

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that each year in the United States, roughly 1 out of 6 people (48 million people) get sick; 128,000 are hospitalized; and 3,000 die of foodborne diseases.
- It is a shared responsibility of the food industry and the government to ensure that food provided to the public is safe, unadulterated, prepared in a clean environment and honestly presented.

Restaurant Inspection Program

Public Health’s Environmental Health Division licenses and inspects over 1,100 food service establishments within Washtenaw County. Facilities include restaurants, bars, school cafeterias, worksite cafeterias, coffee shops, ice cream shops, concession stands, catering kitchens and more. Establishments can be fixed or mobile, and long-term or temporary. The purpose of conducting these inspections is to ensure that safe food is being served to the public.

Routine inspections take place twice per year and are typically unannounced. Each inspection is a snapshot in time, and conditions found at the restaurant are not necessarily the conditions that could be found at other times. Sanitarians (health inspectors) ask many questions about the menu, operations and procedures to get the best possible idea of the day-to-day conditions of the establishment.

Food service establishments are regulated under the State of Michigan’s Food Law and the Michigan Modified Food Code.

Three categories of violations exist:

- **Priority** violations are the most serious, as they are problems directly associated with foodborne illness. Examples include improper food temperatures or lack of hand washing.
- **Priority Foundation** violations are problems that can lead to a Priority violation. Examples include lack of soap at a hand washing sink or not having an appropriate food thermometer.
- **Core** violations are problems related to general sanitation and facility maintenance. Examples include dirty floors or equipment in disrepair.

From October 1, 2014 - September 30, 2015, Washtenaw County Environmental Health sanitarians conducted **2,342** routine inspections, **900** follow-up inspections and cited a total of **10,896** violations. These were the most commonly cited Priority & Priority Foundation violations:

Rank	# of Times Cited	Priority/Priority Foundation Violation Name
1	510	Improper Hot and Cold Holding of Food
2	317	Dirty Food Contact Surfaces
3	262	Cleaning Frequency of Food Contact Surfaces
4	177	Improper Sanitizer Level in Dish Machine or 3 Compartment Sink
5	173	Foods not being Marked with a Discard Date
6	155	Controlling Pests
7	152	Cooling Methods
8	143	Chemical Storage
9	136	Hand Washing Sink Not Accessible
10	134	Cross-Contamination of Raw Meats and/or Eggs with Ready to Eat Foods



Moldy, bulging cans of tomato paste at a local restaurant.



Grease and debris underneath cooking equipment at a local restaurant.

General Restaurant Complaints

Environmental Health responds to general complaints for all foodservice establishments we inspect. Our policy is to begin investigating a complaint within 5 business days, but most are investigated within one to two days. Our sanitarians generally make a site visit to the suspect establishment to investigate the complaint. Complaints regarding a retail grocery store, convenience store, party store, processing facility or warehouse are referred to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD).

The most common complaints we receive include staff touching foods with bare hands, staff not washing hands, insects or other pests in the establishment and lack of general cleanliness. In addition, customers at times find unsavory items in their food, including **hair**, a **staple**, a **gemstone** and a **tooth**.



Cigarette butts on the kitchen counter of a local restaurant.

The Environmental Health Division investigated **103** restaurant complaints from October 1, 2014 - September 30, 2015.

Foodborne Illness (“Food Poisoning”)

Environmental Health investigates foodborne illness complaints for all foodservice establishments we inspect, as well as for those inspected by MDARD.

Our policy is to initiate foodborne illness investigation within 24 hours. Sanitarians contact the ill individual and take a 3-day food eating history. Sanitarians also make a site visit to the suspect establishment and follow the flow of food from delivery to preparation to consumption, in an effort to determine if the food may have led to illness.

During large outbreaks involving multiple ill individuals, sanitarians work with Public Health nursing and epidemiology staff to gather information on potential common sources of illness. Staff interview ill and well individuals in an effort to rule out any suspect foods. Staff also coordinate with hospitals and laboratories to have foods and human specimens tested to determine the organism causing illness and to see if cases are related to a common source.

The Environmental Health Division investigated **64** foodborne illness reports from October 1, 2014 - September 30, 2015.

What is WCPH doing to address this issue?

- WCPH inspects all operations serving food to the public, investigates foodborne illnesses and responds to foodservice establishment complaints. All results of routine and follow-up food service establishment inspections are publicly available on our website in a searchable database, available at <http://foodsafety.ewashtenaw.org>.
- WCPH partners with Michigan State University Extension to offer ServSafe food safety manager courses, including a 16-hour Manager Certification Course and an 8-hour Manager Re-Certification Course. Restaurants must have at least one certified manager on staff, making this a valuable partnership that helps the industry fulfill the requirement.
- WCPH partners with Mlive to post results of restaurant inspections online in the news media. Environmental Health staff sends reporters truncated inspection results, and in turn the reporters review the full reports and post the results online for readers.
- WCPH has an agreement with the University of Michigan’s Department of Occupational Safety and Environmental Health for their agency to carry out environmental health programs, including food service inspections, on University property. This agreement has been in place for decades and functions with an excellent partnership between the agencies.
- WCPH has long enjoyed a collaborative relationship with local restaurant operators. The department leads a Food Service Advisory Committee, comprised of both department and industry representatives. The Committee meets to discuss important issues and potential legislation, leading to greater understanding of both parties’ interests and concerns.

For more information:

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