
INFORMATION NOTE

Food hygiene information system in selected places

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this information note is to provide the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene with information on the food hygiene information system in Denmark, the United Kingdom (UK) and Los Angeles of the United States. The health authorities in these places conduct regular inspections of food establishments, and make the inspection results available at the business premises and via the Internet for public viewing. In Hong Kong, there have been discussions over recent years on the introduction of a similar scheme for licensed food establishments. In particular, the Open Categorization System has been proposed by the Government and discussed on a number of occasions as a scheme to publicize information on the hygiene standards of licensed food establishments¹. Under the proposed System, the hygiene conditions of licensed food establishments would be graded in accordance with results of a score-based inspection system. Food establishments inspected would be required to post a hygiene grading sign at a conspicuous place on their business premises.

2. Denmark

2.1 In the mid-1990s, the Danish government embarked on several reform measures to streamline its food safety policies, in an effort to bring greater transparency and efficiency into the administration of the food sector. For example, it established a new Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries in 1996 to consolidate the responsibility for food safety regulations under one ministry². In addition, the body of laws governing food safety regulations, along with the number of the regulatory authorities in charge of their implementation, was reduced considerably.

¹ See Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (2001) and (2002), Team Clean (2003), Audit Commission (2005), and Legislative Council Secretariat (2002) and (2004).

² Before 1996, the responsibility for food safety regulations was divided between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

2.2 The Danish government continued the food safety reform in 2001 with the launch of a Smiley scheme to enhance the protection of consumers' interest in the food market. The scheme breaks away from the tradition of not publicizing the names of food establishments with food safety problems. Under the Smiley scheme, all inspections of food establishments are followed up by the publication of an inspection report in which the results are summarized in the form of a symbol (a Smiley face ranging from big smile to sad). In so doing, the inspection report and the expression of the Smiley face in particular provides a simple and convenient way of identifying the hygiene conditions of food establishments.

Operation of the Smiley scheme

2.3 In Denmark, all shops, restaurants and other food establishments selling foods and drinks to the public are inspected by health inspectors of the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration³ on a regular basis – typically one to three times a year⁴. The inspections, which are unannounced, cover the compliance with food safety regulations and other control areas such as food contamination and labelling. Food establishments, after each inspection, receive an inspection report showing the inspection results and the Smiley awarded by the responsible health inspector (see Figure 1). In addition to the Smiley summarizing the latest inspection, the Smileys for the preceding three inspections are also shown on the report. The display of four Smileys allows consumers to trace how a food establishment has fared over time. Below the Smiley symbols, the health inspector may put down some comments to explain the inspection result.

³ The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration is a department established under the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries to handle food control and veterinary inspections in Denmark.

⁴ The frequency of inspections is determined by the risk evaluation of the lines of business operated by a food establishment. See Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (2008).

Figure 1 – Sample inspection report

Kontrolrapport

Virksomhed: **Næstved Sociale virksomhed**

Køkken

Adresse: **Fabrikvej 78**

Postnr./By: **4700 Næstved**

Denne kontrol, dato: **31-01-2008**

Tidligere kontrol

Dato	Resultat
27-03-2007	😊
29-08-2006	😊
24-02-2006	😊

Smiley-regler kontrolleret	Resultat*
Hygijne: Behandling af fødevarer	1
Rengøring	1
Vedligeholdelse (lokaler, inventar)	1
Uddannelse i hygiejne	1
Virksomhedens egenkontrol	1
Mærkning og information	1
Godkendelser m.v.	1

*Dårligste resultat bestemmer smiley-kategorien. Det er ikke alle regler, der bliver kontrolleret hver gang.

Resultat	Kategori	Betyder
1	😊	Ingen anmærkninger
2	😐	Indskærpeelse*
3	😞	Påbud eller forbud
4	😡	Bedebrørg, politianmeldelse eller godkendelse indbragt

*Virksomheden kan få uddybet en indskærpeelse i regionen.

Få mere at vide: www.fvst.dk/smiley

Tilsynsførendes bemærkninger

Behandling af fødevarer: Temperaturer i køl og frost samt opbevaring af tørvarer kontrolleret, ingen anmærkninger.

Rengøring og vedligeholdelse af køkken, lager og udsalgsområde kontrolleret, ingen anmærkninger.

Egenkontrol: Dokumentation for udført egenkontrol kontrolleret, ingen anmærkninger.

Godkendelser mv.: Kontrolrapporten fandtes korrekt ophængt. Blanket vedr. retssikkerhed er udleveret.

Ordinaert tilsyn Opfølgende tilsyn Bestilt af virksomhed Kontrolkampagne Godkendelser m.v. Prøver udløbet

Fødevarerregion Øst
Kontrolafdeling Ringsted

30 min
Tilsynets varighed

Virksomhedens kommentar: Enig Uenig Fejl rettes straks Andet:

Source: National Smiley Website (2008).

Criteria for rating a food establishment

2.4 At each inspection, the responsible health inspector will check a number of control areas, such as food handling practices and procedures, provision of food hygiene education, food labelling and administrative-type violations (e.g. failure to post the inspection report)⁵. The health inspector will rate each of these control areas, and the lowest rating marked by the health inspector will determine the Smiley to be awarded after the conclusion of the inspection.

⁵ According to the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (2008), a number of control areas will be checked at each inspection of food establishments. However, the control areas inspected may vary from inspection to inspection and from establishment to establishment.

Symbols to categorize the inspection results

2.5 In Denmark, all food establishments will receive one of the following four Smileys after inspection:

Table – Four Smileys

Smiley	Definition
 Big smile face	No negative comments.
 Small smile face	Instructions given.
 Straight face	Injunctions or prohibition orders given.
 Sad face	Fine imposed, police report made or licence withdrawn.

Source: Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (2008).

2.6 In 2007, 75% of all food establishments inspected received the big smile face, 18% the small smile face, 2% the straight face and 5% the sad face.

2.7 In 2007, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries added another Smiley face – the elite-smiley  – to the four-tiered Smiley grading scheme. The elite-smiley is awarded to a food establishment which has got the big smile face on the latest four inspection reports and received no remarks during the past 12 months.

