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# Food Premises Safe Food Storage

# Guidelines for Using Time as a Public Health Control at Ambient Temperatures

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In collaboration with:

BC Ministry of Health and the five Regional Health Authorities (VCHA, VIHA, FHA, NHA, IHA)

September 1, 2014





### Introduction

Potentially hazardous foods that have been left at ambient temperatures (19°C to 24°C) for longer than 4 hours, and brought in and out of temperatures between 4°C and 60°C are leading causes of foodborne illness outbreaks in food premises. The *BC Food Premises Regulation* requires that,

*"Every operator of food premises must ensure that potentially hazardous food is stored or displayed at a temperature of not more than 4°C or not less than 60°C"* 

Time and temperature controls can help to minimize the growth of pathogens that cause foodborne illness. Using time only as a public health control for potentially hazardous foods that are kept at ambient temperatures can be done safely - *as long as adequate sanitation and time controls are in place*. The local Health Authority may allow an operator of a food premises to use time only as a public health control for potentially hazardous foods for **up to** 4 hours using these Guidelines.

These Guidelines apply specifically to working supplies of potentially hazardous foods held before cooking, or ready-to-eat potentially hazardous foods that are held for service for immediate consumption. However, an operator is still encouraged to keep potentially hazardous foods at:

- ✓ Cold temperature control of 4°C or colder; or
- ✓ Hot temperature control of 60°C or hotter.

Potentially hazardous foods that have been left out for 4 hours or longer must be discarded. These Guidelines ARE NOT TO BE USED for raw eggs in food premises.

The operator of a food premises has the responsibility to ensure all food in the premises is not contaminated and is fit for human consumption. Following these Guidelines will help to ensure these responsibilities are met.

## TIME AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CONTROL – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- Sanitary conditions in the premises are maintained to adequately protect food from contamination. For example, the proper cleaning and sanitation of food contact surfaces, coolers, and hot holding units, and the proper handwashing.
- These guidelines ONLY apply to ambient temperatures of 24°C or less. If the ambient temperature in the premises is above 24°C, then the "Danger Zone" standard must be followed-that potentially hazardous foods can only be left out for 2 hours or less. Potentially hazardous foods left out for longer than 2 hours, must be discarded.
- An operator must meet the above criteria and have an approved food safety plan that addresses using time controls to maintain safety. Plan details must include:
  - Which foods will be held at ambient temperatures for up to 4 hours;
  - Time-labeling procedures (e.g., stickers);
  - Records (e.g., name and volume of food, time put out and time discarded, and temperature of food when removed from hot or cold temperature control);
  - o Cooking and cooling processes; and
  - Procedures for preparation, holding, serving, and display.

- The food must have an initial temperature of 4°C or colder when removed from cold temperature control, or 60°C or hotter when removed from hot temperature control.
- The food must not be returned to hot or cold temperatures once time is used as a control.
- The food must be labeled, marked or otherwise identified to indicate:
  - o The time when the food was removed from hot or cold temperature control; and
  - The time that the food must be thrown out/discarded to waste (i.e., a time limit of up to 4 hours after the food was removed from hot or cold temperature control).
- The food must be served before the time limit indicated on the label.
- The food must be thrown out/discarded:
  - o if it is in unmarked containers; or
  - if the time limit has expired.
- Proof of time tracking (e.g., labeling or marking) will be required to verify that time is being monitored. Unmarked products will be discarded at the discretion of the Environmental Health Officer.

#### ACCEPTANCE

The local Health Authority <u>may</u> allow an operator to use time controls if all the requirements in these Guidelines are met. The inspection and compliance history of the operator may be considered by the local Health Authority.

The local Health Authority <u>may</u> reject the use of time as a public health control if any of the requirements in these Guidelines are not being met or if an Environmental Health Officer deems the operator's ability to maintain food safety in the premises is compromised.

#### REFERENCES

BC Centre for Disease Control. Ensuring Food Safety – Writing Your Own Food Safety Plan – The HACCP Way.

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US Food and Drug Administration. 2013 Food Code, section 3.501.19 – Time as a Public Health Control. <u>http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/GuidanceRegulation/RetailFoodProtection/FoodCode/UCM374510</u> <u>.pdf</u>. Accessed on May 1, 2014.