

**Food
Protection
Committee**

**F P C
Newsletter**

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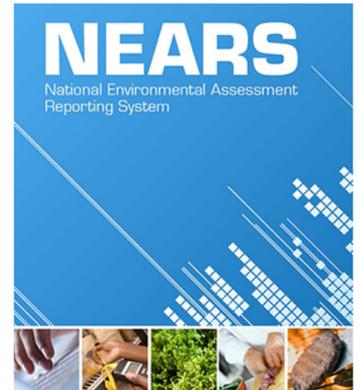
POINTS OF INTEREST

- The food code does not have an air temperature requirement.
- Checking the air temperature will give an indication of temperature trends.
- Check the temperature of any food refrigerated over 24 hours. If it's OK, then the unit is working.

NEARS program comes to Indiana

Attendees at the recent Food Protection Committee meeting learned that Indiana will be a part of the National Environmental Assessment Reporting System, known as NEARS, used to submit foodborne illness data. Tracy Hawkins and Stan Danao, members of the ISDH Food Protection Program's Rapid Response Team (RRT), discussed the fine points of conducting an Environmental Assessment (EA) as compared to a regular inspection. An EA would be appropriate in response to a foodborne illness outbreak investigation. NEARS provides that data collected be sent to a national data-

base at the CDC where the data can be compared to data from other reporting states in the hopes that food safety programs can improve. The EA, Tracy said, will try to improve the identification of environmental factors that contributed to a given illness outbreak, and spotlight areas where improvements are needed at the food establishment. Stan offered that an EA may focus on past events related to a foodborne illness, where as a regular inspection is more about what is happening "today". He added that the EA response should be within 24 hours.



Both Tracy and Stan agreed that becoming a partner in NEARS would be positive for Indiana. The collected data will allow CDC to release reports from time to time that will aid states in improving food safety programs. Participation may help prevent future outbreaks, they said.

What you should know about...

AIR TEMPERATURE

Thermometers are required to measure the internal temperatures of refrigeration units. But, while thermometers are required, no place in the current (or coming) food code will one find a code

cite for the "air" temperature being in violation. Go ahead and look...It isn't there. Why? Because no one eats the air. It's all about protecting the food and as long as the food is not in the danger zone, there is no

violation. What the air temperature will tell you is the general function of the refrigeration unit. If the air is too warm for too long, everything in the unit will soon reach equilibrium and be too

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Tracking food legislation in other states

What if there was a way to track legislation involving food safety in other states? Now there is, thanks to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). Founded in 1974, thanks to grant funding, the NCSL has now added the areas included in environmental health to its searchable database.

Food Safety News reports that NCSL gave a summary of actions taken by state legislatures in 2018 that included 756 measures related to food safety, covering everything from mobile vendors to edible cannabis. Of those bills filed, 170 became law, plus there were 18 resolutions.

A common issue being addressed among states includes the safety of food donations, more than safety in food establishments. Some states looked at nutrition legislation to address health issues like obesity.

States have the primary responsibility and oversight for food safety and rely on the FDA's *Model Food Code* that is intended to provide consistency among states. But the FDA document is not law until it's adopted by each state.

NCSL research has indicated that states generally are focusing on issues including, can non-TCS foods be sold without oversight,

what food products should be labeled, and how to regulate mobile food trucks.

Here is the database link. Cut and paste completely in a browser.

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/environment-and-natural-health-resources/environmental-health-legislation-database.aspx>

In Indiana, The Indiana Environmental Health Association's General Environmental Health Services Committee tries to track all pertinent legislation being considered by the Indiana Legislature. Members may check the IEHA website for details.

What you should know about... (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

warm. Then, if any TCS food measures above 41° F., there may be a violation. (Time might also be a factor.) But no violation should ever be marked for air temperature.

Checking the internal air temperature of refrigeration units

"Check the temperature of the food to determine safety. Checking the ambient air is not enough."

regularly might clue operators into a pending maintenance issue if a trend is noticed that temperatures are slowly rising each day.

It's necessary to check the temperature of the food. Checking the air is not enough.

An example

where an inspector might go wrong would be checking a unit during its defrost cycle. The air will measure too warm, but a properly functioning unit will still maintain proper food temperatures. Marking a violation would be incorrect. Besides, what section would you mark?

To evaluate a refrigeration unit's performance, measure any food that's been held over 24 hours. If it is OK, then the unit is OK.

"Smart" coolers can check you out

Customers and inspectors look into reach-in coolers. Now, a model being tested by Walgreens, has the ability to look back.

Called "smart coolers," the units are equipped with cameras that scan customers' faces and infer age and gender. The tech-

nology, developed by a tech company called Cooler Screens, won't actually use facial recognition to ID you, but will make



inferences based upon the size of your jaw, eyes, and distance between features, according to *Circa*. The point is to collect data about shoppers habits to change how marketers sell products in the future.

What items should not go into a microwave oven?

Microwave ovens are a boon to kitchens and can speed up the cooking process. But because of the way microwave appliances function, some items should not go inside.

