Food Safety Inspections and Enforcement Information

The Public Health Investigations (PHI) division of the Department of Public Health and Environment regulates all retail food establishment including but not limited to restaurants, delicatessens, cafeterias, convenience stores, food trucks, and cannabis infused food businesses.

Food safety inspection reports are made available to help residents when deciding where to dine in Denver. Inspection and enforcement information from as early as June 1, 2000 is available.

Any inspection report is a ‘snapshot’ of the day and time of the inspection. On any given day, a restaurant could have more or fewer violations than noted in the report. An inspection conducted on any given day may not be representative of the overall, long-term condition of an establishment. Also, at the time of the inspection, violations are recorded but whenever possible are corrected on the spot prior to the investigator leaving the establishment.

Inspection Process

Food safety inspections are conducted at a frequency dependent on the complexity of the menu, number of meals served, and compliance of the restaurant. Full-service restaurants are inspected at least twice per year. Facilities like convenience stores and bars with little food handling are inspected at least once every two years. These variable frequencies are due to the risk of foodborne illness increasing with the number of times that a food product is handled during preparation. (For example: restaurants that handle food more frequently are inspected more frequently than a convenience store that serves mostly pre-packaged foods.)

Types of Inspections:

- **Regular or Full Inspection**: This is an unannounced inspection to check thoroughly for compliance in all applicable areas.

- **Limited Inspection**: This type of inspection is limited to just checking on specific issues, usually following up on a recent regular inspection or to investigate a complaint.

Violation Types:

- **Type 1 Violations** (also known as “critical” violations): Violations which may not necessarily cause, but are more likely to cause, foodborne illness.
  - Examples: poor temperature control of food; improper cooking, cooling, or reheating temperatures. Such problems can create environments that cause bacteria to grow and thrive, which puts the consumer at risk for foodborne illness.
• **Type 2 Violations** (also known as “non-critical” violations): Violations not directly related to the cause of foodborne illness, but if uncorrected, could impede the operation of the restaurant and if left uncorrected, could lead to Type 1 violations. The likelihood of foodborne illness in these cases is low.
  ○ *Examples: lack of facility cleanliness or improper cleaning of equipment.*

**Enforcement Action**

PHI imposes the following types of enforcement actions when violations are cited in a facility:

- **Administrative citations**: A citation for violation of the Code or noncompliance with an order issued by the Executive Director by which a civil penalty for such violation or noncompliance is assessed. The department is authorized to levy fines of up to $2,000 for a violation of an order to correct Type 1 and/or Type 2 violations.

- **Closure for imminent health hazard**: A directive is given to cease and desist using unsafe portions of the facility or the entire facility to ensure the safety of the public. Grounds for closure due to imminent public health risks may include but are not limited to:
  ○ No hot water
  ○ Contaminated Food
  ○ Sewage Problems
  ○ Food-borne illness outbreak
  ○ No utilities
  ○ Extreme uncleanliness
  ○ Fire
  ○ Inadequate refrigeration
  ○ Pest infestation

- **Court Summons**: An order to appear in court for alleged violations and failure to comply with applicable laws. A court summons may be issued for a lack of continued non-compliance with orders, refusal to allow an inspection, and other egregious instances.

  The retail food establishment fine schedule can be found on PHI’s [website](#).