STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP) FOR

USING TIME ALONE AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CONTROL TO

LIMIT BACTERIA GROWTH IN POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS FOODS

(Sample SOP)

PURPOSE:To prevent foodborne illness by ensuring that potentially hazardous foods are not held in the temperature danger zone for more than 4 hours before being cooked or served.

SCOPE:This procedure applies to foodservice employees that handle, prepare, cook, and serve food.

KEY WORDS:Temperature, Time As a Public Health Control

1. TEMPERATURE means the amount of heat or cold measured on a thermometer. This SOP measured temperature in degrees Fahrenheit (°F).
2. TIME AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CONTROL means using time only (and not temperature which is usually used in conjunction with time) to control bacterial growth in potentially hazardous foods and ensure safe food products. Food is removed from temperature control for short periods of time (less than four hours) and used correctly, time can be an effective control because there will be no significant bacterial growth or toxin production possible in such a limited time. However, if time is not closely monitored, foodborne illness may result.

# INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Train foodservice employees on using the procedures in this SOP. Refer to the Using and Calibrating Thermometers SOP.
2. Except during preparation, cooking, or cooling, or when time is used as the means of public health control, potentially hazardous foods shall be maintained at 135 °F or above, or at 41 °F or below.
3. Establish written procedures that clearly identify:

* Specific foods for which time rather than temperature will be used as a public health control to limit bacteria growth.
* Food shall have an internal temperature of 41 °F or below or 135 °F or above when removed from temperature control.
* Marking procedures used to indicate the time that is 4 hours past the point when the food is removed from temperature control, such as an oven or refrigerator.
* Procedures to ensure that food that is prepared, cooked and refrigerated before time is used as a public health control are cooled properly. Refer to the Cooling Potentially Hazardous Foods SOP.
* Procedures that are followed when food is in the danger zone for greater than 4 hours.
* Cook raw potentially hazardous food within 4 hours past the point when the food is removed from temperature control.
* Serve or discard cooked or ready-to-eat food within 4 hours past the time when the food is removed from temperature control.
  + Once time is used as a public health control, it cannot be returned to hot or cold holding.
* Avoid mixing different batches of food together in the same container. If different batches of food are mixed together in the same container, use the time associated with the first batch of food as the time by which to cook, serve, or discard all the food in the container.

1. Keep these written procedures in the food establishment and make available to the Health Department upon request.

# MONITORING:

1. Foodservice employees will continually monitor that foods are properly marked or identified with the time that is 4 hours past the point when the food is removed from temperature control.
2. Foodservice employees will continually monitor that foods are cooked, served, or discarded by the indicated time.

# CORRECTIVE ACTION:

* 1. Retrain any foodservice employee found not following the procedures in this SOP.
  2. Discard unmarked or unidentified food removed from temperature control.
  3. Discard food that is noted to exceed the 4-hour limit.

# VERIFICATION AND RECORD KEEPING:

Foodservice employees will mark or otherwise identify food as specified in the Instructions Section of this SOP. The foodservice manager will verify that foodservice employees are following this procedure by visually monitoring foodservice employees and food handling during the shift.

**DATE IMPLEMENTED: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ BY: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**DATE REVIEWED: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ BY: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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