Display of the inspection results

2.8 In Denmark, all food establishments must display the most recent inspection report visibly in a place where consumers could read it before deciding whether to eat there. Failure to do so will result in a fine of 2,000 Danish Kroner (HK\$3,300⁶). As such, many food establishments have displayed their most recent inspection report on the front door or shop window where it can be seen easily by consumers.

2.9 All food inspection reports are available on the national smiley website (www.findsmiley.dk) for public viewing. The website allows consumers to search for the inspection results of a particular food establishment by various criteria such as the name, address and type of business. For each establishment, the website summarizes the latest four inspection results in the form of four Smiley faces⁷, with a date showing when each inspection was conducted (see Figure 2). Consumers could click on any of these four Smiley faces to access the corresponding full inspection report.

⁶ The calculation was based on the average rate of HK\$1.65 per Danish Kroner at end-March 2008.

⁷ The website will display an elite-smiley symbol if the food establishment concerned has got the big smile face on the latest four inspection reports and received no remarks over the past 12 months.

Figure 2 – National Smiley website

The screenshot shows the National Smiley website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Om Os', 'Kontakt', 'Fødevareregioner', 'English', and 'Sitemap'. A search bar contains the text 'Indtast søgeord' and a 'SØG' button. Below the navigation bar, there are buttons for 'Vis liste' and 'Vis på kort', and a search input field containing 'virksomhed'. There are also buttons for 'Detail', 'Engros', 'SØG', and 'SØG' with a magnifying glass icon. A 'Log ind' button and a link for 'Flere søgefelter Hjælp' are also visible.

The main content area is titled 'Forside' and includes a sidebar with links: 'Om findsmiley.dk', 'Info til forbrugere', 'Info til virksomheder', 'Statistik', 'Analyser', 'Regler', 'Ikoner', 'Hjælp', 'Fødevarekontrol', and 'Smiley nyheder'. The main content area displays search results for 'virksomhed' with 19 results. The results are listed in a table with columns for the business name, address, and inspection dates. Each result includes a smiley face icon indicating the rating and a 'Detail' button.

Firma	Adresse	19-03-2008	09-03-2005	16-09-2004	17-09-2003	Detail
ApS SKARV RESTAURATIONS VIRKSOMHED	Pilestræde 43 1112 København K	😊	😊	😊	😊	✉ 🌐
Den Sociale Virksomhed Lolland Afdeling Åvænget	Bays Vej 2 4930 Maribo	😊	😊	😊	😊	✉ 🌐
ELISABETH CHAAHHHIG RESTAURATIONS/DET KINESISKE TÅRN VIRKSOM...	Vesterbrogade 3 1620 København V	😊	😊	😊	😊	✉ 🌐
Esbjerg Kommunes Forsyningsvirksomhederne	Ravnevej 10 6705 Esbjerg Ø	😊	😊	😊	😊	✉ 🌐
Forsvarets Kantinevirksomhed	Sødalsparken 20 8220 Brabrand	😊	😊			✉ 🌐
FREDERIKSBERG KOMMUNES FORSYNINGS VIRKSOMHED	Stæhr. Johanssens Vej 38 2000 Frederiksberg	😊	😊	😊	😊	✉ 🌐
Kantinen C.V.U. Syd Den sociale virksomhed Falster	Bispegade 5, byg. B 4800 Nykøbing F	😊	😊	😞	😊	✉ 🌐
Kursusvirksomheden Østerlund	Gl Nykøbingvej 94 4572 Nørre Asminderup	😊				✉ 🌐
Lyng-frue - Mobil virksomhed vLene Fruelund	Funder Skovvej 21 8600 Silkeborg	😊	😊	😊		✉ 🌐
Næstved Sociale virksomhed Kantinen	Fabrikvej 76 4700 Næstved	😊	😊	😊	😊	✉ 🌐

At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with contact information for 'Fødevarestyrelsen' and a 'Webmaster' link.

Source: National Smiley website (2008).

Re-assessment mechanism

2.10 In Denmark, the Smiley scheme provides food business operators with the opportunity to request a re-inspection of their food establishments after the initial inspection. Re-inspection normally takes place after a food establishment has achieved a low rating at the initial inspection, and remedial measures have been taken since then to improve its hygiene conditions. The costs of re-inspection are borne by the requesting food business operator.

Assessment of the Smiley scheme

2.11 According to the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration⁸, a market survey conducted in November 2007 showed that 97% of consumers supported the Smiley scheme. In the same survey, two out of three consumers said that they would reject a restaurant with a sad Smiley face, whereas 59% stated that they actually chose to dine somewhere else because of the expression of the sad Smiley face. As to food establishments, 88% of them supported the Smiley scheme and 86% believed that health inspectors' judgement was fair when making the assessments.

3. The United Kingdom

3.1 In the UK, both the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 came into force in January 2005, in an effort to promote a culture of openness and accountability among public authorities⁹. These two pieces of legislation set out the statutory right for public access to information held by public authorities in the course of carrying out their functions, unless there are good reasons to keep the information confidential. As to provisions relating to the food safety regulation, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 allows the public to request information on hygiene inspections of food establishments carried out by local authorities. Likewise, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 provide for public access to more specific information on *"the state of human health and safety, including the contaminations of the food chain, where relevant"*¹⁰.

3.2 In order to cope with the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, the Food Standards Agency¹¹ launched a pilot scheme – Scores on Doors – in 2004 to make hygiene inspection information of food establishments available at the business premises and online for public viewing. The pilot scheme was also part of the Agency's Strategic Plan 2001-2006 which aimed at, among other things, reducing food-borne illnesses by 20% over the plan period by improving food safety right through the food chain.

⁸ See Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (2008).

⁹ The Freedom of Information Act 2000 prescribes public access to official information held by public authorities, whereas the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 stipulate the granting of the rights of access to environmental information to the general public. See Wikipedia (2008) and Information Commissioner's Office (2008a) and (2008b).

¹⁰ See Part 1 of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

¹¹ The Food Standards Agency is an independent government department set up by an Act of Parliament in 2000 to protect public health and consumer interests in relation to food.

