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Bon Appétit
The Quarterly Food Safety Newsletter of the Alexandria Health Department

Know Your Inspection Types

Were you ever puzzled because an inspection took two hours this time but half as long the last time? Did you ever wonder why the Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) pointed out the hole in the wall during one inspection, but not during the next inspection? You may notice differences from one inspection to the next because the Health Department conducts several different types of inspection throughout the year to make our inspection program more efficient.

The most familiar inspection type is the routine inspection. These are comprehensive, unannounced inspections intended to evaluate both foodborne illness risk factors and good retail practices. Foodborne illness risk factors generally correspond to those violations that are deemed “critical.” Critical violations are deemed as such because they are more likely than other violations to contribute to foodborne illness. Good retail practices are generally associated with “non-critical” violations. Non-critical violations are not as likely to be the cause of foodborne illness, but if left uncorrected could lead to critical violations. Non-critical violations typically involve general maintenance or cleanliness of items such as floors, walls, ceilings, or equipment. Food establishments can expect at least one routine inspection each year.

Critical procedures inspections are specialized, unannounced inspections intended to evaluate foodborne illness risk factors and the implementation of public health interventions. In other words, these inspections focus on critical violations. Oftentimes, critical procedures inspections may seem as though they do not take as much time as routine inspections. This is not indicative of the quality of the inspection, but merely reflects the fact that good retail practices are not

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Doggie Dining Revisited

Spring has sprung and before we know it, the dog days of summer will be upon us. For Alexandrians, dog days mean more than just hotter days. For us, it means that our residents and visitors are spending more time outdoors and taking their dogs with them everywhere they go. Sometimes, this leads to customers wanting to bring dogs into dining establishments.

With few exceptions, such as service animals, the presence of live animals in food establishments is expressly prohibited by food regulations. Live animals can transmit diseases to humans such as campylobacter or staph infection, carry parasites such as fleas or ticks, contaminate food or equipment through saliva, fecal matter or shedding fur, cause allergies, frighten customers or even bite people or other pets. Due to these concerns, the majority of food establishments in the City do not and legally cannot allow customers to bring their pets into dining areas.

So if live animals are prohibited in restaurants, why do we still see dogs in outdoor seating areas? Several years ago, the Alexandria Health Department began to grant variances for dog friendly areas in food establishments to better serve the needs of our community. A variance is an exemption from a specific regulation. In this case, a variance is granted if a restaurant can successfully show how the implementation of certain precautions will significantly reduce the public health hazards associated with having dogs in outdoor dining areas.

Only those restaurants that possess a variance for a dog friendly area can legally allow dogs into outdoor dining areas. A diner can identify these establishments by looking for a copy of the variance that is to be posted next to the restaurant's health permit. Examples of the additional safety measures that must be taken by these establishments are: cleaning and sanitizing the dog friendly area at the end of each day; providing table tents on each table with rules of conduct such as prohibiting dogs from contacting any tableware, linens

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typically evaluated at that time. The goal of the critical procedures inspection is to identify practices that have the greatest chance of leading to foodborne illness. Depending on the complexity of food preparation conducted at a particular food establishment, one or more critical procedures inspection may be conducted each year.

Facilities inspections are routine inspections that are scheduled with the operator outside of the busiest hours of the day to focus on good retail practices. These inspections may be conducted to allow the operator and EHS to have ample time to discuss long-term maintenance concerns such as the replacement of a floor, cleaning frequency, pest control, or better management of dumpsters. Since these inspections do not provide many opportunities to observe food preparation, they are not conducted as frequently as unannounced routine or critical procedures inspections.

Training inspections are scheduled inspections used to provide targeted training to food employees and managers. These inspections can be conducted outside of normal operating hours to maximize employee participation. A food establishment operator can request this type of training, or it can be initiated by the Health Department.

Complaint inspections are conducted in response to a complaint received by the Health Department from the community. Normally a complaint inspection is limited to the scope of the complaint. The exception to this is rule is when the complaint is regarding a foodborne illness allegedly acquired from a restaurant. A critical procedures or routine inspection is usually conducted in response to a complaint of foodborne illness.

Follow-up inspections are conducted to ensure the correction of outstanding violations identified during a routine, critical procedures or complaint inspection. They are scheduled at a time to be determined by the EHS based on a reasonable time period for the correction of specific violations.

During the course of a year, you may see a combination of these types of inspections. Some establishments will receive one routine inspection a year. Other establishments may receive one routine inspection, two critical procedures inspections, and a training inspection during the course of a year not including any complaint inspection conducted as needed. The reason for this difference is that the complexity of food preparation varies

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greatly from business to business. All food establishments are categorized as one of the following: high priority, medium priority, low priority or no potentially hazardous foods served. These establishments will receive at least four, three, two or one inspection a year respectively. For example, a candy store serving no potentially hazardous foods may only receive one inspection annually. A full-service restaurant serving many potentially hazardous foods that are often cooked, cooled, reheated, and held hot until service may require at least four inspections each year. In this manner, we prioritize our inspections based on the risk involved in food preparation.

