



Time as a Public Health Control*

(Food Code Section 3-501.19)

Using Time as a Public Health Control for Hot and/or Cold Food

With written procedures approved by your regulatory authority, it is possible for your facility to allow potentially hazardous ready-to-eat (hot or cold) foods be stored without temperature controls for up to **four hours**, after which the food **must be discarded or immediately consumed. No food may be reused.**

All food must be properly cooked and/or cooled *before* using time as a public health control, and discarded at the end of the service or at four hours.

You Must Have:

Written procedures, approved by your inspector, are required to be on the premise. Work with your inspector to determine suitable procedures for this process.

For holding hot or cold foods, a facility can develop a procedure to hold food for four hours if:

- The hot food is at least 135° F and the cold food is 41° F or less when the food is removed from temperature control.
- The food is marked or identified to indicate the time that is four hours past removal from temperature control.
- The maximum time the food can be held out at room temperature is **four hours**. It must then be eaten immediately, or discarded.
- All food in unmarked containers must be discarded.

Using Time as a Public Health Control for Cold Food Only

With written procedures approved by your regulatory authority, it is possible for your facility to allow **cold** potentially hazardous ready-to-eat foods to be stored for up to **six hours**, after which the food **must be discarded or immediately consumed. No food may be reused.**

All food must be properly cooked and/or cooled *before* using time as a public health control, and discarded at the end of the service or at six hours.

You Must Have:

Written procedures, approved by your inspector, on the premise. Work with your inspector to determine suitable procedures for this process.

For holding cold foods ONLY, a facility can develop a procedure to hold food for six hours if:

- The internal food temperature must be at or below 41° F when removed from temperature control. The foods must maintain internal temperature of 41-70° F. Clarify in your policy how often temperatures would be taken.
- The food must be marked with the time it is removed from temperature control, and the time it must be discarded.

Food found to be over 70° F must be discarded immediately and **when removed from service, food must be discarded or immediately consumed. No food may be reused.**

***NOTE: A food establishment that serves a highly susceptible population may not use this section as the public health control for raw eggs.**

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