Tips

The Food Safety Newsletter for Brown, Nicollet, Watonwan and Cottonwood Counties

In This Issue:

Trending

Pg. 2

“Person In Charge” Reminder

Pg. 3

What IF……

Pg. 4

Registration Form

August 2016
6 Hour CFM Class & Test

Pg. 5-6

Protect yourself, your friends and your family

Pg. 7

What does the Minnesota Food Code and our Annual Mandatory Licensing Meetings have in common???

Good question! The answer is: both are changing. This year, for the first time in 18 years, we will not be requiring any licensed establishment to attend a mandatory meeting to obtain their license application for 2016. This decision was made because our agency anticipates the development of required training in 2016 as Minnesota moves towards the adoption of a newly revised Minnesota Food Code.

The revision to the Minnesota Food Code, which has taken 5 years so far, will require training for both licensed food establishments and regulators. As you know, we had an opportunity in the past to enhance training and education offered by our agency by having an Environmental Health Educator. Unfortunately, the staff time allowed for that position was significantly reduced in 2015. In order to prioritize our time with you for education and training, we have decided to eliminate the Mandatory Licensing Meetings usually scheduled for November. This will allow us to concentrate on training that may be needed to accommodate the adoption of a new Minnesota Food Code. We anticipate that these new training opportunities will be offered in the summer or early fall of 2016. I know most of you will breathe a sigh of relief when you read this, but believe it or not, the Annual Meetings are something we look forward to each year and we are hopeful that we can schedule them again in 2017.

Please call our office if you have questions or concerns about this change. We will be providing all of the information you need for your 2016 Annual License in the mail this November.
Lately we have been noticing a trend during our inspections—IMPROPER COOLING!

Safe cooling requires removing heat from food quickly enough to prevent microbial growth. Excessive time for cooling of potentially hazardous foods has been consistently identified as one of the leading contributing factors to foodborne illness. During slow cooling, potentially hazardous foods are subject to the growth of a variety of pathogenic microorganisms. A longer time near ideal bacterial incubation temperatures of 70°F to 125°F, must be avoided. If the food is not cooled quickly, pathogens may grow to sufficient numbers to cause foodborne illness.

The rules for cooling food items require cooling from 140°F to 41°F in 6 hours, with cooling from 140°F to 70°F in 2 hours. The 6-hour cooling process, with an initial 2-hour rapid cool, allows for greater flexibility in meeting requirements. The initial 2-hour cool is a critical element of this cooling process. An example of proper cooling might involve cooling from 140°F to 70°F in 1 hour, in which case 5 hours remain for cooling from 70°F to 41°F. On the other hand, an example of improper cooling may be, cooling from 140°F to 41°F in 6 hours, but the initial cooling to 70°F took 3 hours. In this case the food safety hazards are not adequately controlled.

Cooling requirements are based on growth characteristics of organisms that may survive or be a “post-cook contaminate” and grow rapidly under temperature abuse conditions.

**Cooling from Ambient Temperature**

Violations for cooling prepared foods made from ambient temperature ingredients are often a problem too. The term ambient also applies to cold potentially hazardous food which, during the course of normal preparation at ambient conditions in the kitchen, warms to more than 41°F.

Sandwiches, salads, cut melons, tomatoes and sushi are often improperly cooled because of this issue.

Properly cool foods at ambient temperature by:
- Pre-chilling products and ingredients prior to preparation
- Covering loosely (not in a clam shell or plastic wrap) while cooling

**Corrective Actions:**

If temperature and time requirements for cooling cooked food items are not met the food item must be reheated to 165°F for 15 seconds and the cooling process must begin again. Reheat cooked, hot food and begin the cooling process again using a different cooling method when food is:
- Above 70°F and 2 hours or less into the cooling process.
- Above 41°F and 6 hours or less into the cooling process.

Use a different cooling method for prepared foods made from ambient temperature ingredients when the menu item is:
- Above 41°F and less than 4 hours into the cooling process.

**Cooling Methods:**

Appropriate cooling methods can ensure that foods reach the required temperatures within the allowed time. Some efficient ways to cool are:
Managers and employees share in the responsibility to use safe food handling practices that reduce the potential for foodborne illness. Trained staff must be able to identify and take corrective action to eliminate high-risk practices that increase the potential for foodborne illness.

