

Lincoln County Food Safety Program

Grading of Retail Food Establishments Policy

Background

The State of Montana contracts with the Lincoln City-County Board of Health to inspect retail food establishments within the county. The inspections are conducted by Lincoln County Environmental Health once annually. Additional inspections are conducted during follow-up visits for previous violations, complaints received, reported illness or pre-opening of a new establishment. The inspections are unannounced and performed throughout the year.

Inspections are risk-based and identify violations of Montana Code Annotated (Title 50, Chapter 50), U. S. Food and Drug Administration 2013 Food Code and the Administrative Rules of Montana (Title 37, Chapter 110, Subchapter 2). All inspection reports are public information and are available from Lincoln County Health Department on request.

Policy

The Lincoln City-County Board of Health believes that assigning a letter grade to an inspection will make the inspection results easier to interpret for the food service establishment. The Board believes that requiring posting of the grade at the establishment is good public health policy as it provides the public with information about the establishment's food safety practices and may indicate the risk associated with consuming food from the establishment. Grading can have a positive effect by rewarding establishments for implementing good food safety practices and by providing incentive for establishments needing to improve their food safety practices.

Procedure

Grading is based on specific point values assigned to each violation. There are two types of violation categories: Foodborne Illness Risk Factors, and Good Retail Practices. Foodborne Illness Risk Factors violations are improper practices and actions that directly contribute to increasing risk of food borne illness to the public and count for 10 points each, unless the violation is corrected during the inspection (COS), then the violation will count for only 5 points. Repeat violations of a risk factor corrected on site (COS) will count for 10 points. Foodborne Illness Risk Factors violations must be corrected immediately or as directed by the Environmental Health Department. Good Retail Practices are preventative measures to control the addition of pathogens, chemicals, and physical objects into food. Good Retail Practices violations count for 1 point each.

Grades will be assessed at each inspection and based on inspection results using the following point matrix:

Points	Grade
0	A+
1-6	A
7-9	A-
10-12	B+
13-16	B
17-19	B-
20-24	C+
25-29	C
30-34	C-

- Foodborne Illness Risk Factors – 10 points
- Foodborne Illness Risk Factors - Corrected On Site (COS)- 5 pts
- Good Retail Practices – 1 point

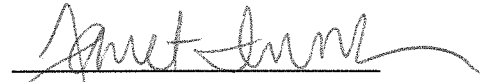
Depending on the number and severity of the violations, establishments that receive a score in excess of 34 points will work with the county sanitarian to develop a compliance plan to correct violations within a time framework. If violations represent a significant and impending health risk or if the establishment refuses to sign a compliance plan, the matter will be referred to the Public Health Officer for further action, which may include temporary or permanent closure of the establishment. An establishment may request another inspection depending upon staff availability.

After the grade is assessed, and the inspection signed by the “person in charge” and the sanitarian, a grade placard will be provided to the establishment with their grade and the date of inspection. The establishment is required to post the grade where it is clearly visible to the public upon entry to the establishment. The placard must not be changed, removed, altered or defaced in any fashion. The grade will remain in effect until the next inspection at which time a new grade placard will be provided. The placard is the property of Lincoln County Environmental Health and must be surrendered upon request.

Grades are public information which may be published on the Lincoln County website and provided to local media upon request. For the purpose of posting food establishment grades on the Lincoln County website, the establishments will be classified by risk factors as set forth by the 2013 FDA Food Code (see Table 1), alphabetized within locations, i.e. Eureka, Libby, Troy, and the grades entered accordingly. An explanation of the risk categories will be provided.

Because inspections are ongoing and grades may not get posted until December of the current inspection year, grades for the previous year will also be posted unless the food establishment has closed or changed ownership.

Adopted by the Lincoln City-County Board of Health on February 8, 2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janet Ivers", written over a horizontal line.

Janet Ivers, Chair
Lincoln City-County Board of Health