

HACCP-Based SOPs

Using Time Alone as a Public Health Control to Limit Bacteria Growth in Potentially Hazardous Foods

PURPOSE: To prevent foodborne illness by ensuring that potentially hazardous foods are not held in the temperature danger zone for more than 4 hours before being cooked or served.

SCOPE: This procedure applies to foodservice employees that handle, prepare, cook, and serve food.

KEY WORDS: Temperatures, Holding, Time as a Public Health Control

CRITERIA FOR USING TIME AS A CONTROL:

If time is used as the public health control, the following criteria *must be* met:

- The food must be marked, logged or otherwise identified to indicate the time that is four hours past the time when the food is removed from temperature control.
- The food must be cooked and/or served or discarded within the four hours.
- Food that is designated being under “Time as a Control” must be discarded. There are no exceptions.

Written procedures that ensure compliance with the time as a control provision must be prepared in advance and maintained in each food service site. The written procedures must be available to the local health department upon request and include cooling methods for food that is cooked and cooled prior to using time as a public health control.

Some jurisdictions require notice and/or pre-approval prior to implementation. Check with your local health department to verify whether pre-approval is needed before implementing time as a control.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Train foodservice employees on using the procedures in this SOP. Refer to the Using and Calibrating Thermometers SOP.
2. Follow State or local health department requirements.
3. If state or local health department requirements are based on the *2013 FDA Food Code*, establish written procedures that clearly identify the:
 - Specific foods for which time rather than temperature will be used to limit bacteria growth.
 - Corrective procedures that are followed to ensure that foods are cooled properly. Refer to the Cooling Potentially Hazardous Foods SOP.
 - Marking procedures used to indicate the time that is 4 hours past the point when the food is removed from temperature control, such as an oven or refrigerator.
 - Procedures that are followed when food is in the danger zone for greater than 4 hours.

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4. Cook raw potentially hazardous food within 4 hours past the point when the food is removed from temperature control.
5. Serve or discard cooked or ready-to-eat food within 4 hours past the time when the food is removed from temperature control.
6. Avoid mixing different batches of food together in the same container. If different batches of food are mixed together in the same container, use the time associated with the first batch of food as the time by which to cook, serve, or discard all the food in the container.

MONITORING:

1. Foodservice employees will continually monitor that foods are properly marked or identified and logged with the time that is 4 hours past the point when the food is removed from temperature control.
2. Foodservice employees will continually monitor that foods are cooked, served, or discarded by the indicated time.

CORRECTIVE ACTION:

1. Retrain any foodservice employee found not following the procedures in this SOP.
2. Discard unmarked or unidentified food or food that is noted to exceed the 4-hour limit.

VERIFICATION AND RECORD KEEPING:

Foodservice employees will mark or otherwise identify food as specified in the Instructions Section of this SOP. The foodservice manager will verify that foodservice employees are following this procedure by visually monitoring foodservice employees and food handling during the shift. The foodservice manager will complete the Food Safety Checklist as directed by the district. The Food Safety Checklist is to be kept on file for a minimum of 1 year.

DATE REVIEWED: _____ **BY:** _____