

UNDERSTANDING THE INSPECTION AND ENFORCEMENT PROCESS

Every once in a while we get a phone call from an unhappy food establishment operator who doesn't understand the Health Department inspection and enforcement process. Usually, by the time the person calls, he or she has been cited for uncorrected violations and is surprised that this could happen.

All of us at the Madison Department of Public Health are aware of the challenges and hard work involved in running a food establishment. We respect those operators who must constantly train new staff, deal with equipment that is always breaking down and must put in long hours on a daily basis.

In most cases, we will work closely with you to allow you a fair chance to make the corrections called for on the health inspection. But the bottom line is that you must be able to provide safe food to the public at all times.

Often we will mark several different types of violations on the inspection sheet.

There may be physical repairs that are needed, such as patching a hole in the wall; there may be operational corrections that are needed, such as cleaning under your fryer; or there may be critical item violations, such as chicken being held at 100°F.

The critical item violations, as the name indicates, are the most serious and need your immediate attention. We try to get these violations corrected on the spot or, if that is not possible, give you until the end of the day to get the corrections made.

Normally, we will give you 1 to 2 weeks to correct the operational problems and 30 days to correct more extensive physical problems.

Your health inspector will clearly mark down the dates on your inspection sheet by which corrections must be completed. Before leaving your establishment, he or she will go over each item with the person in charge and carefully explain what needs to be done. These correction dates, therefore, are firm.

When we return to re-inspect, these items must be completed or you will be facing a referral to the City Attorney and a fine for each uncorrected violation.

We do understand that sometimes you order things that do not come, or schedule repairs that don't get done before the time of reinspection. It is your responsibility to find out when the work will be done and ask for an extension from your inspector **before** he or she returns to re-inspect.

One final word. Be sure the person in charge when you, the owner or manager are not around, knows enough to tell you when we have been in to inspect or re-inspect.

Then, find the inspection sheet that was left and call your inspector, if anything is not clear to you.

If you are timely in making your corrections and communicate well with us, you will have one less thing to worry about in the day-to-day operation of your food establishment!