



# Deschutes County Environmental Health Food Safety Newsletter

Fall/ winter 2019

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## Using chlorine as your sanitizer?

Chlorine (CL) is one of the most commonly used sanitizers in food facilities. Mixed correctly common household CL Bleach is safe and effective. Recently inspectors have noticed facilities using unapproved bleaches as sanitizers on food contact surfaces. These alternative type bleaches will still test with CL test strips however they are NOT safe for food contact surfaces. Look at your bleach and make sure it is NOT scented or splashless.



**It's flu season! Remind employees that a flu shot is the best protection! Click here to sign up for the weekly flu report.**

## Implementing nudges to increase handwashing

Handwashing is a critical part of ensuring food safety and preventing cross contamination in a food establishment. For handwashing to be effective, it needs to be practiced consistently and thoroughly. Even when employees have access to soap and water, and know how to properly wash their hands, many food service workers still do not properly wash their hands consistently and at the correct times.

Changing the behavior of your employees is a huge challenge. One tool that can help change your employees' handwashing behavior is the use of nudges.

### What are nudges?

Nudges are simple cues in our environment that influence us to behave in a certain way. The idea of nudges is based on the theory that behavior is not only based on conscious thoughts and decisions, but that it can be also be unconsciously guided by aspects of our environment.

Nudges have been used in marketing and urban planning to change human behavior, and have been tested to encourage healthy behaviors, including handwashing. Handwashing is often done as a relatively unconscious action, so it lends itself well to nudging.

### How can you use nudges in your food and beverage establishment?

Successful examples of nudges are simple and easily noticed. Some of them are already built into Food Code requirements and are items that are checked on routine inspections. They may include:

- Hot and cold running water at handwashing sinks
- Available soap
- Available paper towels
- A handwashing sink that is easily accessible as employees move throughout the kitchen, especially at critical times (For example, the sink is available when employees enter the kitchen, or are handling raw animal foods)
- A handwashing sink that is not blocked by dirty dishes, food or other kitchen equipment
- Noticeable signage in bold font that stands out from the background, stating that the sink is for handwashing
- Signage that has a message stating the positive impact of handwashing or has a "yuck" factor explaining what could happen when employees don't wash hands.
- Interestingly, in one study of handwashing, individuals showed a preference for using sinks with mirrors!
- Finally, nudges can take the form of brief weekly safety trainings, reminding employees regularly of how, when and where to wash hands, the importance of not working while they are sick, and of recent outbreaks that have occurred.



## Power out? What now?



Having a plan before an outage occurs can help your business protect the public by ensuring safe foods and minimize losses. Generally during a power loss an establishment will voluntarily close due to inability to keep foods at safe temperatures, loss of hot water for dish and handwashing, loss of hood systems and dangerous conditions for patrons and employees due to loss of lights.

### When a Power Outage Occurs

- Keep track of the time the outage begins.
- Stop using gas cooking and heating equipment if the exhaust hood and make-up air systems stop working. Using this equipment without proper ventilation can lead to a dangerous build up of toxic fumes that may cause injury or death.
- Throw away any foods that are in the process of being cooked but have not yet reached their final cooking temperature.

### Actions that can keep food safe for several hours:

- **Cold Potentially Hazardous Foods**
  - Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
  - If practical, group packages of cold food together. Keep raw meats away from other kinds of food.
  - Cover any open display refrigerators and freezers, especially vertical displays.
  - Surround food with ice.
- **Hot Potentially Hazardous Foods**
  - Don't put hot food in refrigerators or freezers.
  - Keep lids on foods to keep foods over 135°F.
- **After Power is Restored**
  - Check the internal temperature of all hot and cold potentially hazardous food, if food is maintained under 41°F or over 135°F, treat the food as normal.
  - If the power outage lasts longer than 4 hours and food temperatures are over 41°F or under 135°F consider discarding foods.

More detailed information on food temperatures, when to discard foods can be found at:

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYENVIRONMENTS/FOODSAFETY/Pages/eprep.aspx>



All food service licenses expire on December 31st. In the following weeks you can expect to see renewal notices arrive in your inbox and by mail. Fees are based on the type of establishment and the number of seats and will be listed on your renewal notice. You can renew online, in person or by mail once renewals have been generated.

**Remember renewals not paid in full by December 31st will incur a late fee of \$150.**

Global Handwashing Day

October 15th



*Help celebrate by holding a handwashing training!*