

# 9 Tips to Make Food Safety a Routine and Get Better Health Inspection Scores

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Nowadays, consumers and the media are paying more attention to cleanliness and food safety than ever before. The proliferation of social networks has also enabled anybody (customer or employee) to point a spotlight on sanitary conditions at any moment. On top of that, the vast majority of health inspections are unannounced. Since these scenarios can occur at any time, how can you be sure that you will be ready, even during rush hours?

The proper strategy to get ahead of these situations is to always be ready. Now, that may sound daunting. But, here are some items to easily integrate readiness into your workweek. Managers can conduct weekly, in-house inspections to stay ahead of the game. Here are nine tips to help your team prepare:

- **Walk your establishment to get an outsider's impression.** It's easy to get locked into your day-to-day tasks and move about your facility with the familiarity of your own home. But that's an easy trap to fall into. You can become blind to conditions in the facility. After all, you see it every day. Take the opportunity to step outside of yourself and look at your facility from your customers perspective. Like its your first time in the facility. What do you see? What are the employees doing? How's the product organization? Facility cleanliness? Product Freshness? Presentation?
- **Use a checklist or better yet, use the same form** that your health department uses to inspect. This puts yourself in the health inspector's shoes. That's exactly where you want to be. Ask your local health department for a copy of the forms being used or use your last inspection form as a template. If the form looks complicated or they assign points, make it simple. Use: Yes/No, In/Out.
- **Know your priorities.** Focus on the high-risk findings. Your health department is. Things like product temperatures, handwashing, food contact surfaces, cross-contamination, etc. After those items, ask yourself what your priorities are? Complete the checklist, product rotation, display cases?
- **Communicate, communicate, communicate.**
  - **Brief your employees and review any problems post-inspection.** Use both written and verbal communication. This will help convey the importance of food safety to staff members as well as reinforce a team attitude.
  - **Set an Action Plan.** Its one thing to find problems, its another to fix them. Setting up a written action plan, lets employees know that these are priorities. Eventually as these become more routine, you'll find that employees take the initiative and actions become easier to manage.
  - **Ensure all employees are on the same page.** Be open and clear. The more they know, the more they can be extensions of you when it comes to food safety. If your staff includes employees for whom English is a second language, have the findings, the Action Plan and your expectations translated so everyone understands how important food safety is. If you have an employee who is bilingual, consider leveraging their expertise. A bilingual staff

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member might use terms or phrases that might not make sense or could be misinterpreted in other dialects.

- **Reinforce the importance of hand washing.** Post signs at all kitchen sinks and in employee restrooms.
- **If you have other managers train them on what you are doing and encourage additional food-safety training.** Restaurant employees can use [ServSafe](#) food safety training programs.
- **Ask your local health inspector** about any special, local requirements that apply to your facility. Also, ask them about anything that they have seen other facility's do that could work for you. Use their knowledge. They want to see you succeed in food safety too.