

Rule Revision Update:

The Washington State Board of Health approved the revised food service regulations at its September 8, 2004 meeting.

The rule changes go into effect May 2, 2005.

Rule Revision Background

- Washington's food service rules were last revised in 1992.
- In 2001, the State Board of Health initiated the major revision of the food rules.
- RCW 43.20.145 mandated that the most recent (2001) FDA Food Code be considered for the food service rule.
- The FDA Food Code serves as the basis for food service rules in 45 states.
- The new code will provide Washington with rules that are more consistent with national food safety standards.

Temperature Danger Zone

The "Danger Zone" is the temperature range in which most bacteria are able to grow in potentially hazardous foods. The Danger Zone currently used in Washington is 45°F-140°F.

Because several bacteria that cause foodborne illness have been shown to grow at 45°F, the new code will lower the required cold holding temperature.

The revised Danger Zone will be 41°F to 140°F.

What if your refrigerated units can't keep food at 41°F? If your current equipment is able to keep food 45°F but *unable* to keep food 41°F, you will have until May 2010 to replace the cooler with compliant equipment.

Two Notes:

1. The five-year grace period is only for machines unable to meet the requirement—if your cooler is mechanically able to keep foods 41°F, you will be required to adjust it to meet the required temperature.
2. If your cooler is unable to keep your foods 45°F or colder, it must not be used for potentially hazardous foods.

Why isn't the new colder temperature required for eggs? Shell eggs can still be stored at an ambient temperature of 45°F or colder because the bacteria of concern [*Salmonella* Enteritidis] is inhibited at 45°F. This temperature is also consistent with the USDA temperature requirement for eggs during transport.

Potentially Hazardous Foods

Potentially Hazardous Foods [PHF] are foods that require time and temperature control to prevent bacterial growth or production of bacterial toxins. PHF must be kept out of the Danger Zone for food safety.

With the new food code, *cooked* fruits and vegetables will be added to the list of Potentially Hazardous Foods.

Potentially Hazardous Foods include:

Animal products:

- meat, fish, and poultry
- dairy products, including custard pies
- eggs (except for air-dried, hard cooked eggs with an intact shell)

Fruits and vegetables:

- raw seed sprouts
- sliced melons
- garlic and other fresh herbs in oil
- *cooked fruits or vegetables*

Cooked starches:

- potatoes, legumes, beans, rice

Why were cooked fruits and vegetables added to the list of PHF?

Because a plant's natural defenses are often destroyed with cooking, cooked plant foods may allow disease-causing bacteria to grow.

Although fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables are ready to eat at any temperature, they must be cooked to 140°F if they will be hot-held. The hot holding temperature for cooked plant foods will also be 140°F to prevent the growth of disease-causing bacteria that might be present.