Lincoln-Lancaster County
Health Department

Food Manager Memo #1 (Revised 9/19/03)

Frequent Food Temperature Violations

The Food Code requires that all time/temperature control for safety (TCS) food (formerly known as "Potentially Hazardous Foods") meet temperature requirements during storage, preparation, display, service, and transportation. TCS foods are any foods that will support rapid bacterial growth that might lead to a foodborne illness. Examples are beef, pork, poultry, eggs, dairy products, tofu, soy products, cooked rice, cooked vegetables, and cut fruit and melons. If these foods are left or held at temperatures between 41° and 135° F, the bacteria that might be present will grow rapidly. For this reason, the temperature range of 41° to 135° F is called the Temperature Danger Zone.

Once food is properly cooked, it may be hot held at 135° F or above, or it may be cooled as rapidly as possible and held at 41° F or lower. Frequent violations include incorrect hot or cold holding temperatures caused by a failure to reheat or cool foods properly before they are placed on steam tables or cold tables. An example of this violation is the use of a steam table to reheat foods. Steam tables should not be used for heating or reheating foods because they are seldom capable of reaching 165° F rapidly before holding the foods at 135°F. Foods should be **reheated to 165° F in two hours or less**. It might be necessary to reheat foods in small containers. Food reheated in a microwave oven must be heated to 165° F and allowed to stand, covered, for two minutes.

Failure to cool cooked foods rapidly is frequent cause of foodborne illness. Rapid cooling is best accomplished by placing foods in shallow containers in a cooling unit or by using an ice water bath. Stirring foods also helps to reduce the temperature. Use your food thermometer and a watch to **ensure that foods are cooled to 70° F within two hours or less then to 41° F or below within an additional 4 hours**.

Improper thawing of foods is also a frequent problem. Thawing should be done in refrigerator, under cold running water, in a microwave oven if the food is to be cooked immediately, or as part of the cooking process. **Food should never be thawed at room temperature**.

Don't guess. Use a **probe-type metal stem thermometer** to verify internal food temperatures. The Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department considers temperature violations (also called "temperature abuse") to be very serious. Any temperature violation

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that might lead to a foodborne illness found during an inspection will result in the issuance of a Food Enforcement Notice (FEN).