Operation of the Scores on Doors scheme

3.3 The first Scores on Doors scheme (doors scheme) was introduced in 2004 and a number of similar schemes have been set up across the UK in the ensuing years. At present, there are over a hundred local authorities operating various versions of the doors scheme in the UK. Many of these schemes are sponsored by the Food Standards Agency with a view to providing the Agency with evidence of how well the schemes work in practice. Meanwhile, there are a number of local authorities which have developed their own doors schemes to cope with the increasing number of requests from the public for hygiene inspection information. The following paragraphs summarize the general features of the various doors schemes currently in operation across the UK.

Criteria for rating a food establishment

3.4 In the UK, the Food Law Code of Practice, issued under the Food Safety Act 1990, sets out instructions and criteria which health inspectors are required to follow when enforcing the food law. In particular, the Code stipulates a food hygiene scoring system which employs a set of seven risk assessment criteria to rate a food establishment and determine the frequency of inspections so required¹². Most of the doors schemes have made use of this scoring system and employed the following three criteria stipulated therein to inspect and rate a food establishment¹³:

- (a) food hygiene and safety procedures (including food handling practices and procedures, and temperature control);
- (b) structure of business premises (including cleanliness, layout, condition of structure, ventilation, etc.); and
- (c) confidence in management/control systems (including the food business operator's history of compliance with food hygiene law, the attitude of the management towards hygiene and food safety, and evidence of a food safety management system¹⁴).

During an inspection, each of the above three criteria is given a score by the responsible health inspector. The scores are then totalled to determine the overall score, which will be translated into a Smiley, a letter or a grade to summarize the hygiene standards achieved at the time of inspection.

¹² The frequency of inspections ranges from every 12 months for the highest-risk food establishments, to once every five years for the lowest-risk food establishments.

¹³ The coverage of the doors scheme differs among local authorities. Some schemes focus on specific sectors of the food market, usually catering outlets, while others cover all food businesses subject to food hygiene inspections.

¹⁴ Most doors schemes have selected these three criteria out of the seven criteria set out in the food hygiene scoring system because they are under the direct control of the food business operator.

3.5 After an inspection, each food establishment will receive a certificate summarizing the hygiene standards achieved at the time of the latest inspection. The amount of information shown on the certificate varies among local authorities. For example, the city of Derby adopts a star-rating scheme and the certificate only shows the star awarded (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 – Sample certificate issued by the Derby City Council



Source: Derby City Council (2008).

3.6 In contrast, the city of Leicester adopts a Smiley scheme and the certificate includes not only the Smiley face, but also the rating for each of the control areas and a summary of the inspection findings (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Sample Certificate issued by the Leicester City Council

Food Safety Report	
Name of establishment: 5H20	Address: 443 Welford Road Leicester LE2 6BL
Food business operator: Ravinder Singh	
SmileSafe Rating	
Inspection date: 13 Feb 2008	
Food hygiene practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food handling • Temperature control • Personal hygiene of staff 	SmileSafe rating: 
Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleanliness • Maintenance and repair • Facilities 	
Confidence in management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food safety procedures • Track record of business • Food hygiene training 	
The poorest rating above determines the SmileSafe rating	
 High standards of food hygiene	 Unsatisfactory standards, some major problems
 Satisfactory standards, some issues raised	 Highly unsatisfactory standards, enforcement action likely
Summary of Inspection Findings	
<p>Food handling practices were satisfactory. Food was handled and stored hygienically and all fridges were operating at correct temperatures to ensure food safety. Personal hygiene of food handlers was also satisfactory and appropriate protective clothing was worn when preparing food.</p> <p>Standards of cleanliness were good. The structure of the kitchen was reasonable, although some redecoration was required and the storeroom floor required repair.</p> <p>Food safety checks were being carried out in this business. These now need further development and documentation. Food handlers had received food hygiene training, but this was some time ago.</p>	
Inspector: Elizabeth Johnson	Signature:
Leicester City Council, Food Safety Team, New Walk Centre (A4), Welford Place, Leicester, LE1 6ZG	Tel: 01 16 2527001 www.leicester.gov.uk/food E-mail: food@leicester.gov.uk
	

Source: Leicester City Council (2008).

Symbols to categorize the inspection results

3.7 Local authorities have converted the food hygiene inspection results into symbols to differentiate the various hygiene standards of the food establishments inspected. A wide range of symbols is used in the existing doors schemes. Most of them use a 5-star rating scheme, ranging from no star (very poor hygiene standards) to five stars (best standards of food safety management). There are also other rating schemes employed to categorize the inspection results, such as:

- (a) Smiley scheme – big smile (high standards of food hygiene), smile (satisfactory standards), no smile (unsatisfactory standards) and frown (highly unsatisfactory standards);
- (b) letter-grading system – "A" (excellent), "B" (good), "C" (acceptable), "D" (poor) and "E" (very poor);
- (c) a two-tiered scheme with "Pass" and "Improvement Required" ratings; and
- (d) traffic light scheme, plus "gold" for the best rating – gold (excellent hygiene standards), green (good hygiene standards), amber (satisfactory compliance level) and red (enforcement action taken/some improvement required).

Display of the inspection results

3.8 Local authorities post the latest hygiene inspection results on their websites for public viewing. However, there is currently no legal requirement obliging a food establishment to display its rating certificate at the business premises. Should the food establishment choose to do so, the certificate must be displayed in places visible from outside of the business premises, thereby enabling the public to view the latest hygiene result before deciding to enter.

Re-assessment mechanism

3.9 In general, a food establishment will get a new rating only at the next food hygiene inspection or if there has been a change in ownership. Nevertheless, there are a few doors schemes which allow for re-assessment upon request by the food business operators. For example, in the city of Leicester, a food business operator could request for a re-inspection if he/she is dissatisfied with the Smiley rating received at the initial inspection and has taken remedial actions since then to improve the hygiene conditions of his/her food establishment. The operator must make the request within 28 days of the initial inspection and pay for the re-inspection costs.

