

KNOW THE FACTS!

DIGITAL FOOD SERVICE INSPECTIONS

Residents can access inspection reports for licensed food service operators and retail food establishments in Hamilton County (excluding those within the cities of Cincinnati, Norwood, Sharonville, Springdale and St. Bernard). Visit our Web site, www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org, for more information.

Why did the Health District make inspection reports available online?

Residents should have an understanding of what is being done to protect them from food borne diseases. Making inspection reports available online helps residents get to know Ohio's Uniform Food Safety Code by gaining a better understanding of what our sanitarians look for when they inspect a facility, as well as the steps taken to correct violations.

The Health District inspects nearly 3,000 food service operators each year. In 2006, we conducted more than 7,000 inspections. While traditional paper inspections take a lot of time and paperwork to complete, the computer-based system will save time, while at the same time giving the public access to an important public health function.

What will I be able to see when I search for an inspection report online?

Both critical and non-critical violations are shown on inspection reports. The corresponding food code and recommended corrective actions are listed with each violation so residents understand what is required to correct the problem. This information will help residents better understand Ohio's Uniform Food Safety code and what is done locally to enforce it.

- **Critical violations** are items that, if in noncompliance, are more likely than other violations to contribute to food contamination, illness or an environmental health hazard. Examples include food obtained from an unsafe source, inadequate cooking, improper holding, contaminated equipment, and poor personal hygiene.
- **Non-critical violations** cover such things as dirty floors, lack of hair restraints, and open waste receptacles. These can usually be corrected while the sanitarian is on site.



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DIGITAL FOOD SERVICE INSPECTIONS (cont.)

What impact will online restaurant inspections have on the community?

Residents will have easy access to a commonly requested public record and they will gain a better understanding of what's being done locally to protect them from food borne illnesses. Residents will be able to use this information to make decisions about what businesses they want to use or visit based on a facility's inspection history.

It is important to understand, however, that a single inspection report shows only the conditions of the facility at the time of the inspection. A single inspection report should not be used to evaluate a food service establishment. Looking at a facility's inspection results over a period of time gives a more accurate picture of that facility's commitment to food safety and sanitation.

What types of reports are available online?

Inspection reports for all of the Health District's licensed food service operators and retail food establishments will be available, including: restaurants, grocery stores, school cafeterias, nursing homes and daycare centers. Reports will only be available online for those facilities inspected after March 1, 2007. More reports will be added online as the inspections are completed.

What do you look for when conducting an inspection?

Sanitarians inspect restaurants and other licensed food service operators for proper food storage, handling, preparation and serving. We want to ensure that eating out is a safe and enjoyable experience for Hamilton County residents. Depending on the type of facility, inspections occur one to two times per year, not including follow-up inspections. Sanitarians can choose to conduct additional inspections throughout the year if he/she feels the facility needs extra guidance/monitoring. Inspections are not scheduled in advance; owners do not know when a sanitarian will be conducting an inspection.

What are common problems found during an inspection?

Many problems found during an inspection are non-critical and do not pose an immediate public health threat, for example: dirty floors, lack of hair restraints, and open waste receptacles. Most non-critical violations can be corrected while the sanitarian is on site. These violations are still noted on the inspection report as a matter of record.

Critical violations are more serious and may require a follow up. These violations are more likely than others to contribute to food contamination, illness or an environmental health hazard. Critical violations may require additional follow up from the sanitarian to ensure the problems are corrected properly.

While most businesses value your patronage and work hard to provide quality food and service, some may fall short of the task. As a general rule, Health District sanitarians practice education over enforcement and work with food service staff to help them understand the food code and prevent potential problems before they occur. Sanitarians conduct food safety trainings with food service staff to ensure they understand and follow proper food handling procedures.

Would the Health District ever close a restaurant?

Very rarely. Anytime a food service establishment is found to pose an imminent hazard to the public health, it is closed. An imminent health hazard may exist because of an emergency such as a fire, flood, extended interruption of electrical or water service, sewage backup, misuse of poisonous or toxic materials, the onset of an apparent food borne illness outbreak, a gross unsanitary occurrence or condition, or other circumstance that may endanger public health.

How can I report a complaint about a food service facility?

If you encounter a problem or have a concern, first try talking to the owner or manager and ask that the problem be corrected. If you are not satisfied with the response, or if you want to report a suspected food borne illness, contact the Health District immediately at (513) 946-7800 or www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org. We investigate all complaints we receive.



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