# Food for Thought

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Volume 2 Issue 4
Spring 2011

## Food Safety Reminders

- **Wash Hands Often!**
- **Don't handle ready-to-eat foods with bare hands.**
- **Report symptoms of foodborne illness to management.**
- **Food must come from an approved source**
- **Cook foods to proper temperatures.**
- **Use a food thermometer!**
- **Keep hot food HOT - above 135°F**
- **Keep cold foods COLD - below 41°F**
- **Keep foods out of the *Danger Zone* (41°F-135°F)**
- **Wash, rinse and sanitize food contact surfaces regularly**
- **Wash Hands Often!**

# Employee Health Policy Revisited

The first phase of the Employee Health Policy Initiative of 2011 is half completed. As inspections are being conducted during the first half of 2011, information is being given to all food service owners/operators which can be used as a basis for a valid employee health policy as required by the Fairfax County Food Code. Also as part of this first phase, *expectations* are being set. During the second phase, as inspections are being conducted over the last half of the year, operators will be asked to explain how they have implemented the employee health information into their own Employee Health Policies. Is there employee training on foodborne illness symptoms? Is there a method in place to confirm that employees have acknowledged that they have a responsibility to report symptoms of, diagnosis of or exposure to foodborne illness? Is there a plan in place for management's response to a report of symptoms of, diagnosis of or exposure to foodborne illness? If you have any questions about implementing your employee health policy, you may contact your area inspector or call the Health Department at 703-246-2444.

One piece of information being given as part of the Employee Health Policy is a form referred to as the Employee Agreement or Form 1-B. The form has a signature block for employees to sign, acknowledging that they 'agree to report to the person in charge' if they experience symptoms of, are diagnosed with or are exposed to foodborne illness. There has been some question as to whether this form meets HIPPA confidentiality requirements. Form 1-B comes directly from the FDA Model Food Code. As part of the Model Food Code, Form 1-B has met all requirements of HIPPA confidentiality. If you have any questions about the use of the Employee Agreement as part of your Employee Health Policy, you may contact the Health Department at 703-246-2444.

## Reminder: No Bare-hand Contact

Bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat foods can be a contributing factor to the risk of a foodborne illness. Examples of bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat-foods are: mixing salad lettuce with bare hands in the prep kitchen; handling bread and deli meats with bare hands at the sandwich prep line; or placing cooked foods on plates with bare hands. The use of single-use, disposable gloves is a very good means of preventing bare-hand contact. It is also a good practice for employees to use disposable gloves when handling raw foods such as ground beef and chicken. Proper use of gloves and proper changing of gloves can be a big help in preventing cross-contamination. Wash hands with soap and water before putting on clean gloves. Tongs and deli paper may also be used to handle ready-to-eat foods.

When a "no bare-hand contact" policy is combined with an effective Employee Health Policy and handwashing procedures, the risk of a foodborne illness is reduced. **Bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat food is prohibited by the Health Department.** If an inspector observes bare-hand contact with a ready-to-eat food, he/she will recommend that the food item be voluntarily discarded by the person in charge. The food handler will be asked to wash his/her hands and to use another method, such as gloves, to handle the ready-to-eat food. (Page 2)

The inspector will cite the code provision for bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat foods. If the food is not discarded, the inspector may add a citation for not discarding contaminated food. It is the Certified Food Manager's responsibility to train employees on methods to reduce the risk of foodborne illness (see next article). If you have any questions about bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat foods, please contact the Health Department at 703-246-2444.

## Do You Have Enough CFMs?

The Fairfax County Food Code requires that food establishments are under the direct supervision of a Certified Food Manager (CFM). This is referred to as *active managerial control*. This means that during all hours of food preparation, food service and kitchen clean-up there must be a CFM on the premises. A single CFM may not go to the bank "for fifteen minutes." Do you have more than one CFM?

The requirement under the Fairfax County Food Code is that a CFM pass an approved food safety test. After passing the test, a picture ID must be obtained from ORS Interactive, located in Falls Church. The certification and ID card are valid for five(5) years. At that time, another test must be passed for continued certification. Most food service establishments require a *full* Certified Food Manager (CFM). In certain food service operations a *limited* certified food manager (LCFM) is required. Specific information regarding the certification requirements and testing process is available on the Health Department website at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/food/cfmlist.htm.

What are the responsibilities of a CFM? According to the Food Code, the CFM is *'responsible for training food service personnel in sanitary food-handling techniques and proper methods of food protection, and for ensuring that good public health and food protection practices and sanitary techniques in manufacturing, storing, serving and transporting foods are used at all times on the premises under his control.'* This requires that the CFM put into practice what was learned in order to pass the CFM test; he must train employees in safe food-handling practices. Information is available from the area inspectors and the Health Department website to provide specific training materials to employees in various languages, if necessary.

If a restaurant is operating without a CFM on site, the Permit to Operate will be suspended and the restaurant closed. There is a $200.00 fee to re-instate the permit after the CFM arrives on-site. Do you have more than one CFM?

If you have any questions regarding the Certified Food Manager requirement in Fairfax County Food Code, please refer to the website or you may call the Health Department at 703-246-2444.

## Fraudulent Phone Calls

The Fairfax County Health Department (FCHD) has been contacted by several retail food establishments concerning phone calls received from a person claiming to be with the Virginia State Health Department. In most cases, the caller states that they will be conducting an inspection at a later date and time, gives the operator an "inspection code", and then says someone else will call to ask for that code.

Please be aware that these phone calls are not coming from FCHD or the Virginia Department of Health. These calls are fraudulent and are part of a nationwide scam. It is **not** the policy of the FCHD to schedule or pre-arrange routine inspections with an operator. It is also **not** the policy of the FCHD to charge or collect fees or fines during an inspection. When FCHD staff members do visit food establishments, they will identify themselves, state the purpose of the visit, and present a valid Fairfax County Government photo identification card.

Please make your employees aware of this information. If you receive a suspicious phone call or if you have questions about an inspector coming to your facility, please contact the Health Department at 703-246-2444.

## Kitchen Corner Quiz

(answers below)

1. Bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat food is a risk factor for foodborne illness. (T or F)
2. The use of single-use gloves, tongs and deli paper are methods to prevent bare-hand contact. (T or F)
3. Food which has been handled with bare hands must be thrown away. (T or F)
4. All food service facilities must have a Certified Food Manager (CFM) on site at all time. (T or F)
5. The CFM certification is good for 3 years. (T or F)
6. One responsibility of the CFM is to train employees in good food safety practices. (T or F)
7. Food safety training materials are available on the Health Department website. (T or F)
8. If a food service establishment has no CFM on site, the restaurant will be closed and a $200 fee must be paid before re-opening. (T or F)

Answers: 1. T; 2. T; 3. T; 4. T; 5. F; 6. T; 7. T; 8. T



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