



Preparing Employees to Answer Health Inspectors' Questions

During inspections it's common for health inspectors to ask food handlers questions about their tasks and how are they done. When a health inspector speaks directly to employees they tend to get nervous or even freak out like when being pulled over by a police officer. When anxious it's easy to answer questions incorrectly or even forget the answers.

Here are examples of actual questions from health inspectors

- Tell me how to wash your hands.
- When you aren't feeling well, what do you do?
- How do you calibrate your thermometer?
- What time was this food prepared?
- How do you cool cooked foods to be reheated later?
- What's the holding temperature for cold foods? And hot foods?
- What's the cooking temperature of...?
- Give me an example of a ready-to-eat food. And how do you handle this food?
- Do you know if any of your recipes include one or more of the "Common 8 Food Allergens"? (This somewhat a new requirement so the 8 are listed at the end of this article)
- What's okay to clean the counters with?
- Where are the test strips? What are they used for. Explain how to use the test strip kit.
- When did you take your food handler certification?

Properly trained employees will make less mistakes making them more confident and happier about their jobs which in turn increases employee retention. Something that we all strive for.

✓ Three steps to get employees ready for the next inspection.

1st Assess Training Needs Then Start with the Inspection Report

- Assess training needs by determining what your food handlers already know and what they need to know. Three ways to assess deficiencies and training needs: Review past health inspection reports, observe food handler's performance on the job and test their food safety knowledge.
- Next choose training materials. To get you started we have included several free tools.
- Use the health inspection report as a guide to teach employees the do's and don'ts and to eliminate other issues that may be found during inspections. Get your staff involved in the process to teach them what to expect during regulatory inspections. This will give them a better understanding of the process which leads to higher inspection scores, cleaner and safer environment for employees and customers.
- With 47 violations on the inspection report it can seem overwhelming. Break it down and concentrate on the violations that relate to the food handlers' job. The focus should be on the

priority violations which include the first 5 violations that are all *Time and Temperature* related as well as *hygiene and preventing contamination*.

2nd Learning to Confidently Interact with Inspectors and Answer Questions

- You may want to assess training needs again to determine what they learned from the inspection report exercise and what they still need to know. Unlike managers, it probably isn't necessary for food handlers to be an "expert" on all of the violations.
- Have employees practice to help them think confidently and quickly on their feet when interacting with health inspectors. In pairs or small teams have employees quiz each other. Then have them role play by taking turns being the health inspector and employee. When requested by clients this exercise is included in Thornhill' Trainings private food handler and manager classes.

3rd Training Resources

- a) **Free forms and posters** - To assist with training employees, we have forms and posters to get your started.
 - **Temperature Safety Chart for the Kitchen** - It includes all the temperatures for food safety as well as other temperatures like the water at handwashing sinks should reach a minimum of 100°F. To download the chart in PDF format, click on [Download Posters & Documents](#), scroll down to the Temperature Chart – English PDF and click on the former.
 - **Food Safety Audit Checklist** – this is helpful to understand the violations on the inspection report and for self-inspections. Put employees into small teams. Give each team thermometers, test strips, clip boards... To download the checklist, click on [Download Posters & Documents](#), scroll down to Forms and Other Documents. Then click on Food Safety Audit Checklist to download the information.
- b) **Manager Classes** - All the violations on the inspection report are included in Thornhill Training's ServSafe Food Protection Manager certification class. **We offer monthly public Spanish and English classes as well private classes held just for your business.** To register for a ServSafe class click on [Food Protection Manager Information](#) and select the class you need under Register for ServSafe.
- c) **Online Manager certification** – For those businesses that don't require the national ServSafe certification we have the **Texas Food Manager certification.** To register for the Online class click on [Food Protection Manager Information](#) and click on the Online Texas Certified Food Manager Certification.

"Common 8 Food Allergens"

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|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1. Soy and soy products, like soy beans and tofu | 5. Shellfish |
| 2. Wheat | 6. Fish, such as bass, flounder, and cod |
| 3. Peanuts | 7. Milk and dairy products |
| 4. Tree nuts, such as walnuts and pecans | 8. Egg and egg products |

Thanks for reading. Wishing you the highest inspection scores ever!

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