

# CUYAHOGA COUNTY

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# BOARD OF HEALTH

## YOUR TRUSTED SOURCE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION

### MORE HEALTH CODE VIOLATIONS?

As Registered Environmental Health Specialists (inspectors) for the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, we know that operators can be surprised and/or frustrated by frequent violations. We don't enjoy writing them any more than you enjoy receiving them, but preventing or correcting violations is critical to ensure that food and beverages are safe for your customer's consumption.

Here are the five most common violations that we see and tips to prevent them:

#### 1. **Failure to ensure staff are properly trained, with documented food safety training certificate(s)**

If you are a Risk Level 1 or Level 2 facility, it is required that at least one certified person-in-charge (PIC) is on staff during all hours of operation. An Ohio Department of Health approved Person-In-Charge course meet this requirement. Click here for approved courses [Food Safety Certification | Ohio Department of Health](#)

Risk Level 3 and Level 4 food businesses must meet the requirement above, plus employ a person that is certified in manager-level food safety training. This training is more comprehensive than PIC training, to ensure that all aspects of food safety are addressed for your operation. An Ohio-accredited Manager Certification training course meets this requirement. [Food Safety Certification | Ohio Department of Health](#)

To determine the Risk Level for your facility, [please click here.](#)

For more information about how to obtain these required trainings, please [visit our website.](#)

#### 2. **Improper cold-holding of time/temperature-controlled for safety (TCS) foods**

All TCS foods must be held at 41°F or lower to prevent the growth of foodborne-illness bacteria.

To prevent serious foodborne illness from harming your customers due to improper cold-holding, it is important to do the following:

- Ensure that all coolers are equipped with thermometers
- Monitor temperatures throughout each day
- Schedule regular maintenance of equipment
- Use only commercial-grade equipment
- Keep cooler door gaskets intact
- Keep shelves clean
- Don't allow prep cooler lids to remain open while not in use
- Purchase approved commercially graded NSF or equivalent equipment

If equipment does not meet these standards, it must be repaired or replaced.

### 3. **Cooks and food prep staff are not wearing hair restraints, or are wearing them ineffectively**

Customers always remember the restaurant that served them food with hair in it and often share their experience on social media.

To decrease the negative social media comments, the following types of hair restraints are acceptable if your hair is completely covered: hairnets, baseball caps, chef hats, stocking caps, beanies, or bandanas.

### 4. **Not date-marking TCS foods**

Date-marked food can be safely kept at or below 41°F for up to 7 days.

Date-marking reminds you to throw away food before bacteria can cause foodborne illness, especially *Listeria*, which can grow at cold temperatures and is harmful to children and elderly. Remember that *Listeria* can also cause miscarriage.

**How to date-mark:** You can write dates on the container or use color codes or day dots as long as the date-marking system is consistent and can be understood by all employees. Be mindful of color-blind employees if using a color-based system.

**What date should be marked on the food?** The expiration date placed on the product is 6 days from the day the food was prepared or opened. For example, pasta that was prepared on March 15 would have an expiration of March 21.

#### **What if I combine foods with different date-marks?**

The date of the oldest ingredient would be used as a reference date.

**What if date-marked items are frozen?** Freezing foods stops the date-mark clock, but does not reset it. The date-mark clock starts again as soon as the food is removed from the freezer.

#### **What if a food looks to be spoiled before its date-mark?**

This product should never be served or sold. Throw it away or return for credit.

### 5. **Not cleaning facilities and equipment frequently or thoroughly**

Establish daily and weekly routine cleaning schedules for floors, walls, ventilation hoods, and equipment.

As long as routine cleaning procedures are in place, there really is no “down time” in a kitchen. When customer volume is low, take advantage of the opportunity to clean.

Pro-tip: Routinely use a flashlight and look below, behind, and inside equipment to be sure there is no buildup of food or debris in hard-to-see places. This also sends a nonverbal signal about cleaning expectations to staff. Remove any buildup as soon as possible.

To review the inspection history for your facility and others, please [visit our website](#).

If you need assistance with reinforcing food safety with your staff, please contact our agency at 216-201-2001 x1243 to schedule an in-service.