

Changes to Cold Holding Temperatures in NC

Did you know? On January 1st, 2019, cold holding temperature requirement for Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods will change from 45°F to 41°F.

Importance of Changes

Federal estimates indicate that there are about 48 million cases of foodborne illness annually. TCS foods reading at a temperature between 41° to 135°F will cause bacteria to grow at dangerous levels which could lead to several foodborne illnesses. Current science, research, and key stakeholders support reducing temperatures from 45°F to 41°F to provide the safest food for all consumers and prevent foodborne illness.

Why is this Change Happening?

- Pathogens, such as *Escherichia coli* and *Staphylococcus aureus*, can grow at 45°F, but not at 41°F.
- *Listeria monocytogenes* is a species of bacteria that can cause serious illness in certain people, such as pregnant women, the elderly, and immune-compromised people.
- Listeria grows at a much faster rate at 45°F than it does at 41°F
- When illness from listeria occurs, it leads to more hospitalizations than any other food borne pathogen and is responsible for one-third of mortality.
- Holding cold food at 41°F or below, instead of 45°F or below, is the safest way to protect customers from illness.

How Listeria Outbreaks May Occur

- Food can be contaminated with listeria in the manufacturing environment and then continue to grow at refrigerated temperatures once in a food establishment.
- Food equipment (slicers, milk shake machines, etc.) may be contaminated with listeria and cause contamination of food products when used in a food establishment.
- When outbreaks occur, they have led to devastating human cost along with a potential irreparable reputation.

What Can You Do?

Things to do to ensure compliance.

- Take temperatures often to ensure food is below 41°F.
- Do not overfill food containers in preparation coolers, and make sure that food is below 41°F before placing into cold holding units.
- Ensure equipment has regular maintenance and adequate internal and external air flow

Code Sections Affected by this Change

- 3-501.12 – Slacking
- 3-501.13 – Thawing
- 3-501.14 – Cooling
- 3-501.16 – Cold Holding
- 3-501.17 – Date Marking
- 3-501.19 – Time as a Public Health Control