



Food Service Inspection

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Fast facts

- ▲ About 3,000 food establishments are inspected by Hennepin County's Public Health Protection unit each year.
- ▲ Food service inspection has four primary goals:
 - Prevent foodborne illness.
 - Correct and prevent conditions that may adversely affect consumers.
 - Provide standards for the design, construction, operation and maintenance of food establishments.
 - Meet consumer expectations of the safety of food establishments.

What is food service inspection?

Hennepin County regulates food establishments to protect the health, safety and general welfare of the people. The county acts on behalf of the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, which require food service providers, from cart vendors to five-star restaurants and from school cafeterias to grocery stores, be inspected and licensed for health reasons.

The county's goal is to make sure food staff have a thorough understanding of safe food handling. This is accomplished through the inspection process, informal training of food service staff and a requirement that each establishment have a certified food manager on site for each shift.

How many inspections are done each year?

Hennepin has 12 environmental health specialists who inspect close to 3,000 food facilities a year. Nine cities in Hennepin County – Minneapolis and Bloomington the largest of them – have their own food inspection programs.

Most food facilities are inspected at least once every year; some low-risk facilities are inspected every 24 months.

What happens during a food inspection?

Inspectors rate food handling, the facility and operations to ensure that the operator is meeting health safety codes, which are spelled out in the Minnesota Food Code (MN Rules Chapter 4626) and Hennepin County Ordinance. The rules and regulations meet criteria established by the Centers for Disease Control and the Food and Drug Administration.

How is the rating done?

Each inspection begins with a perfect score of 100, and points are deducted for violations, such as improper handwashing or poor sanitation. A critical violation, such as improper food temperature, represents a five-point deduction and requires immediate remediation. A non-critical violation, such as damaged or missing floor tiles, receives a minor deduction of one point. Other situations – such as a sewer back-up or the loss of one or more utility services – are viewed as significant health risks equating to a fully failed inspection and trigger an immediate closure of the facility until corrections can be made.

A food service inspection is a snapshot in time of what the operations were like at the time of inspection. Within one food facility, there may be several operations, so the eating area may receive one rating while the bar receives another.

Operators compare scores from year to year and appraise the establishment's general performance. County staff use inspection information to determine training needs of food service staff.