

Wisconsin Food Code Updates



Over the past year the Department of Health Services and the Department of Agriculture have been busy updating the Wisconsin Food Code (WFC). In August these state agencies met with industry and local health department representatives to go through the purposed updates. The WFC updates reflect changes already made in the 2009 FDA Food Code. A copy of the 2009 FDA Food Code may be found at:

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/RetailFoodProtection/FoodCode/FoodCode2009/>

Here are some of the proposed major changes to the WFC:

- Cut leafy greens and cut tomatoes will require temperature control for safety
- Food employees will need to demonstrate an awareness of food allergens
- Frozen commercially processed & packaged raw animal foods can now be stored with frozen, packaged ready-to-eat food

- Ground meat (hamburger) cannot be served raw or undercooked from a children's menu
- Foods exempt from date marking will include:
 - Deli salads that are commercially produced
 - Hard and Semi Soft Cheese
 - Cultured dairy products like sour cream
- The code will allow non-heated, fast blowing air for hand drying devices at handwashing sinks instead of single-use towels

The draft of the Wisconsin Food Code will go to public hearing in the winter of 2011 and will hopefully be finalized by the end of 2011.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your district sanitarian at (608)243-0330.

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Meat Slicer Maintenance

By Dave Gifford, Manager, WA DOH Food Safety Program

As discussed at the Washington State Department of Health (WA DOH) Fall Food Safety Workshops, meat slicers in restaurants and grocery stores can be a major public health concern if they are not appropriately maintained and cleaned.

In 2007, a salmonellosis outbreak may have been caused by a restaurant's contaminated meat slicer. The meat slicer appeared to be in good repair, but hidden mechanical defects and improper washing may have

contributed to this outbreak. There have also been recent outbreaks in other states where unclean meat slicers were named as the primary contributing factor.

Following the above-mentioned outbreak, [WA DOH] completed a small-scale field survey of food establishment meat slicers and found that both slicer construction and cleanliness are common concerns.

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Meat Slicer Maintenance

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Meat scraps can accumulate under the handle of the slicer due to gaps in the silicone pieces. The meat scraps could then degrade and leach onto food being sliced.

The survey found that many slicers were inadequately maintained. Both the food contact surfaces and the non-food contact parts of the equipment tend to deteriorate over time. They found handles and plastic pieces that were cracked or broken, missing screws and degraded or missing silicone seals. There were even some food scraps that had calcified to the point where regular cleaning would not remove it.

In the salmonellosis outbreak, they found that gaps in the silicone allowed meat scraps to accumulate under the handle of the slicer, degrade and leach contamination onto the food that was being sliced. A quick glance might not show this type of problem.

Many slicers were not being adequately cleaned, either due to improper methods or inadequate frequencies. **Slicers used throughout the day need to be taken apart and cleaned every four (4) hours.** Very few establishments were cleaning at this frequency, and many were not being cleaned properly. Some were using wiping clothes – which is not proper cleaning.

See page 3 for instructions on how to properly clean and sanitize a meat slicer.

Since the WA DOH completed their survey, they have had phone and in person meetings with representatives of various meat slicer manufacturers. The manufacturers are now very aware of the potential food safety issues related to old, defective slicers and have taken steps to assist retail facilities to repair or replace them.

Article reprinted with permission from the Washington State Department of Health – Food Safety Program.

Three Keys to Meat Slicer Care:

• **Maintenance/Cleanability**

- Pay special attention to slicers that are more than a year old and those that are heavily used, as they are more prone to malfunction and durability issues.
- Look at the places where plastic parts meet the metal parts. Check the plastic/metal interface whenever you see these slicers. The WA DOH found that over 50% of all the slicers with both plastic and metal parts were cracked or broken. These need to be repaired or replaced.
- Look at silicone seals. Degraded seals can lead to hidden food accumulation that can leak onto food contact surfaces.

