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# *ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN*

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To: Orange County Retail Food Establishment Operators

Subject: **Hot/Cold Food Displays in Retail Food Establishments**

During routine inspections of retail food establishments in Orange County, Environmental Health staff have observed a dangerous trend developing in relation to the handling and display of ready-to-eat meat and poultry products. Staff have found numerous incidents where meat and poultry products were being held at improper temperatures (between 41°F and 135°F). This practice will promote the growth of pathogenic microorganisms which may lead to an outbreak of foodborne disease.

Environmental Health staff have also found hot food display equipment being used to heat potentially hazardous foods, those foods capable of supporting the rapid and progressive growth of pathogenic microorganisms. Hot food display equipment is designed for temperature maintenance only. This equipment is not designed to rapidly heat foods to required holding temperatures.

The California Retail Food Code (CRFC) requires that all potentially hazardous food be kept at or below 41°F or be kept at or above 135°F at all times (except as otherwise allowed in CRFC). Environmental Health also requires that all potentially hazardous foods, such as meat and poultry products, be heated or chilled rapidly to the desired temperature, using equipment designed for that purpose, prior to being placed in temperature holding display equipment.

Improper temperature maintenance of potentially hazardous foods is the leading factor contributing to foodborne illness outbreaks in the United States today. You are encouraged to evaluate your hot and cold food displays and to make any necessary changes in equipment or procedures to bring the operation in compliance with good sanitation principles and State law. Your cooperation in this matter is appreciated.

If you have any questions please contact Environmental Health at 433-6000.

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