Assessment of the Scores on Doors schemes

3.10 In 2007, the Food Standards Agency commissioned two research companies – Continental Research and Greenstreet Berman – to evaluate the doors schemes in the UK. Continental Research focused on consumer understanding of the schemes, whereas Greenstreet Berman evaluated the impact of the schemes on local authorities and food businesses and recommended the way forward for the schemes in light of the evidence found.

Key findings of Continental Research

3.11 The evaluation conducted by Continental Research showed support from consumers, food businesses and local authorities for the doors scheme as a way to better inform and empower consumers. The research company also found the need shared by all stakeholders for introducing a national doors scheme in order to avoid confusions arising from the current proliferation of various versions of the schemes across the UK.

Key findings of Greenstreet Berman

3.12 According to Greenstreet Berman, the doors schemes did not place any undue regulatory burden on local authorities, and the resources to operate the schemes were less than expected. In addition, there was evidence that the doors schemes encouraged food businesses to improve their hygiene standards and might have led to measurable improvements in hygiene inspection scores. The evidence included:

- (a) the subjective opinions of food businesses and health inspectors;
- (b) statistically significant improvements in hygiene inspection scores before and after implementation of the doors schemes; and
- (c) evaluations of similar schemes overseas which showed a direct link between the doors schemes and improved standards in food businesses.

3.13 In addition, Greenstreet Berman highlighted the justifications for the introduction of a national doors scheme, including the finding that 97% of consumers and the majority of food businesses supported the idea of a national doors scheme. In addition, a national approach could increase consumer awareness of the doors scheme and facilitate self-compliance among food establishments¹⁵.

¹⁵ According to Greenstreet Berman, the hygiene rating displayed on the certificate issued to food establishments inspected provides recognition and the incentive to improve the food hygiene standards. See Foods Standards Agency (2008a).

Recent development in the Scores on Doors scheme

3.14 At its open meeting held on 12 March 2008, the Board of the Food Standards Agency agreed that a single nation-wide doors scheme should be put in place to make food business hygiene ratings available to consumers. According to the Agency¹⁶, the decision on the launch of a national scheme is based on the experience with over a hundred schemes running over the past two years. It also demonstrated the commitment of the Agency to facilitate consumer choice.

3.15 On 20 May 2008, the Agency launched a 12-week consultation exercise to solicit views from all interested parties on the national doors scheme. In particular, it will consult on two possible rating options:

- (a) a four-tiered system, with three stars and a fail rating; and
- (b) a three-tiered scheme with "Pass" or "Improvement Required" certificates being issued, alongside a fail rating.

4. Los Angeles of the United States

4.1 In January 1998, the Department of Public Health¹⁷ in Los Angeles started issuing letter grades (A, B or C) to food establishments based on their latest hygiene inspection results. In addition, the Department, for the first time, publicized the inspection results at the business premises and via the Internet¹⁸. Previously, inspections were documented by health inspectors based on a scoring system that subtracted points from a starting score based on the nature and extent of any violations of the food safety regulations marked. However, there were no grades associated with this scoring system, and the hygiene scores were for internal use only.

4.2 The introduction of the letter-grading scheme in 1998 was in response to an investigative news programme broadcast by a local television station in November 1997. The programme used hidden cameras to catch unsafe and unhygienic food handling at a number of restaurants in Los Angeles. It also exposed poor handling practices at several restaurants that had received acceptable inspections. In the wake of the negative media coverage, the Board of Supervisors, the governing body of Los Angeles County, ordered the Department of Public Health to submit a plan addressing the deficiencies identified in the news programme. The Department subsequently returned to the Board with a 17-point action plan, which set the stage for the implementation of the following new food inspection measures from 1998 onwards:

¹⁶ See Food Standards Agency (2008a).

¹⁷ The Department of Public Health is responsible for protecting health, preventing disease, and promoting health and well-being of the Los Angeles County residents.

¹⁸ Letter grades are issued to permanent food establishments that store, prepare, package, serve, vend, or otherwise provide food for human consumption at the retail level. See Department of Public Health (2007).

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- (a) adoption of objective inspection scoring criteria to rate food establishments based on their compliance with the food safety regulations;
 - (b) introduction of a letter-grading scheme to classify food establishments of different compliance levels;
 - (c) establishment of a re-rating mechanism to provide the opportunity for food business operators to improve the low grade/score received by their food establishments; and
 - (d) provision of increased public access to the food hygiene inspection results.

Operation of the letter-grading scheme

4.3 The health inspectors of the Department of Public Health conduct regular inspections of food establishments to ensure compliance with the relevant food safety regulations. The frequency of inspections is based on the risks posed by an establishment's food handling practices¹⁹. For example, food establishments selling pre-packaged and already prepared foods (e.g. convenience and grocery stores) receive one inspection a year, while those with limited menus and limited ingredients (e.g. fast food establishments) receive two inspections a year. For food establishments with full menus, they are inspected three times a year.

Criteria for rating a food establishment

4.4 At each inspection, any violations of the food safety regulations are documented in the Food Official Inspection Report (FOIR), which will be issued by the responsible health inspector to the food establishment concerned at the conclusion of the inspection. The purpose of FOIR is to identify the varying degrees of risk associated with any of the food establishment's violations of the applicable food safety regulations. FOIR contains 108 control areas for documenting various violations and requirements. It is separated into six sections, namely Sections I – IV for recording violations²⁰ and Sections V – VI for data collection and documentation (see the Appendix)²¹.

¹⁹ See Department of Public Health (2007).

²⁰ Section I is used to record the "major" violations that directly relate to the transmission of food-borne illnesses (e.g. the adulteration of food products), while Section II is used to record violations that pose a lower risk to public health and safety (e.g. food temperature). For Section III, it is used to identify those violations that have no immediate risk to public health and safety (e.g. improper thawing methods). Meanwhile, Section IV is used to identify administrative-type violations that do not have a direct impact on health risk (e.g. failure to post a handwashing sign). See Department of Public Health (2007).

²¹ Section V identifies the training needed for the staff of food establishments, while Section VI documents the temperature of potentially hazardous food. See Department of Public Health (2007).