• **Cleaning Methods and Frequencies**

- Ask the appropriate employee how and how often slicers are to be cleaned.
- Slicers in use all day need to be taken apart and all food contact surfaces need to be washed, rinsed and sanitized every four (4) hours.
- Wiping the slicer down with a cloth or rag is not acceptable.

• **Slicers that Operate Under Heat Lamps**

- Heat lamps provide a good environment for bacteria and also may speed up the degradation of silicone seals and plastic parts. Pay close attention to these slicers and ensure air drying before use.

“Degraded silicone seals can lead to hidden food accumulation that can leak onto food contact surfaces.”

Accela - Coming to a Computer Near You!

For many months Public Health Madison and Dane County has been working closely with City of Madison Information Systems on implementing an entirely new licensing and inspection software system called Accela.

Accela delivers a cost-effective way to move traditional counter services to the Web, providing citizens and businesses with easy and convenient 24/7 online access to government services.

This project will bring many new perks when managing the licenses you hold with the Public Health department and other City of Madison departments. In the near future you will be able to perform the following online:

- Renew and pay for licenses
- View your own establishment's inspection reports
- Apply and pay for a temporary food permits

We will send you more information in the future with detailed instructions on how to create an account to access your establishment's information.

Don't worry - those of you without access to a computer or the internet will still be able to send in your payments through the mail. Stay tuned for more Accela updates!



Image Source: www.accela.com

How to Clean and Sanitize a Meat Slicer

1 Rule: **USE CAUTION!** Slicers are extremely dangerous to clean. Only trained personnel should clean a slicer.

Steps for Cleaning

| | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Switch the power off and remove the plug from the power source. 2. Set the slice control to zero, so that the blade is flush with the machine. 3. Dismantle the slicer, taking great care in handling the blade. 4. Wash and sanitize all removable parts either in a mechanical dishwasher or in your utensil washing sinks. 5. The rest of the machine parts should be thoroughly cleaned using hot water, detergent and a cloth. Use a brush to wash the hard-to-reach areas. 6. Rinse with hot, clean water. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Apply a sanitizer per the manufacturer's instruction. 8. With clean hands, reassemble the slicer. 9. Check that all guards are back in place. 10. Reconnect power and test run to ensure that the machine is working safely. If not, turn the machine off, disconnect power and make necessary adjustments. Retest the slicer. 11. Switch the machine off, unplug and cover. |
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Legionnaire's Disease - A Recent Wisconsin Outbreak



Potential heat sources such as decorative lighting near grocery misters should be evaluated in order to prevent warm water temperatures.

Photo: www.food.change.org

In March 2010 eight people from a Milwaukee area hospital were diagnosed with Legionnaire's disease, a lung infection and form of pneumonia caused by a water-borne bacteria. Luckily, there were no deaths related to this outbreak, even though fatality rates can be as high as 30% in people diagnosed with Legionnaire's disease.

The early symptoms of the disease are similar to common respiratory illnesses and pneumonia, however, people may also experience: a high fever (102 to 105°F), dry cough, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. People with mild respiratory illness normally recover within 2 to 5 days without medical treatment, while people with the more severe form of the disease require medical attention with antibiotics. Legionnaire's disease is not spread person to person.

The Milwaukee area outbreak was related to a decorative water wall in the lobby of the hospital. An electric fireplace on the opposite side of the wall housing the water fountain increased the temperature of the water, providing the perfect environment for the bacteria to grow. The sick people contracted the disease by breathing in the water vapor from the decorative water wall, which contained the Legionella bacteria. The bacteria are naturally found in most sources of water. Man-made water sys-

tems such as water misters and sprayers, cooling towers, hot water tanks, and decorative fountains have all been linked to outbreaks of legionellosis.

The best way to prevent an outbreak is through good sanitation. Periodic maintenance of the water system that includes shutdown, cleaning and draining of the system and plumbing, and disinfection is extremely important. Maintenance should be scheduled more frequently if the water system is located in facilities that have large numbers of elderly persons, people suffering from chronic lung disease, or individuals with weakened immune systems from pre-existing illness.

