CDC’s Findings on Retail Deli Food Safety Practices

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The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of CDC or the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.
CDC’s Environmental Health Specialists Network (EHS-Net)

CDC-funded cooperative agreement

- with state and local health departments
- to conduct practice-based research on retail food safety
- that includes environmental health and epidemiology programs

EHS-Net goal:
Identify food safety gaps and ways to address them
Listeria is a significant problem for retail delis.

Of 23 ready-to-eat foods, deli meats pose the greatest Listeria risk.

Most deli meat listeriosis cases result from retail-sliced meat.
Purpose

**Identify**
- Gaps in delis’ policies and practices that can prevent *Listeria*
- Deli characteristics linked with good policies and practices

**Focus on**
- Cross contamination prevention
- Proliferation prevention
Food safety guidance

**Slicer cleaning**

- Food contact surfaces (like slicers) should be cleaned and sanitized every 4 hours (FDA)
- Slicers should be disassembled for cleaning (USDA-FSIS)

**Cold storage**

- Ready-to-eat food requiring time and temperature control (like deli meat) should be stored at or below 41°F (FDA)
Data collection

Data collected by environmental health specialists in:

- California
- New York City
- Minnesota
- Rhode Island
- New York State
- Tennessee
# Data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manager interview  (N=298)</th>
<th>Worker interview  (N=294)</th>
<th>Deli observation  (N=298)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Deli and manager characteristics</td>
<td>• Worker characteristics</td>
<td>• Slicer number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Food safety policies and practices</td>
<td>• Food safety policies and practices</td>
<td>• Refrigerator temperatures</td>
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</table>
Deli characteristics

55% Chains

75% Served <300 meals daily
Staff characteristics

- 68% managers certified
- 47% workers are knowledgeable in food safety
Slicer cleaning

All slicers broken down, cleaned, and sanitized every 4 hours

49% of delis (say managers)

46% of delis (say workers)
Cold storage

All refrigerators were at or below 41°F

83% of delis
Deli and staff characteristics linked to slicer cleaning frequency

- **Volume/size**
  - More customers
  - More servings

- **Chain ownership**

- **Written policy on slicer cleaning**

- **Manager food safety certification**

- **Manager & worker food safety knowledge**

All slicers cleaned every 4 hours
Deli and staff characteristics linked to cold storage temperatures

- Refrigerator temperature recorded
- Manager food safety certification
- Fewer refrigerators

All refrigerators at or below 41°F
Food safety gaps

Half of delis don’t clean slicers appropriately

Cross contamination risk

17% of delis have refrigerator temperatures >41°F

Proliferation risk
Potential interventions

- Training and certification
- Written policies
- Temperature recording
- Target independent, smaller delis
More info

https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/ehsnet/foodsafety.htm
Thank you

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