

INTRODUCTION

Food is necessary for life. It also provides a feeling of comfort and satisfaction. However, food can also carry pathogenic bacteria, chemical residues, and other foreign material that can cause illness and injury to people. Through carelessness, a lack of correct knowledge and training, and a lack of wholesale food supplier certification of safety, there are an estimated 6.5 to 81 million foodborne illnesses and from 525 to over 7,000 resulting deaths a year. The estimated cost of foodborne illness in the United States adds up to over 20 billion dollars.

Foodborne illnesses are responsible for such symptoms as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and extreme discomfort. Physical objects cause choking and broken teeth. In some instances, death results. The severity of the illness is dependent on its cause and the level of susceptibility of the person involved. Foodborne illnesses are particularly devastating when acquired by the elderly, infants and people who are immune compromised.

No foodservice employee wants to cause intestinal illness, disease or injury in people. The wholesale food industry lacks food safety assurance management and exercises very little control over microbiological, chemical, and hard foreign object hazards in food, particularly fresh food. Therefore, foodservice employees must assume that any incoming food supplies are potentially hazardous unless the supplier has specifically certified the food as safe.

Correctly trained foodservice employees are essential in preventing foodborne illnesses. These employees are trained to recognize food safety hazards and apply management-specified critical control procedures during the production and service of food. Thus, foodborne illness outbreaks are prevented. If a foodservice employee does not apply the correct procedures and is proven to be the cause of an illness, they can be held liable, sued, and financially devastated.

The material covered in this booklet provides the knowledge that foodservice employees need to know in order to avoid making customers ill. Owners, managers, and supervisors have the responsibility to identify hazards. Employees should expect owners and managers to establish safety-assured policies, procedures, and standards that ensure safe food production and service. Employees should expect to be trained and coached so that they never make a mistake in handling food.

In August of 2003, the FDA revised the hot-holding requirement for potentially hazardous food to 135°F. Cooling recommendations were also revised for the 2003 Code. It is now stated that “potentially hazardous food be cooled from 135 to 70°F within 2 hours, and within a total of 6 hours from 135 to 41°F or less. Potentially hazardous foods prepared from food at ambient temperature, such as reconstituted products and/or canned food items such as tuna, must be cooled to 41°F or less within 4 hours. These recommendations have not been changed by most state food regulatory agencies. As a result, states may use different cold- and hot-holding standards and cooling recommendations.

The hot-holding temperature for roast beef has been 130°F since the publication of the 1982 FDA Retail Food Store Sanitation Code. There is no foodborne illness outbreak data that indicates 130°F is unsafe. Scientific studies indicate that 130°F will eventually become the standard hot-holding critical temperature for all food.