Whereas conventional ovens penetrate heat from the outside in, a microwave heats by radiation penetrating the food and causing the molecules of water, fat, and sugar to vibrate, which creates friction that generates heat. It's that heat that cooks or reheats the food.

Foods best cooked with conventional methods include -

Thin meats

Meat that is too lean will never heat sufficiently to reach the required 165° F no matter how long its heated.

The meat will just dry out. This is why meats like bacon cook well in a microwave - plenty of grease.

Seafood

Insider reports that seafood

cooked in a microwave will come out with a texture like a balloon, too rubbery.

"Some foods don't lend themselves to microwave cooking. Foods that are too dry or too lean will not heat sufficiently."

Aluminum, metals

Sparks can fly (literally) when metal like foil is exposed to microwave radiation. Food employees must be aware of plates, utensils, etc., that may contain aluminum or some other metals. To be safe, use items labeled as safe for microwave use.

Rubber, plastics, Styrofoam

Such items may heat up in the microwave oven and can vent toxins like biosphenol-A (BPA), or the toxins may leach or melt into the food, says Insider.

Pizza or bread

This might be a matter of taste rather than safety, but the texture of anything doughy will be destroyed in a microwave.

Although thawing frozen meat in a microwave oven is acceptable, care must be taken to monitor the food and cook it immediately when sufficiently thawed. Heating the meat partially, and allowing it to stand could accelerate pathogen growth.



All microwaved foods much reach 165° F. to assure safety. Many foods can't achieve this temperature.

Brown paper bags

Paper is highly flammable and may contain inks that, when heated, will release toxins.

Older China or dinner plates

Many such products contain lead. Heating them can allow toxic materials to get into the food.

Raw shell eggs

Microwave heating may cause them to explode.

Again, assure that anything placed in a microwave oven is clearly labeled as safe for microwave use. The utensil placed in a microwave for reheating food should not heat up (except from being in contact with the food), only the food itself should get hot. If the plate heats up, and it's not from contact with the food, don't use it.

Why not eat raw cookie dough?

We've all heard that eating raw cookie dough is a health risk, and we all believed it was because cookie dough may contain raw eggs.

But FDA says there's another reason to not risk it. Jenny Scott, a senior advisor with FDA's CFSAN, says the flour might also pose a risk. Besides

the potential of Salmonella in eggs, flour has also been found to contain bacteria like E. coli.

Scott adds that consuming any dough, like



cake or pizza dough before it's cooked or baked is risky.

If not heat treated right away, raw dough should be held cold, and proper hand hygiene should be followed.

Reminder: the cookie dough ingredient in commercial food products has been pasteurized, so it's safe.



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FOOD PROTECTION COMMITTEE

www.iehaind.org

IEHA MISSION:

To promote, preserve and protect environmental public health in the State of Indiana, and to encourage a spirit of cooperation among all environmental health stakeholders while serving its members in the regulatory, industry and academic communities.

The **Food Protection Committee (FPC)** is one of four standing subcommittees of the **Indiana Environmental Health Association**. The committee meets approximately four times per year with dates and locations chosen by the members. Its focus is to discuss food safety related issues of interest to its members. While all IEHA members and guests may attend meetings, only voting members, as specified in the IEHA Constitution and Bylaws, may vote. Meeting information is disseminated by email. To be added to the email list, contact one of the co-chairs, or your IEHA chapter representative.

FPC Co-chairs: Lisa Chandler, Sarah Dallas

FPC Newsletter Editor: Ed Norris

Tidbits and morsels

This is about Stormy, a black rescue cat that for six years has been a permanent resident at the Fritz Creek General Store in Homer, Alaska. *The Take-out.com* describes Stormy as female, a bit overweight, and spending days alternating between naps in the sun and allowing herself to be petted by the store's regular customers.

But despite being popular with the customers, Stormy's life has taken a dark turn. The Food Safety and Sanitation Program of Alaska's Department of Environmental Conservation has informed store owners that Stormy is a food safety violation and has to go.

The plight of Stormy has received some national exposure after getting the attention of national media. One customer reportedly has commented that Stormy's presence in

the general store might actually make the place more sanitary by catching rodents. But all is not lost for Stormy. An owners' family member will give her a new home.

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For every one person in Delaware, there are 200 chickens. Station WHYY reports that chickens raised on Delaware's large farms are shipped around the world. There are about 1 million people in the state. One might not believe the math, but with a 1 to 200 ratio, that's 200 million chickens!

Future meeting dates:

June 27, 2019

August 22, 2019

November 21, 2019

Location: 2525 N. Shadeland Ave., Indianapolis

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A bill is expected to be introduced in Congress soon that will make unwashed poppy seeds an adulterant, making such sales illegal, according to *Food Safety News*.

The action was prompted after Steve Hacala's son died from morphine intoxication. The boy wasn't on drugs but apparently died after consuming tea made from poppy seeds. The proposed law would define unwashed poppy seeds as poppy seeds that have not been processed adequately to remove poppy straw, latex, or other contaminants that contribute to levels of morphine, codeine, or other compounds that pose a health risk.