One of the things we see often during inspections is a large container tightly covered with a lid or plastic wrap, with condensation on the lid or plastic. This is a good indicator that the food items has not been properly cooled.

**Remember to PROPERLY COOL all prepared foods!**

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**Remember to “PIC your Person” in 2015!**

The food code requires a designated person to be “in charge” at the food establishment during all hours of operation. This designated “Person in Charge” is responsible for assuring safe food handling practices and must be able to demonstrate knowledge of foodborne disease prevention.

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**“PIC” Your Person
*PERSON-In-Charge**
**WHAT IF…..**

A violent summer storm knocks out power leaving your restaurant scrambling for ways to keep frozen or refrigerated foods from spoiling. Here are some tips from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for keeping food safe if the power supply is interrupted:

- A full freezer will stay at freezing temperatures for about two days without power. A half-full freezer will maintain a safe temperature for about a day. If your freezer is not full, group packages together so they protect each other.

- Resist the temptation to keep looking to see if the food is still frozen. Each time you open the freezer door, warm air rushes in.

- If it appears the outage will last for several days, call our office for help. We may suggest placing dry ice around the items to be kept frozen, being careful not to let it touch the food packages directly. Twenty-five pounds of dry ice will hold a 10 cubic-foot full freezer for three to four days. Don’t touch dry ice with your bare hands breathe the fumes in an enclosed area.

- Group meat and poultry to one side or on a tray so if they begin to thaw their juices won’t get on the other foods. Always discard items in the refrigerator or freezer that have come into contact with raw meat juices. Meat or poultry that still contains ice crystals may be safely refrozen. Once they thaw or are only “cool feeling,” it is better to cook them. Cooked items can then be refrozen.

- Never taste food to check if it’s safe! And don’t rely just on appearance or odor to determine if food is safe. When in doubt throw it out!

- If you have any doubt about the safety of a thawed food, or if you detect a slightly unusual color or odor, play it safe and throw the product out! You don’t want to risk making your customers sick.

- Food in the refrigerator should be safe if the power is out for no more than four hours. Keep the door closed as much as possible. Discard any perishable foods (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers) that have been above 41 degrees F for more than two hours.
Certified Food Manager 6-Hour Class and Exam

Registration Form

When:  
**Tuesday, August 18, 2015**

Where:  
Brown County License Bureau  
1900 N. Franklin Street — Conference Room A  
New Ulm, MN (see map on back)

*Please do not park in parking lot; park on side streets. Thank you!*

Time: 9:00 am until 3:00 pm

Registration Fees:  
Please circle one…

- Within Brown, Nicollet, Cottonwood or Watonwan County  $ 170.00
- If you print your own class manual prior to class from our website  $ 140.00
- Outside four county area  $ 195.00
- Exam only (must have already attended a 6-hour class)  $ 75.00

NEW POLICIES: Payment must be received prior to the meeting, if you sign up for the class and do not show up, payment will not be returned.

****You must bring a picture ID with you to the meeting.

Please detach the bottom portion and return with your registration fee no later than **Friday, August 7, 2015** - Save this top portion of the form as a reminder!

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**6-Hour Certified Food Manager Class—Tuesday, August 18, 2015**

Name ____________________________________________________________

Establishment ______________________________________________________

Phone ____________________________

Amount Paid ________ (make checks payable to Brown-Nicollet CHS)

Return with fee to:  
Brown-Nicollet CHS  
322 S. Minnesota Avenue  
Saint Peter, MN  56082  -  Phone: 507-934-4140
They’re here……………
Protect yourself, your friends and your family!

Spray
before you work or play

- Prevent West Nile Virus Disease - keep bug spray handy.
- Dusk and dawn are when the mosquitoes are out.
- Use mosquito repellent with up to 30% DEET.
Reminder:

Certified Food Manager 6-hour Course

Tuesday, August 18 ~ 9:00 a.m. — 3:00 p.m.

Are you in need of any materials?

Posters, Logs, Charts? Temporary Food License Application? Handwashing Posters?

You can find these and many more helpful resources on our website!

Check it out! www.co.nicollet.mn.us > Brown-Nicollet Environmental Health