spores, mold, mildew and some viruses. Sanitizer strips specifically used for chlorine will allow for the proper measurement of chlorine to be maintained at 50 parts per million (ppm).



Remember: Sanitization is the most effective method of preventing cross-contamination and food borne illnesses.

REMINDERS

It is unlawful to sell tobacco products to anyone under the age of 19.

Food workers must always use a sanitary ice scoop, tongs, or gloves for an extra level of protection.

Employees should be wearing disposable gloves when handling food and change gloves after doing non-food tasks and after handling any raw seafood.

Always put the liners inside the dumpsters, making sure that lids are on securely to protect the trash from scavanging animals.

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Englewood. This issue was compiled by Enoch Moochi.