

Food Manager / Handler Certification Requirements

Revised June 2014 from Letter to Retail Food Establishments dated 9/5/12

Food safety is an issue that should be constantly on the minds of every Englewood food facility customer and regulator. Customers expect to be served safe and wholesome food at all times. A food borne illness outbreak can ruin a food facility's business. Regulatory compliance and effective food safety practices and their execution, particularly in our current economy, are vital to the success and future survival of the food service industry in Englewood. Food facilities often provide the first and best line of defense in controlling and eliminating foodborne illness hazards.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported in December 2010 that approximately 70% of all food borne disease is spread by direct or indirect contact with infected individuals. The report further states that 3,037 people die each year from tainted food served from food facilities nationwide. Over 128,000 are hospitalized and 47.8 million people become ill annually from food facility contamination. The CDC reports that one in six Americans gets sick from food every year. Salmonella was found to be the leading cause of foodborne illness causing 28 per cent of the deaths and 35 per cent of the hospitalizations according to recent data. From a fiscal loss standpoint, that translates to \$152 billion per year according to a report from the National Restaurant Association (NRA). It is vital therefore that all food handlers at the food facility level be aware of the serious consequences of poor and non compliant food safety practices.

Food handlers are defined as individuals involved in the preparation, storage or service of food in a food facility. This includes but is not limited to wait staff, chefs, head cooks, cooks, bussers, bartenders, host/hostesses that handle food, beverage pourers, and supervisory personnel, such as the general manager or managers, unless they are certified under the existing food managers certification program – ServSafe. If you stock prepackaged, non-potentially hazardous foods, or are handling food items, such as hand-stocking shelves and are employed at a non-exempt food facility (e.g. restaurant, deli food facility, or food court) then you are required to have a food handler certification.

The New Jersey State Chapter 24 (N.J.A.C. 8:24, "Sanitation in Retail Food Establishments and Food and Beverage Vending Machines", also known as the New Jersey Sanitary Code, and Englewood Health Code applies to both salaried and hourly food handlers, even if you work part-time, (e.g. one day/week) or are a temporary employee, (e.g. employed for two months) and regardless of your age.

Subject to the New Jersey State Chapter 24 are supermarkets; supermarkets with meat markets, delicatessen or bakeries, including a facility which is a meat market only. Manager Certification is required for Deli, Bakery, and Meat Market managers. Food Handler Certification is required for all employees that handle open food product.

The food certification must be recognized by the Conference for Food Protection. Below you will find a list of approved exam providers. Contact the exam provider of your choice to locate a class near you. Frequently asked questions about the food handler certification requirements can be found on the following website:

<http://www.in.gov/isdh/files/FAQFEB09.pdf>

The following certification exams are recognized by the Conference for Food Protection:

- ServSafe (www.servsafe.com)
- National Registry of Food Safety Professionals (www.nrfsp.com)
- Thompson Pro-metric (www.prometric.com/foodsafety)

All Englewood retail food establishments with employees involved in the preparation, storage, or service of food in a food facility are required to have a current food handler certification. Once the food handler certification card is issued, it is valid for three (3) years. The law requires employers to maintain all valid food handler certification cards on site. Failure to maintain records that all food handlers meet the requirements of the New Jersey Sanitary Code would constitute a violation of the law. It is the employee's responsibility to register, purchase, and pass the Food Handler's Certification. Therefore, employees of a retail establishment hired in a food handling capacity must bring their food handler certification card in and a copy will be maintained at the unit in which they work. Food handlers hired by a retail food establishment must obtain a valid food handler certification card within 30 days after the hire date.