4.5 When a health inspector conducts an inspection, he/she will check the appropriate categories in Sections I – VI of FOIR. Any violations of Sections I – III are marked and pre-specified points are deducted for each violation²². The health inspector will add up all the points deducted and subtract the total from a starting score of 100 points assigned to each food establishment before the inspection. The remaining points will determine whether the food establishment concerned receives a grade card or a score card at the end of the inspection.

Symbols to classify the inspection results

4.6 A grade (A, B or C) card is issued to a food establishment receiving a score of 70 points or above in FOIR. The grade displayed on the grade card is based upon the following grading scheme:

- (a) "A" for a score of 90-100²³, meaning generally superior in food handling practices and overall food facility maintenance;
- (b) "B" for a score of 80-89, meaning generally good in food handling practices and overall food facility maintenance; and
- (c) "C" for a score of 70-79, meaning generally acceptable in food handling practices and overall food facility maintenance.

A food establishment with a score less than 70 points receives a score card, which only displays the numerical score listed in FOIR²⁴. Receipt of a score card means poor food handling practices and poor overall food facility maintenance.

Display of the inspection results

4.7 Food establishments are required to have a copy of the most recent inspection report available for review by the public, as well as posting an information card advising the public of which local inspection office to contact for additional information. The inspection results are also made available to the public through the website of the Department of Public Health (<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/rating/>). The website has an online search function that facilitates rapid access to the score of a particular restaurant by grade, name, or location/neighbourhood.

²² The categories in Sections I-III have been assigned a specific point value based on the associated public health risk of the violation. For example, a food temperature violation will result in a six-point deduction, while one live cockroach observed with no other evidence of an infestation will result in a one-point deduction. See Department of Public Health (2007).

²³ The Department of Public Health issues a Certificate of Excellence to food establishments that have received three consecutive "A" ratings with no Section I violations or no repeated Section II violations in FOIR. See Department of Public Health (2007).

²⁴ Food establishments that score below 70 points twice within a 12-month period are subject to closure.

4.8 In Los Angeles, the requirement to display the grade/score card only applies to those food establishments located at the cities that have adopted the Los Angeles County Ordinance and made it part of their municipal code. Under the Ordinance, food establishments are required to post their most recent grade/score card clearly visible to the general public and patrons entering the business premises²⁵. In addition, the grade/score card must remain posted until the next routine inspection, at which a new grade/score card will be issued.

Re-assessment mechanism

4.9 The Department of Public Health has put in place a re-assessment scheme – owner-initiated inspections (OII) – to provide food business operators with the opportunity to request for a re-inspection after receiving low grade/score for their food establishments. A food business operator is allowed to request for an OII once in any 12-month period, and must pay for the re-inspection fees so incurred.

4.10 Request for an OII must be made within three business days of receipt of a grade and inspection score. The approval of the OII will lead to two unannounced inspections. The first of these occurs within 10 days after the payment of the re-inspection fees by the food business operator. This arrangement gives the operator the opportunity to address any critical issues disclosed within the initial inspection and improve the hygiene condition of his/her food establishment. Within 30-60 days after the conclusion of the OII, there will be a second unannounced department-initiated inspection. This second inspection allows the health inspector to determine whether or not the food business operator has managed to preserve improvements and fully resolve the issues discovered in the initial inspection. If so, the operator will receive a new letter grade/score for his/her food establishment.

Assessment of the letter-grading scheme

4.11 In January 2008, the Department of Public Health published a report – *10-Year Review of Restaurant and Food Facility Grading Program* – to summarize the evolution and results of the letter-grading scheme over the past decade²⁶. In the report, the Department highlighted the contributions of the scheme in terms of (a) improved and safer food facilities, (b) reduced occurrence of related illnesses, (c) improved information for consumers, and (d) positive public perception of the scheme. The following paragraphs summarize the key survey and research study results quoted by the report to quantify the success of the letter-grading scheme.

²⁵ According to Chapter 8.04 of the Los Angeles County Code, "clearly visible to the general public and to patrons" means (a) posted in the front window of the establishment within five feet of the front door, (b) posted in a display case mounted on the outside front wall of the establishment within five feet of the front door, or (c) posted in a location as directed and determined at the discretion of the County health officer to ensure proper notice to the general public and to patrons.

²⁶ According to the Department of Public Health (2008), the publication of the report marks the 10th anniversary of the launch of the letter-grading scheme in Los Angeles County.

Improved and safer food facilities

4.12 A review of the trends in inspection scores and statistics showed the success of the letter-grading scheme in improving the hygiene conditions of food establishments. Between 1997-1998 and 2006-2007, the average inspection score for restaurants rose from 84.7 points to 93.3 points. In particular, the percentage of restaurants with scores of 90-100 points (i.e. "A" grade) rose from 39.9% to 82.5% over the same period. Meanwhile, the percentage of restaurants with inspection scores below 70 points fell sharply from 11.8% in 1997-1998 to 0.2% in 2006-2007.

4.13 Similar to restaurants, other retail food facilities exhibited a declining trend in the percentage of low-scoring inspections between 1997-1998 and 2006-2007. Within this group, the percentage of inspections with scores below 70 points dropped from 4.7% in 1997-1998 to 0.1% in 2006-2007, while the percentage of inspections with "A" grade awarded increased from 63.0% to 88.3%.

Reduced occurrence of related illnesses

4.14 The reduction in the number of low-scoring food facilities, coupled with improvement in average scores, has been found to improve public health. For instance, an econometric study by two economists concluded that there was a 20% decrease in food-borne illness hospitalizations before and after the implementation of the letter-grading scheme²⁷. Another study by the Department of Public Health in 2005 compared the food-borne disease hospitalization rates in Los Angeles County to those in the rest of California between 1993 and 2000. The study found a significant decrease of 13.1% in food-borne disease hospitalizations in Los Angeles County that was not mirrored in other counties.

Improved information for consumers

4.15 A survey of 2 000 County residents conducted in 2001 reflected increased public access to information on hygiene inspections of food establishments under the letter-grading scheme. According to the survey, 84% of respondents heard of the grading scheme and 77% of respondents noticed posted grades always or most of the time. The survey also found that 65% of respondents were influenced in their selection of food establishments by letter grades always or most of the time. Of respondents who dined out, only 3% responded that they would eat at "C"-graded restaurants, and 25% would eat at "B"-graded restaurants, whereas 88% would eat at "A"-graded restaurants always or most of the time.