In addition to preventative maintenance of the system, potential heat sources like fireplaces near fountains and decorative lighting near grocery misters should be evaluated in order to prevent warm water temperatures that may promote growth of the Legionella bacteria.

More information can be found at:

http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/patient_facts.htm

For guidelines on control of Legionella in ornamental water features, visit:

<http://www.legionellae.org/guidelines/guidelines.htm>

“Fatality rates can be as high as 30% in people diagnosed with Legionnaire's disease.”

Food Cart Requirements

Are you thinking about opening up a mobile food cart? Check out our updated licensing information at:

<http://publichealthmdc.com/environmental/food/mobilefood.cfm>

Be sure to view the new slideshow, especially designed for new food cart operators.



WI Act 101: The “Pickle Bill”

A new law called Wisconsin Act 101, or the “Pickle Bill,” was passed in February 2010. The Pickle Bill allows the uninspected sale of certain home-canned pickles and naturally acidic, acidified or fermented fruits and vegetables.

It's important to note that the Pickle Bill is a narrow exception to the law, and **ALL** of the following must apply:

- Products must be prepared at home – not at a restaurant or retail establishment.
 - Items prepared must have an equilibrium $\text{pH} \leq 4.6$.
 - The person receives less than \$5,000/year (gross, not profit) from the sale of the products.
 - The person must complete a home-canning safety course, or follow an approved recipe.
 - Only canned, screw-top jar products that do not require refrigeration are allowed.
 - A sign stating “Products made in a private home and not subject to state inspection” must be displayed at the point of sale.
 - Stringent labeling, record-keeping and food product testing (pH) requirements apply.
- Products are sold in Wisconsin directly from the producer to the consumer at community or social events like:
 - Farmers' Markets
 - Non-retail roadside stands
 - Fairs/Celebrations/Bazaars
 - Sales NOT allowed:
 - **Restaurants or retail stores**
 - For wholesale (resale by some one else)
 - Out of the home
 - For-profit events (carnivals, fund-raising events, craft shows, etc.)
 - Consignment
 - Via the internet
 - Out of state

What does the Pickle Bill mean for a licensed establishment operator? Most important to remember is that since the foods produced under the Pickle Bill are exempt from licensing, they are not considered an “approved source” for use in your restaurant or retail food establishment.

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Restaurants and retail food stores cannot serve or sell food processed under the Pickle Bill.

Environmental Health Staff Update

Recently, Tommye Schneider retired after 37 years with the health department. Tommye worked as a microbiologist, sanitarian, supervisor and lastly as the Director of Environmental Health. We wish her the very best of luck in her retirement!

We are happy to announce that Doug Voegeli has been promoted to Director of Environmental Health. Doug had been the Environmental Health Services Supervisor with the health department for the past 10 years. Prior to working for Public Health Madison and Dane County, Doug worked for the State of Wisconsin as an Evaluation and Training Officer. He started his environ-

mental health career in a small rural health department in southwest Minnesota.

Doug also is an Environmental Science Officer in the United States Army Reserves and recently returned from Afghanistan where his detachment was the public health resource for the southern and western areas of the country. Needless to say, our department is very pleased to have Doug safely back with PHMDC and in his new role as Director of Environmental Health.

Congratulations Doug!



Beware! Health Inspector Scam



Not sure if one of these smiling faces is truly a Public Health Sanitarian? Ask to see their department I.D.!

Recently, a few Dane County food establishment operators have been contacted by a scam in which one or more people posing as a public health inspectors try to schedule an inspection. These individuals say they are “public health officials/inspectors” working for the health department. They usually request to schedule a restaurant inspection and ask detailed personal and business information. In some cases the operators are given a unique code number and telephone number and requested to call the “inspectors” back.

This scam has been reported in other states from Maine to Hawaii, as well as in Canada. It appears that establishments are targeted to both extort money and possibly so the scammers can set up fake identities via websites, in order to fraudulently sell goods and services. These websites require a phone call in order to verify an identity before setting up an account, which is why the impersonators usually try to have the operator call back at a later time.

