



Frequently Asked Questions About Food Inspections

What happens on a food inspection?

The inspection has two-parts; it is a **snapshot** in time to visually inspect operations for food safety violations, and it is an opportunity to **interview** operators about food processing and determine practices that are food safety concerns, even though they may not be visible on a walk-through.

How often do inspectors stop by?

Inspections occur twice a year; once during the period January 1st through June 30th, and once during the period July 1st through December 31st. Facilities that fail to comply on two consecutive routine inspections are inspected quarterly until they have completed four inspections without failing. Costs of the additional inspections are charged to the restaurant owner. Inspectors may also stop by to investigate complaints.

How long does an inspection take?

Inspection times vary. It could take a few minutes or several hours to inspect the operation and conduct a food safety interview with the manager. The average inspection lasts a little over an hour.

Can I follow the inspector through the inspection?

Yes. We encourage the person in charge to come along with the inspector on the walk-through. This way, we can ask questions about the operation, and they can explain the different processes by which food is prepared. We know that sometimes the manager will be busy, so this is not required if you don't have time.

Can I ask the inspector questions?

Yes! We encourage two-way communication during inspections. It is better for operators to have questions answered by the inspector directly than to try to guess about proper procedures later.

What is a passing score?

A passing score is anything between 70-100.

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What would cause my restaurant to have to close down?

There are two circumstances in which a restaurant will be immediately closed due to food safety violations:

1. If the operation fails to achieve a score of 70, and then does not receive a passing score within 30 days
2. If there is an uncorrected critical violation (i.e. approved alternative procedures are not followed, or there are no approved alternative procedures available).

The permit holder shall immediately discontinue operations and notify the Environmental Health Department of any imminent health hazard that exists at the food establishment such as a fire, flood, extended interruption of electrical or water service, sewage backup, misuse of toxic materials, onset of an apparent food borne illness outbreak, or other emergency circumstance that may endanger public health.

What is a critical violation, and what is a non-critical violation?

Critical violations are items noted during inspections that can directly affect the health and well being of the consumer. They are zero, four and five point violations. **High Risk** critical violations are related to the **"5 Risk Factors"** associated with food borne illness.

1. Improper Holding Times and Temperatures

- Foods must be reheated to 165° F within 2 hours then held at 140° F.
- Hot foods must be held at 140° F at all times.
- Cold foods should be stored in refrigerator at 41° F or below.
- The one exception is that food may be held between 41° F and 140° F for 4 hours. It must then be discarded.

2. Contaminated Equipment/ Cross Contamination

- Food maybe contaminated when:
- It is placed on surfaces or utensils that had been used for other food preparation especially raw animal products.
- Juices or other fluids from raw animal foods drip or splash onto foods.

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3. Poor Personal Hygiene

Food handlers are required to wash hands twice for twenty seconds

- At the beginning of shifts
- After breaks
- After using the toilet
- After contaminating hands with bodily fluids, e.g. coughing or sneezing.
- After handling any raw meat.

4. Foods from Unsafe Sources

All foods in restaurants must be obtained from approved sources

- No foods from home
- No foods from back of cars (illegal vendors)
- No foods that you got from your neighbors back yard

5. Inadequate Cooking

Cook raw meats to the following temperatures:

- 145° F for 15 seconds – eggs, fish, beef and pork.
- 155° F for 15 seconds – injected and ground beef and pork and fish cakes.
- 165° F for 15 seconds poultry, ground poultry and stuffed meats.

Non Critical Violations: any 1 or 2 point violations

Do I need a restaurant license if I just have a coffee shop or a bar?

Yes, unless you are only serving exempt foods. Please see Pages 5-6 of the Oregon Food Sanitation Rules for the definition of a Food Establishment:

<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/foodsafety/docs/foodsantiationrulesweb.pdf>

How long is a food handler's card good for?

The card is valid for three years from the date the test was passed. Cards issued from any state-certified provider are valid throughout Oregon.

Can anyone see my inspection score and inspection report?

All food inspection reports are public records and are available by public records request. Our website shows only your score and any high risk critical violations.

<http://www2.co.multnomah.or.us/Health/mchealthinspect/ListSearch.aspx>

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How can I do better on my next inspection report?

The most important thing is to make sure there are no critical violations. But there is always room for improvement in food safety in any operation, even if you received a score of 99. If you are interested in improving food safety at your operation please consider:

Manager Training: Food Safety training by a nationally certified program has been demonstrated to lower the risk of food borne illnesses. More information here: <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/foodsafety/docs/fmgr2008.pdf>

Employee Sick Leave: allowing employees with potentially infectious illnesses to take time off will reduce the risk of food borne illnesses in your establishment.

I lost my last report. Can I get a copy of my last inspection report?

Yes. Please call our office at (503) 988-3400, or contact your inspector.

Can I schedule my inspections?

No, all Semi-annual complete inspections are unannounced.

Why do you have to come at lunch hour/other busy times?

Oregon Food Sanitation Rules specify that we can inspect at any time during operating hours. However, we avoid starting inspections between 11:30am and 1:00 pm for most restaurants that serve lunch, and do not start inspections after 5 pm for most pubs or taverns. Value of information gained from seeing your operation during busy times is outweighed by loss of your attention during the inspection. Sometimes an inspection may start before 11:30 and run into a busy time for you. This is not intentional.

Can I request an inspector with whom I have had good past working relations?

No. For efficiency and cost effectiveness, inspection staff is assigned to particular geographical districts.

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Of course, Multnomah County welcomes comments on any inspection experience, positive or negative, to allow us to develop our staff and our program as a whole.

How frequently do I have to update my license?

Licenses must be updated every calendar year, according to state regulations. If an operation is licensed between October and December, the licensing fee is halved.

Where can I get Food Handlers information?

For general information, please see the Multnomah County Environmental Health Website at:

<http://www.co.multnomah.or.us/health/mchealthinspect/index.html>

Online Food Handler Test:

<http://www.oregonfoodcard.com>

If I sell my business (or buy someone else's) is the license transferable? No. Although some licenses that businesses are required to obtain are transferable, ours is not. Because we license the operation, and not just the facility or location and new owners often change menus and procedures, we must issue a new license when a business changes hands.

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