

Moving Forward: COVID-19 in 2022

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We're Back!

During the first years of the pandemic environmental health staff were tasked with lots of new roles— you may have even seen us at the vaccination clinics last year! Due to this change in focus, routine inspections for most low and medium risk food service establishments were paused. In 2022 we expect to resume our normal inspection schedules. For low and medium risk facilities that means at least one visit per year. For high risk establishments, at least two. We are also restarting our biannual food worker training classes in person. See details about upcoming classes are on page two of this newsletter.

After two long years, we are finally getting a hint of what the future with COVID-19 might look like. Distancing, occupancy, and enhanced cleaning requirements for restaurants have been lifted. Most mask use mandates are done, too. The COVID-19 pandemic is not over, but we've made progress, and we're seeing results.

First, let's take a moment to celebrate! Restaurant operators like you faced an unprecedented challenge and made it through. Your resilience, adaptability and commitment to public health made this recovery possible, so thank you!

What does this mean going forward? Some of the changes you made during the early stages of

the pandemic will probably be habits worth keeping. Increased hand washing, sanitizing high touch surfaces, and improving ventilation continue to be important. At current health metrics, mask mandates are unlikely to restart, but we may see seasonal or periodic changes to requirements in the future. Your mask policies might be different if you serve a high risk population, or if you have employees with health concerns. As always, we are here to help

if you have questions.

We also encourage you to continue educating your employees about sick worker policies. The health code requires that employees **MUST** stay home when they are feeling unwell. This protects you and the public both from COVID-19 and foodborne illnesses.

And again we thank you for all your hard work in the past couple of years.



What on Earth is an air gap??

A commonly cited violation in restaurants is a missing air gap in plumbing installation. It seems that every time we cite this violation the reaction is the same: "What's an air gap?" Basically, an air gap is a separation in the drain line under a sink or other equipment. This ensures that if the drain line backs up, waste water can't make contact with food or dishes. It's also called an indirect drain. A diagram of the most common type is shown here.



Where are air gaps required? We expect them on the 3-bay sink, dishwasher, ice machine, and prep sink. Hand wash and slop sinks do not require an air gap.



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LIVINGSTON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Necessary Time of Prep

If you have been in the food service world for a while, then you know that temperature control is a huge component of safely working with food in the kitchen. Temperature control means potentially hazardous foods are kept cold (below 45° F) or kept hot (140°F or above) at all times. But what happens when the food item cannot be “in temp” because of steps required to complete the recipes? Are you in violation of the Health Code or even worse, creating a hazardous food item?

Usually, the answer is no. Even the strictest of Health Inspector understands that a cheeseburger patty might be over 45°F while you’re pressing it. In fact, the Health Code specifically says you’re allowed a reasonable amount of time for preparation (not to exceed 2 hours) of a potentially hazardous food item.

Issues arise when determining what a “reasonable amount of time” actually is. Are those cooked whole potatoes sitting for a bit to steam off so you don’t burn your fingers when you skin them? Okay! Or have the potatoes been left in the pot off in the corner of the kitchen with no signs of activity? As inspectors, that wouldn’t seem like a “reasonable” prep step and would most likely result in a violation.

One way to clear up confusion between kitchen staff and inspectors is to complete a HACCP for items with long prep processes. When a HACCP review is completed for a menu item, all steps and processes are laid out start to finish. Here the process can be finalized and agreed upon with the inspector and kept on file. This way, the next time the inspector comes to the kitchen, you can show that you are following the plan, and everything is good to go.

Always remember:

- limit the amount of time food is out of temperature
- actively work with the product
- work with reasonable amounts
- return to temperature control as soon as possible
- never** exceed 2 hours



Food Worker Training

Online Food Workers Course

The Livingston County Department of Health is now offering an **online** Food Worker Training Certification! This course may be completed at anytime. For more information, visit our website:

<https://www.livingstoncounty.us/1019/Food-Worker-Training>

Please note that there is \$10 fee for the online course which is paid directly to the third party course provider. The LCDOH will continue to offer in-person trainings free of charge at our regularly scheduled times.

In-Person Food Workers Courses

Tuesday April 5, 2022 9am-12pm

Wednesday April 6, 2022 1pm-4pm

Thursday April 7, 2022 5pm-8pm

PRE-REGISTRATION IS A MUST!!

Space is limited and classes fill up quickly. Please register online using the link above on or before April 1, 2020.

If you don’t have internet access call our office to register at (585)243-7280

All courses are being held at the Livingston County Highway Department at the Hampton Corners Complex on Gypsy Lane.

At least one employee from each food establishment must have a current certificate from an approved Food Workers Course. Please call the LCDOH for more details regarding approved courses.