Local operators have reported that the scammers have been scared off when asked for lots of information about their “agency,” their identities, their manager’s information, etc. To protect yourself and

your establishment, always verify the credentials of anyone representing themselves as an inspector. Do not give out any personal, private or secure information to anyone without first confirming their identity.

Sanitarians working for Public Health Madison and Dane County have a department photo i.d. they can present – do not be afraid to ask to see it! If you are contacted by a suspicious person claiming to be an inspector, you can always contact PHMDC at (608) 243-0330 to determine if the person really does work for the local health department.

PHMDC first received notice of this scam in the summer of 2010 and sent an email advising people to beware via our “Food Establishments” list-serve. Didn’t know about this scam until now because you aren’t on the email list? Sign up now! Go to <https://my.cityofmadison.com> where you can quickly and easily sign up for an account, then choose to receive emails in our “Food Establishments” group.

Anyone can sign up, not just those within the City of Madison! For more information on the email groups, contact PHMDC at (608) 243-0330.

Informational Source: <http://www.palatine.il.us/news/default.aspx?&ArticleId=89>

“Local operators have reported that the scammers have been scared off when asked for lots of information.”

WI Act 101: The “Pickle Bill”

(cont. from page 5)

Many resources for more information about the Pickle Bill are available. For helpful, thorough fact sheets on the Pickle Bill, visit:

http://www.foodsafety.wisc.edu/assets/pdf_Files/Pickle_Bill_April_EMRule2.pdf

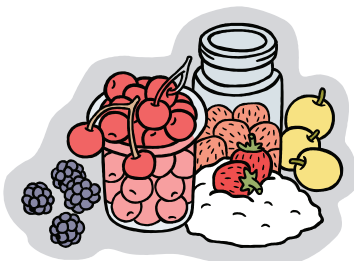
http://www.foodsafety.wisc.edu/assets/pdf_Files/home%20canning%20factsheet_DATCP.pdf

Questions about the Pickle Bill and its details should be directed to:

Barb Ingham
UW-Extension Food Scientist
(608)263-7383
bingham@wisc.edu

Questions about retail licensing fees, state regulations and facility requirements should be directed to:

WDATCP
(608)224-4700
food@wi.gov



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Help Wanted: Safe Food Advisory Committee

Since 1997, Public Health Madison and Dane County (PHMDC) has had an active Safe Food Advisory Committee to help provide needed feedback to our department. This committee of food industry partners meets 4 times a year to discuss various food safety and inspection related issues. Some of the committee goals include to:

- Act as a liaison between PHMDC and the foodservice industry.
- Serve as an advisor to PHMDC on food-service issues that affect the public health and safety of the community.
- Assist with the development of PHMDC operational policy and procedures.

- Discuss industry concerns on PHMDC policies and procedures.

Some recent agenda items included discussions about the Safe Food Crew food safety training program, putting inspection reports online and the criteria for Achievement Awards for excellence in food safety.

We are looking for **2 volunteers** to represent the **retail food industry** – grocery stores, convenience stores, bakeries, and delis. If you are interested or would like more information please contact our office at (608) 243-0330.



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Food Safety Info Sheets

Let's be honest: food safety information is not always the most interesting thing to read, yet it is very important because that information can help reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses. How do you solve this problem? By reading the Food Safety Info Sheets!

Check out the website at [http://
foodsafetyinfosheets.wordpress.com](http://foodsafetyinfosheets.wordpress.com).

This website is maintained by Dr. Benjamin Chapman at North Carolina State University. About once a month the site posts informative, to-the-point and often very humorous food safety info sheets that you can print out and post in your establishment for your employees to read. The info sheets are a great way to share foodborne illness and food safety information with your staff.

The Food Safety Info Sheets website is presented in a blog format, which makes it easy to subscribe to their RSS feed and be notified when a new info sheet has been posted. Simply go to their website, click on the "Subscribe to feed" link, and follow the instructions to confirm the subscription.



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