²⁷ See Jin, G., & Lesile, P. (2003).

4.16 The public's preference for eating at higher-rated restaurants as demonstrated in the 2001 survey has been supported by other research studies. A study conducted by two economists in 2003 found that there was an economic incentive in the form of increased revenue for restaurants to earn higher grades²⁸. In areas with mandatory grade posting, restaurants with "A" grades saw an average increase in revenue of 5.7% once grade cards were introduced. Revenue for restaurants with "B" grades in mandatory grade posting areas saw an average increase in revenue of 0.7% after grade cards were introduced, five percentage points lower than "A"-graded restaurants.

Positive public perception of the letter-grading scheme

4.17 According to the Department of Public Health, whether the public views the letter-grading scheme as valuable and beneficial serves as another measure of the success of the scheme. In 2001, 2 000 County residents were randomly selected and surveyed on their opinions about the letter-grading scheme. The survey found that 91% of the respondents liked the scheme. The Los Angeles Health Survey conducted in 2005 also found that 89% of 8 648 respondents considered the scheme effective in assuring food safety.

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²⁸ See Jin, G., & Lesile, P. (2003).

Appendix (cont'd)

**SUMMARY OF THE CORRESPONDING LAWS AND REGULATIONS FOR THE VIOLATIONS LISTED ON THE FRONT SIDE OF THIS FORM.
THIS SUMMARY PAGE LISTS THE GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR EACH ITEM. THE DEPARTMENT MAY CITE ADDITIONAL SECTIONS, AS NEEDED.**

