



HEALTH CARE AGENCY/PUBLIC HEALTH ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH *INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN*

TO: Orange County Retail Food Facility Owners/Operators

SUBJECT: Handwashing Requirements and Procedures for Food Handlers

The California Retail Food Code (CRFC) establishes handwashing requirements and procedures for food handlers. The purpose of this Bulletin is to inform you of these provisions of the law and to assist you in complying with them.

The purpose of handwashing is to prevent the spread of disease-causing organisms such as Hepatitis, Norovirus, Salmonella, and Shigella. These organisms can easily be spread to food and food contact surfaces by contaminated hands.

It is important to thoroughly wash your hands to remove as much dirt and other contamination as possible before you work with food. The requirements and procedures described below are cited in the law to ensure that all employees practice thorough and timely handwashing.

Section 113953.3(a), contains instructions on the correct procedures for washing your hands. This section requires all employees to thoroughly wash their hands and arms by vigorously rubbing them with cleanser and warm water, paying particular attention to areas between the fingers and around and under the nails, rinsing with clean water.

Additionally, employees must always dry their hands using a hot air dryer or single use paper towels from a sanitary dispenser. Cloth towels are unacceptable as they may be contaminated from previous use.

The law states when food handlers are required to wash their hands. These requirements describe activities and situations where hands may become contaminated. Even healthy people can spread disease when they touch their nose, mouth, or other parts of the body and then handle food. The activities listed in 113953.3(a) of CRFC are:

- Immediately before engaging in food preparation, including working with unpackaged food, clean equipment and utensils and unwrapped single-service food containers and utensils.
- Before dispensing or serving food or handling clean tableware and serving utensils in the food service area.
- As often as necessary during food preparation to remove soil and contamination and to prevent cross-contamination when changing tasks.
- When switching between working with raw foods and working with ready-to-eat foods.
- After touching any bare human body parts other than clean hands and clean, exposed portions of arms.
- After using the toilet room.
- After coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or disposable tissue, using tobacco, eating or drinking.

Continued

- After caring for or handling any live animal that is allowed in a food facility.
- After handling soiled equipment or utensils.
- After engaging in any other activities that contaminate the hands.
- Before putting on gloves for food preparation.

Section 113953.5(a) of CRFC requires signs to be posted in toilet facilities directing employees to thoroughly wash their hands after using the toilet. The signs must be posted in a location that is likely to be seen. You may request handwashing signs from an Environmental Health Specialist.

CRFC Sections 113973(a) – (f) also list the requirements for the use of gloves in food preparation and service:

- Employees serving ready-to-eat foods shall use utensils, including scoops, forks, tongs, paper wrappers, gloves, or other implements to assemble ready-to-eat food or to place it on tableware or into containers.
- An employee who is in compliance with the handwashing requirements may assemble ready-to-eat food and place it on tableware or into containers without using utensils, as long as it is done in an approved food preparation area.
- Gloves are required when the employee's hands touch any food or food contact surface if the employee has any cuts, sores, rashes, artificial fingernails, nail polish, rings (except for a plain wedding band), uncleanable orthopedic support device, or fingernails that are not clean, neatly trimmed or smooth.
- Whenever gloves are worn, they shall be changed, replaced or washed as often as handwashing is required. (See handwashing requirements.) Single-use gloves must be replaced each time they are removed.
- When using single-use gloves, the gloves shall be used for one purpose (handling of ready-to-eat foods only or handling of raw animal products only). Gloves should be discarded when damaged, soiled, or when interruptions in food handling occur.
- Slash-resistant gloves used for protection when cutting food shall be used on foods that will be subsequently cooked (frozen foods or primal cut of meat). If slash-resistant gloves are used on ready-to-eat foods, those gloves are required to have a smooth, durable, and nonabsorbent outer surface or can be covered with a smooth, durable, nonabsorbent glove or a single-use glove can be used.
- Cloth gloves may only be used on foods that will be subsequently cooked.

The use of gloves is not an acceptable substitute for proper handwashing procedures. Food handlers shall wash their hands prior to putting on a pair of clean gloves.

Hand sanitizer stations are optional. If used, hand sanitizer stations must be installed in conjunction with the required handwashing facilities and may not take the place of required handwashing facilities.

During the normal course of inspections, your Environmental Health Specialist will monitor the handwashing procedures and facilities at each food facility to verify compliance with these requirements.

If you have any questions regarding the handwashing requirements, please contact your Environmental Health Specialist at (714) 433-6000.