

## VDH Risk Categorization of Food Establishments

The Virginia Food Regulations prescribe that food establishments are inspected at least once every six months. A food establishment may be inspected less frequently if the Commonwealth implements a risk-based inspection schedule uniformly applied throughout the Commonwealth. Determining inspection frequency using a risk categorization system based on factors that may indicate associated risk of foodborne illness allows inspection staff to spend more time in higher risk food establishments. Each Risk Category below lists the extent of foodservice processes allowable within the Category. Category 1 food establishments present the lowest risk due to food preparation processes associated with minimal incidence of foodborne illness while Category 4 food establishments present the highest risk due to food preparation processes associated with higher incidence of foodborne illness if not adequately controlled.

### **Risk Category (RC) 1** (One (1) inspection per year)

- Establishment prepares, serves, and/or sells only non-temperature control for safety (TCS) foods.
- Establishment heats commercially processed TCS foods for immediate service and/or hot holding.

**Note:** No cooling of TCS food allowed.

(Examples may include convenience store, bakery, concession stand, hot dog cart, coffee shop)

### **Risk Category 2** (Two (2) inspections per year)

- Establishment cooks raw animal food(s) and/or conducts ambient cooling of TCS foods.

(Examples may include schools/day cares that heat and serve commercially prepared foods, fast food restaurants, delis)

### **Risk Category 3** (Three (3) inspections per year)

- Establishment conducts two-stage cooling and/or reheats TCS foods for hot holding.

(Examples may include typical full service restaurants, some fast food restaurants)

### **Risk Category 4** (Four (4) inspections per year)

- Establishment conducts a specialized process requiring a variance and HACCP plan.
- Establishment serves a highly susceptible population (HSP).

**Note:** Aside from serving a HSP population, if the food establishment would otherwise fall under RC1, the establishment may be reassigned to RC2.

(Examples may include nursing homes, hospitals, or preschools and restaurants that conduct specialized processes such as curing, smoking, reduced oxygen packaging, etc.)

Regardless of the risk category initially assigned to food establishments, the health district may consider whether the establishment has implemented a voluntary food safety management system like HACCP, to justify a **decrease** in inspection frequency. Likewise, the following factors are among many that health districts may use to justify an **increase** in inspection frequency:

- History of non-compliance with provisions related to foodborne illness risk factors
- Specialized processes conducted
- Food preparation a day in advance of service
- Large number of people served
- History of foodborne illness and/or complaints