FOOD TEMPERATURE	FOOD SAFETY CERTIFICATION
<p>1, 2, 18, 19. Potentially hazardous foods shall be held at or below 41/ 45°F or at or above 135°F. Potentially hazardous foods that have been removed from holding temperatures for preparation shall be returned to approved holding temperatures within 2 hours. (113956, 113958, 114000)</p> <p>2. See Number 1.</p> <p>3. Comminuted meat, raw eggs, or any food containing comminuted meat or raw eggs, shall be heated to 155°F for 15 sec. Fish, single pieces of meat, and eggs for immediate service, shall be heated to 145°F for 15 sec. Poultry, fish, comminuted poultry, stuffed fish / meat / poultry shall be heated to 165°F for 15 sec. Other temperature requirements may apply. (114004, 114008, 114010, 114093)</p> <p>4. Any potentially hazardous foods cooked, cooled and subsequently reheated for hot holding or serving shall be heated within 2 hours to a minimum temperature of 165°F for 15 sec. (114016)</p> <p>5, 21. All potentially hazardous food shall be RAPIDLY cooled from 135°F to 70°F, within 2 hours, and then from 70°F to 41 °F, within 4 hours. Cooling shall be by one or more of the following methods: in shallow pans; separating food into smaller portions; adding ice as an ingredient, using an ice bath, stirring frequently, using rapid cooling equipment; or, using containers that facilitate heat transfer. (114002)</p>	<p>35. There shall be at least one food safety certified owner or employee at each food facility. (113947)</p> <p>FOOD / METHODS</p> <p>36. Food shall be thawed under refrigeration; completely submerged under cold running water of sufficient velocity to flush loose particles; in microwave oven, during the cooking process. (114020)</p> <p>37. See Number 27.</p> <p>38. Food shall be inspected upon receipt and prior to use. Food shall be transported (less than 30 minutes) so as to be pure, free from contamination, adulteration and spoilage. (113980, 113982, 114035)</p>
<p>EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND HYGIENIC PRACTICES</p> <p>6. Employees with a communicable disease shall be excluded from the food facility / preparation of food. Gloves shall be worn if an employee has cuts, wounds, and rashes. (113948, 113950)</p> <p>7. Employees are required to wash their hands: before engaging in food preparation; as often as necessary, during food preparation, to remove soil and contamination, when switching from working with raw to ready to eat foods; after touching body parts; after using toilet room; before donning gloves; or any time when contamination may occur. (113952, 113953)</p>	<p>OPERATIONS</p> <p>39. Utensils or other approved devices or mechanisms shall be provided for customer self-service of unpackage food; clean tableware must be used for each visit to self-service areas. (114063, 114065, 114075)</p> <p>40. Handwashing soap and single-use towels or drying device shall be provided in dispensers; dispensers shall be maintained in good repair. (113953)</p> <p>41. All employees preparing, serving or handling food or utensils shall wear clean, washable outer garments or uniforms and shall wear a hairnet, cap, or other suitable covering to confine hair. Gloves shall be worn if an employee has artificial nails, nail polish, or fingernails that are not clean and neatly trimmed. (113959, 113971, 113973)</p> <p>42. Facility shall maintain tags / records from shellfish for at least 90 calendar days. (114039)</p> <p>43. See Number 30.</p> <p>44. All returned or damaged food products and food products without labels shall be stored in a designated area, separate from food. (114055)</p> <p>45. The interior premises of each food facility shall be kept clean and free of litter and rubbish; all clean and soiled linen shall be properly stored; non-food items shall be stored and displayed separate from food and food-contact surfaces. No sleeping accommodations shall be in any room where food is prepared, stored or sold. (114185, 114257, 114285, 114286)</p> <p>46. No live animal, bird or fowl shall be kept or allowed in a food facility (exception: guide dog, signal dog, or service animals). (114259)</p>
<p>SEWAGE</p> <p>8. All liquid waste shall drain to an approved fully functioning sewage disposal system. (114197)</p> <p>9. Toilet facilities shall be provided and maintained in good repair. (114250, 114276)</p>	<p>UTENSILS / EQUIPMENT / SHELVING / CABINETS</p> <p>47. All utensils and equipment shall be fully operative and in good repair. (114175, 114177)</p> <p>48. Non-food contact surfaces shall be kept clean. (114115, 114175)</p> <p>49. Utensils and equipment shall be handled and stored so as to be protected from contamination. (114074, 114178, 114179)</p> <p>50. All utensils and equipment shall be approved, installed properly, and meet applicable standards. (114130 – 114133)</p> <p>51. Wiping cloths used to wipe service counters, scales or other surfaces that may come into contact with food shall be used only once unless kept in clean water with adequate sanitizer. (114185)</p> <p>52. Testing equipment and materials shall be provided to measure the applicable sanitization method. (114099, 114107)</p> <p>53. An accurate easily readable metal probe thermometer suitable for measuring temperature of food shall be available to the food handler. A thermometer +/- 2 °F shall be provided for each hot and cold holding unit of potentially hazardous foods and high temperature warewashing machines. (114099, 114101, 114157, 114159)</p>
<p>VERMIN</p> <p>13, 14, 15. Each food facility shall be kept free of vermin: rodents (rats, mice), cockroaches, flies. (113939, 114259)</p>	<p>WALLS / CEILINGS / FLOORS</p> <p>54, 55. Walls / ceilings shall have durable, smooth, nonabsorbent, light-colored, and washable surfaces. All floor surfaces, other than the customer service areas, shall be approved, smooth, durable and made of nonabsorbent material that is easily cleanable. Approved base covering shall be provided in all areas, except customer service areas and where food is stored in original unopened containers. All food facilities shall be kept clean and in good repair. (114257, 114268, 114271)</p>
<p>WATER / SANITIZING</p> <p>16. Equipment food-contact surfaces, utensils and multiservice utensils shall be cleaned by one of the following means: 1) handwash using a three-compartment sink: wash in hot water with cleanser; rinse in clean hot water; rinse in final sanitizing solution or 2) machine wash, followed by a hot water or chemical sanitizing rinse. All utensils and equipment shall be clean. Food-contact surfaces / utensils shall be cleaned and sanitized each time there is a change in process between different raw animal products, produce and ready-to-eat foods, and at least every 4 hours based on the temperature of the room. (114097, 114099, 114115, 114117)</p> <p>17, 62. An adequate, protected, pressurized, potable supply of hot water (120°F) and cold water shall be provided at all times. (114192, 114195)</p>	<p>VERMIN</p> <p>56, 57, 58, 59. A food facility shall at all times be constructed and maintained so as to prevent the entrance and harborage of vermin. (114259, 114268)</p> <p>PLUMBING / FIXTURES / EQUIPMENT DRAINAGE</p> <p>60, 61. All plumbing and plumbing fixtures shall be installed in compliance with local plumbing ordinances, shall be maintained so as to prevent any contamination, and shall be kept clean, fully operative, and in good repair. Any hose used for conveying potable water shall be of approved materials, labeled, properly stored, and used for no other purpose. (113953, 114190-93)</p> <p>62. See Number 17.</p>
<p>FOOD TEMPERATURES / METHODS</p> <p>18, 19. See Number 1.</p> <p>20. Maintain raw shell eggs at ambient temperature of 45°F or less. (113956, 113958, 114000)</p> <p>21. See Number 5.</p>	<p>VENTILATION / LIGHTING</p> <p>63, 64, 65. Exhaust hoods shall be provided to remove toxic gases, heat, grease, vapors and smoke and be approved by the local building department. Exhaust hoods and filters shall be properly installed, maintained clean, and in good repair. Canopy-type hoods shall extend 6" beyond all cooking equipment. All areas shall have sufficient ventilation to facilitate proper food storage. Toilet rooms shall be vented to the outside air by a screened openable window, an air shaft, or a light-switch activated exhaust fan, consistent with local building codes. (114149)</p> <p>66. Adequate lighting shall be provided in all areas to facilitate cleaning and inspection. Light fixtures in areas where open food is stored, served, prepared, and where utensils are washed shall be of shatterproof construction or protected with light shields. (114252)</p>
<p>FOOD STORAGE</p> <p>22. All food must be stored in an approved facility. Food shall be covered and stored as to be protected and kept free from contamination. Food shall be stored in approved containers and labeled as to contents. Food shall be stored at least 6" above the floor on approved shelving. (114047, 114049, 114051-55, 114185)</p> <p>23. Food shall be protected from cross-contamination. (113986)</p> <p>24. Unpackaged food shall be displayed, shielded and dispensed in a manner that protects the food from contamination. (113984, 114060)</p>	<p>TOILETS / TOILET ROOMS / DRESSING ROOMS</p> <p>67. Toilet facilities shall be maintained clean, sanitary and in good repair. Toilet rooms shall be separated by a well-fitting self-closing door. Toilet tissue shall be provided in a permanently installed dispenser at each toilet. The number of toilet facilities shall be in accordance with local building and plumbing ordinances. Toilet facilities shall be provided for patrons in facilities with more than 20,000 sq ft.; facilities offering on-site liquor consumption; and facilities, built after January 1, 2004, that provide space for the consumption of food on the premises. (114250, 114276, LA County Code)</p> <p>68. A separate room, or designated area away from food, food storage, and toilet rooms shall be provided for employees to change and store their clothing and personal effects. (114256)</p>
<p>PLUMBING / FIXTURES</p> <p>25. The potable water supply shall be protected with backflow or back siphonage protection devices, as required by applicable plumbing codes. (114192, 114193)</p> <p>26. Adequate facilities shall be provided for handwashing, food preparation and janitorial / maintenance purposes. (113953, 114163, 114190, 114279)</p>	<p>REFUSE / PREMISES / JANITORIAL</p> <p>69. A separate area away from food shall be provided for the storage of cleaning equipment and supplies. A janitorial sink or mop basin shall be provided for general cleaning purposes and for the disposal of mop bucket wastes and other liquid wastes. (114279 – 114282)</p> <p>70, 71. All food waste and rubbish shall be kept in leak proof and rodent proof containers. Containers shall be covered as required. All waste must be removed and disposed of as frequently as necessary to prevent a nuisance. The exterior premises of each food facility shall be kept clean and free of litter and rubbish. (114244 – 114245, 114257)</p>
<p>FOOD</p> <p>27, 37. All food shall be manufactured, produced, prepared, packed, stored, transported, kept for sale, and served so as to be pure, free from contamination, adulteration, and spoilage. Linen may be used to line a container for service of food if replaced each time container is refilled. (113980, 114185)</p> <p>28. See Number 12.</p> <p>29. Food that is unused or returned by the consumer shall not be offered as food for human consumption. (114079)</p>	
<p>OPERATIONS</p> <p>43. All poisonous substances, detergents, bleaches, and cleaning compounds shall be stored separate from food, utensils, packing material and food-contact surfaces. (114254)</p> <p>31. No employees shall eat, drink, or smoke in any work area or commit any act that contaminates food or food-contact surfaces. (113975, 113977)</p>	
<p>CONSUMER PROTECTION</p> <p>32. All retail food facilities which offer raw, untreated oysters harvested from the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas shall provide a written warning to any person who orders such product. (114090, Title 17-CCR)</p> <p>33. Packaged food and self-service bulk food must be properly labeled. Any food is misbranded if its labeling is false or misleading. Merus and advertising must accurately represent the food offered for sale. (114057, 114087, 114089, 114093)</p> <p>34. Ready-to-Eat food containing raw eggs, undercooked meat / seafood and unpackaged confectionary food containing more than ½% alcohol may be served if the facility notifies the consumer. (114090, 114093)</p>	

