

Food Establishment Risk Categories with Examples

Studies have shown that the types of food served, the food preparation processes used, the volume of food, and the population served all have a bearing on the occurrence of foodborne illness risk factors in retail and foodservice establishments. Food establishments are individually evaluated and placed into categories based on potential and inherent food safety risks described in the table below. The risk category assigned to a given food establishment will be evaluated on each inspection and when changes to the menu and food preparation processes occur.

Examples are provided for reference, however, are not the final determining factor. For instance, a convenience store “deli” that serves reheated hot dogs and taquitos may be assigned Risk Category 1 while a convenience store “deli” that has a more extensive menu like pizza and sandwiches may be assigned a Risk Category 2.

Risk Category	Description
1	<p>PRE-PACKAGED FOOD & MINIMAL FOOD OPERATIONS</p> <p>Establishments that serve or sell only pre-packaged foods and permits with no food. Open foods are limited to ready-to-eat time/temperature control for safety (TCS) foods for cold holding with minimal handling and heat only commercially processed TCS foods for immediate service or hot holding with minimal handling. Establishments that prepare open TCS food with minimal handling.</p> <p><i>Examples: Packaged food stores/markets, warehouses, liquor stores, convenience stores (market and hot dog type deli), ice cream shops, bars with TCS foods, coffee/tea shops, retail donut shops, gift shops refrigerated storage w/open TCS foods, wait stations, liquor/soda pump rooms, ice machine rooms, dishrooms, open air vendors with minimal TCS foods (hot dog & coffee carts)</i></p>
2	<p>LIMITED FOOD OPERATIONS</p> <p>Establishments where most products are prepared/cooked and served immediately and may involve a substantial amount of handling during preparation. May involve hot and cold holding of TCS foods after preparation or cooking. May involve cooling from ambient (4 hour).</p> <p><i>Examples: Fast food without cooling, sandwich shops, sushi bars, butcher shops, garde manger (most), bakeries without cooling, support area/kitchens (salad prep, dessert prep), buffet stations, schools</i></p>
3	<p>COMPLEX FOOD OPERATIONS</p> <p>Establishments that have complex preparation of food including cooking and cooling (6 hour) of TCS foods, also usually involves hot and cold holding.</p> <p><i>Examples: Fast food/quick service and full-service restaurants w/cooling, grocery store deli w/cooling, support area/kitchens w/cooling, garde manger w/cooling, bakeries w/cooling, main kitchens, banquet kitchens</i></p>
4	<p>SPECIAL PROCESSES, PROCESSING & HIGHLY SUSCEPTIBLE POPULATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishments serving highly susceptible populations. <i>Examples: Daycare kitchens (less than school age), senior centers, senior apartment food service</i> • Establishments that conduct specialized processes, e.g., smoking and curing; reduced oxygen packaging for extended shelf-life. This does not include holding of food packaged using special processes. <i>Examples: Facilities with required HACCP plans/waivers (produce/package food using ROP 2 barrier or cook chill, smoking, curing, using food additives, molluscan shellstock life-support system, sprouting seeds or beans, juice processing)</i> • Establishments that processes food and then wholesale. This does not include facilities that process food for retail. <i>Examples: Facilities FDA or USDA inspected, processors that wholesale their product</i>