A special type of inspection currently being conducted in Alexandria is the survey. In 2003, the Alexandria Health Department conducted its first baseline survey to obtain a snapshot of compliance with risk factors and intervention within segments of the foodservice industry. In February 2009, another survey project was launched. A randomly selected set of food establishments will be evaluated over the next year. After the project is complete, we hope to see how compliance with risk factors and interventions has changed over the past 6 years. Results will be communicated to food establishments via this newsletter and on our website. You may not notice the difference between a baseline survey inspection and a critical procedures inspection except that it may occur outside your normally inspection frequency and reports will communicate violations through categorization as risk factors or interventions instead of identification with Food Code section numbers.

The Health Department uses several different types of inspections to evaluate food safety in permitted facilities. Although each inspection has a different focus, all are intended to provide safe food to the public through working with our industry partners. If you have questions about the different types of inspections the Health Department performs, please call us at (703) 838-4400 x 266 or 267.

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or utensils; limiting contact employees have with dogs; cleaning and sanitizing tables and chairs between patrons; documenting regular training of employees regarding variance requirements; and removing dog owners or their dogs if the dogs are in poor health or ill-behaved. Restaurants must apply annually to renew their variance. Restaurants found to not be in compliance with the agreed upon precautions may not have their variance renewed.

It is clear that Alexandrians enjoy both their dogs and their restaurants-sometimes at the same time. Let's continue allowing our community to have the best of both worlds and abide by the rules to keep everyone healthy and happy.

VDH Presents: Annual Emergency Preparedness Seminar Series

Food Facility Emergency Planning

Here in Virginia, food facility operators are faced with many potential threats to their business. Whether it be a natural disaster (hurricane, flood) or a foodborne illness outbreak due to a tainted product, your business could be at risk. This year's FREE annual seminars are designed to provide emergency response tools and media training for food facility operators to help them deal with a crisis.

This year's seminars include:

- Determining threats and assessing risk
- Developing emergency plans
- Continuing operations in an emergency
- Training your staff to respond in a crisis
- Getting your message out through the media

Target Audience:

All food facility operators (restaurants, nursing homes, schools, daycares, etc.) interested in having plans and appropriate training, including media relations, in place for their facility to respond to and recover from an emergency event

Attend the seminar nearest you!

All sessions are from 9:00AM-3:15PM Check-in begins at 8:30AM
Lunch is on your own

Date	City	Location
April 20	**Richmond**	**Chesterfield Fire Training Facility**
April 27	**Newport News**	**Point Plaza Suites**
April 28	**Chesapeake**	**SpringHill Suites (Greenbrier)**
May 4	**Charlottesville**	**Comfort Inn Monticello**
May 11	**Winchester**	**Frederick County Public Safety Building**
May 12	**Fairfax**	**Fairfax Health Dept-Kelly Square**
May 18	**Abingdon**	**Southwest VA Higher Education Center**
May 19	**Lynchburg**	**Kirkley Hotel**

Online registration is required. To register and learn more, log onto https://va.train.org Questions? Call Patrick Bridge (VDH) at 804-864-8235

Virginia Cooperative Extension
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VirginiaTech Invent the Future

VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY

VHTA Virginia Hospitality & Travel Association

VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Protecting You and Your Environment
Emergency Preparedness & Response Programs

Food Facility Emergency Planning – Registration Information

Registration is free. Lunch is NOT provided.

- Meeting registration will be through the TRAIN-Virginia website. TRAIN can be accessed at **http://va.train.org** or through the VDH website http://www.vdh.state.va.us. You will find TRAIN at the Distance Learning site.

- You will need to login on the **TRAIN** site. If you have not been into the site yet, it may take a few minutes to create an account. (This is a one time entry-subsequent visits will only require your login name and password.) If you have forgotten your password, select the "Forgot your password" link on the login page and follow the instructions. Please do not create another account!

- Once on **TRAIN**, the easiest way to find the seminar is to select the meeting from "Upcoming Events" (lower right hand corner). You will be on the meeting course details page in **TRAIN**. Select the Registration tab and follow the process. The Course ID# is 1016655

- If you encounter any problems during the registration process, please contact Brad. You can reach him at Robert.Bradley@vdh.virginia.gov or by calling 804-864-8233. If for some reason you need to cancel or you do not have internet access. Please email Sherri Chedester at eprtraining@vdh.virginia.gov or call 804-864-8231.

- A **Va TRAIN** user guide is available at http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/DistanceLearning

If you have any questions please call Patrick Bridge (Virginia Department of Health Training Coordinator) at 804-864-8235 or email Patrick.Bridge@vdh.virginia.gov and we will assist you. There is no limit to the number of people you may bring from your establishment as long as seats are available for your session.