Appendix (cont'd)

RETAIL FOOD OFFICIAL INSPECTION REPORT

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES • DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

DBA / NAME:	SITE #:	DATE:	EHS INITIALS:					
SECTION IV: SIGNS / PERMITS / REQUIREMENTS								
<small>(POINT VALUE - VIOLATIONS MARKED ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE CALCULATION OF THE FINAL SCORE AND DO NOT AFFECT OVERALL GRADE)</small>								
177	72. Public Health Permit	82. Specialized Process	187	188	189	190		
178	73. Inspection Report							
179	74. Grade / Score	83. Person In Charge:						
180	75. Public Notice							
181	76. Missing Invoice Copies	84. Demonstration of Knowledge	195	196	197	198		
182	77. County Business License (Unincorporated Areas)							
183	78. Signs - Handwashing / Smoking / Restroom	85. Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) Plan	199	200		202		
184	79. Vending Machine - Name / Address / Phone Number							
185	80. Vending Machine - Record of Cleaning	86. Variance Documentation	203	204		206		
186	81. No Construction Plans Submitted							
SECTION V								
<small>(POINT VALUE - SUBCATEGORIES ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE CALCULATION OF THE FINAL SCORE AND DO NOT AFFECT THE OVERALL GRADE)</small>								
TRAINING PROVIDED			CLOSURE / ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION					
207	87. Sanitization - Food Contact Surfaces	98. Suspension of Public Health Permit				218		
208	88. Handwashing - Employee	99. Administrative Review / Office Hearing				219		
209	89. Delivery - Proper Inspection of Food	100. Referral - Plan Check				220		
210	90. Cooking Temperatures	101. Referral - Other Agency or Department				221		
211	91. Cooling Methods	FOOD PREPARATION - STATUS						
212	92. Holding Temperatures	102. No Food Preparation Observed at Time of Inspection				222		
213	93. Thawing / Thawing Methods	103. No Potentially Hazardous Foods				223		
214	94. Reheating	MISCELLANEOUS						
215	95. Other (Specify):	104. Letter Grade / Score Card - Replacement				224		
BULLETINS / ADVISORIES DISTRIBUTED TO OPERATOR		105. Public Notice - Replacement				225		
216	96. Food Facility Information Packet (Packet Date):	106. Other:				226		
217	97. Summary of Advisory Bulletins	107. Other:				227		
WATER TEMPERATURE AT ():		108. VOLUNTARY FOOD DISPOSAL:		TOTAL	LBS.	228		
SANITIZER TYPE		Meat	lbs	Dairy	lbs	Canned Goods	lbs	
Chlorine	Quaternary Ammonia	Seafood / Fish	lbs	Produce	lbs	Eggs	lbs	
Iodine	Other:	Poultry	lbs	Nuts / Grains	lbs	Misc.	lbs	
POINT DEDUCTIONS PER SECTION		FINAL SCORE:		SCORE / GRADE				
SECTION I	SECTION II	SECTION III	TOTAL	A	B	C	SCORE < 70	
			(100 - Total Deductions)	90 - 100	80 - 89	70 - 79		
<small>POSTING OF THE FINAL SCORE / GRADE IS REQUIRED IN THOSE CITIES THAT HAVE ADOPTED COUNTY ORDINANCE 97-0071</small>								
1. Failure to correct the violations by the compliance date may result in additional fees of \$ _____ for each additional re-inspection.								
2. Your signature on this form does not constitute agreement with its contents. You may discuss the contents of this report or your grade with the department by contacting the supervisor at the Environmental Health Office indicated on page one of this report. Until such time as a decision is rendered by this department, the contents of this report and the grade shall remain in effect.								
3. If you are not satisfied with your score or grade on this report, you may be eligible for an Owner initiated inspection which may result in a change in your grade. Contact your Environmental Health office indicated on page one of this report within 3 business days for eligibility determination. The current fee for this inspection is \$ _____ and the REQUEST MUST BE MADE NO LATER THAN _____.								
SECTION VI: TEMPERATURE CONTROL CHART - POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS FOODS								
	TYPE OF FOOD	F	PROCESS / HOLDING	LOCATION	TIME / METHOD	VIOL.	ACTION TAKEN	LBS.
A								
B								
C								
D								
E								
See Reverse Side For The General Requirements That Correspond To Each Violation Listed Above								
PAGE 2 OF _____								
It is improper and illegal for any County officer, employee or inspector to solicit bribes, gifts or gratuities in connection with performing their official duties. Improper solicitations include requests for anything of value such as cash, discounts, free services, paid travel or entertainment, or tangible items such as food or beverages. Any attempt by a County employee to solicit bribes, gifts or gratuities for any reason should be reported immediately to either the County manager responsible for supervising the employee or the Fraud Hotline at (800) 544 - 8861 or www.lacountyfraud.org. YOU MAY REMAIN ANONYMOUS								
OPERATOR SIGNATURE: _____								

Source: Department of Public Health (2007).

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