

# Using Time Alone as a Public Health Control to Limit Bacteria Growth in Potentially Hazardous Foods

**PURPOSE:** To prevent foodborne illness by ensuring that potentially hazardous foods are not held in the temperature danger zone for more than 4 hours before being cooked or served.

**SCOPE:** This procedure applies to foodservice employees that handle, prepare, cook, and serve food.

**KEY WORDS:** Temperatures, Holding, Time As a Public Health Control

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Train foodservice employees on using the procedures in this SOP. Refer to the Using and Calibrating Thermometers SOP.
2. Follow California Retail Food Code requirements.
3. Establish written procedures that clearly identify the:
  - a. Specific foods for which time rather than temperature will be used to limit bacteria growth.
  - b. Corrective procedures that are followed to ensure that foods are cooled properly. Refer to the Cooling Potentially Hazardous Foods SOP.
  - c. Marking procedures used to indicate the time that is 4 hours past the point when the food is removed from temperature control, such as an oven or refrigerator.
  - d. Procedures that are followed when food is in the danger zone for greater than 4 hours.
4. Cook raw potentially hazardous food then serve it within 4 hours past the point when the food is removed from temperature control.
5. Serve cooked or ready-to-eat food within 4 hours from the time the food was removed from temperature control.
6. Discard cooked or ready-to-eat food that is 4 hours past the time when the food was removed from temperature control.
7. Avoid mixing different batches of food together in the same container. If different batches of food are mixed together in the same container, use the time associated with the first batch of food as the time by which to cook, serve, or discard all the food in the container.

**MONITORING**

1. Foodservice employees will continually monitor that foods are properly marked or identified with the time that is 4 hours past the point when the food is removed from temperature control.
2. Foodservice employees will continually monitor that foods are cooked, served, or discarded by the indicated time.

**CORRECTIVE ACTION**

1. Retrain any foodservice employee found not following the procedures in this SOP.
2. Discard unmarked or unidentified food or food that is noted to exceed the 4-hour limit.

**VERIFICATION AND RECORD KEEPING**

Foodservice employees will mark or otherwise identify food as specified in the Instructions Section of this SOP. The foodservice manager will verify that foodservice employees are following this procedure by visually monitoring foodservice employees and food handling during the shift. The foodservice manager will complete the Food Safety Checklist daily. The Food Safety Checklist is to be kept on file for a minimum of 1 year.

**DATE IMPLEMENTED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE REVIEWED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE REVISED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **BY:** \_\_\_\_\_