



Loss Control TIPS

Technical Information Paper Series

Innovative Safety and Health SolutionsSM

The FDA Food Code and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point Plan (HACCP)

Introduction

Foodborne illness is a major concern in the United States. It is not uncommon to read of an incident of “food poisoning” or of the need to recall a food product. These concerns are real! Each year, more than 24 million people become ill from microorganisms in food, resulting in approximately 10,000 deaths. The annual cost of foodborne illness is in the billions.

To address these concerns, the U.S. Public Health Service and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has developed the *Food Code*. In recent years, the Food Code has gained strong support on federal, state, and local levels. The FDA recently consolidated the different codes in an effort to standardize and reduce redundancies.

Purpose of the Food Code

The model *Food Code* is the FDA’s strongest and best attempt to assist federal, state, and local jurisdictions in their efforts to ensure that the food at the “retail level is safe and properly protected and presented.” The Code is a system of prevention and overlapping safeguards designed to minimize foodborne illness by ensuring:

- Employee health
- Industry management knowledge
- Safe food
- Non-toxic and cleanable equipment
- Acceptable levels of sanitation in food establishments
- Fair dealings with the consumer

Is My Operation Covered by the Food Code?

A *food establishment* is “an operation that stores, prepares, packages, serves, vends, or otherwise provides food for human consumption” and “*relinquishes control of the food to the consumer directly, or indirectly*”



through a delivery service.” The *Food Code* specifically excludes food processing plants, which are defined as “a commercial operation that manufactures, packages, labels, or stores food for human consumption and *does not provide food directly to the consumer.*” The most significant difference in these definitions is that of “providing the food directly to the consumer.” If an operation *meets the definition of a food establishment*, and the *jurisdiction having authority has adopted the Food Code*, a *HACCP Plan* must be developed.

What is the HACCP Plan?

A Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point Plan (HACCP) is a written document designed to identify and monitor biological, chemical, and physical properties that are foodborne hazards. It is *preventive*, rather than *reactive*.

Elements of a HACCP Plan

The National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF) has developed seven principles that must be followed to have an effective HACCP Plan.

1. Conduct a Hazard Analysis.
2. Identify the Critical Control Points (CCPs) in food preparation. (A CCP is a point, step, or procedure where application of adequate controls can prevent, eliminate, or reduce the hazard to acceptable levels).
3. Establish Critical Limits for Preventive Measures. (Critical Limits are the maximum or minimum value to which a physical, biological or chemical parameter must be controlled at CCP to minimize the risk from the food hazard.)
4. Establish Procedures to Monitor CCP. (Documented observation and measurement at each CCP).
5. Establish the Corrective Action to be taken when a Critical Limit has been exceeded.
6. Establish an Effective Record Keeping System to Document the HACCP Plan.
7. Establish Verification Procedure to Confirm that the HACCP Plan is Working as Intended.

Conclusion

The food industry, principally seafood, meat, and poultry, are implementing the *Food Code* and HACCP. In addition many food establishments have voluntarily adopted the HACCP principle and have achieved improved food safety. HACCP is an effective Risk Management tool.

References

1. Christine, Brian. “Confronting Food Safety Risks.” *Risk Management*, September 1994, pp. 71-72.
2. *Food Code*. Washington, DC: Food and Drug Administration.
3. Foulke, Judith E. “A Menu of Modern Safety Standards.” *FDA Consumer*, April 1994, pp. 7-9.
4. Kurtzweil, Paula. “HACCP: Patrolling for Food Hazards.” *FDA Consumer*, January-February 1995, pp. 5-10.

For more information, contact your local Hartford agent or your Hartford Loss Control Consultant. Visit The Hartford’s Loss Control web site at <http://www.thehartford.com/corporate/losscontrol/>

This document is provided for information purposes only. It is not intended to be a substitute for individual legal counsel or advice on issues discussed within. Readers seeking resolution of specific legal issues or business concerns related to the captioned topic should consult their attorneys and/or insurance representatives.

