



Reheating Verification

Perhaps you're the owner of a successful restaurant, or maybe you're even the Certified Food Manager for your business. You know how to create successful policies and train your employees. So why did you still get a reheating violation?

It's probably time to verify that your establishment's reheating policy is being followed.

First of all, what is verification, and how do you verify that your reheating policy is being followed?

Verification is the periodic validation of food safety procedures. Use your verification process for feedback on whether you need to retrain employees or modify your policy.

As you create a verification process to ensure your reheating policy is being followed, ask yourself these important questions:

How do you verify that policies and training are being followed?

Do you write anything down during your verification step?

Do you have logs?

Do your logs include monitoring of all of your reheated food?

Are you verbally testing your staff?

Do they know what temperature previously cooled food needs to be reheated to? Do they know what temperature commercially prepackaged food needs to be reheated to? Can the staff explain what your policy is, and demonstrate how to follow your procedure?

Are you watching your employees to determine if they are following policies?

How frequently? In which areas of the kitchen? You may want to include spot checks at prep stations and on your cook line.

If a job is assigned to a mid-level employee, are you following through to ensure that they are doing their job, especially during busy times?





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How often do you verify that your policies are followed?

Do you check logs daily? After each meal? Weekly? Frequent verification is helpful to ensure that prompt feedback can be given.

What do you do if a policy is not being followed properly or an item is found to be out of compliance?

Use areas of non-compliance to provide targeted training for your staff.

How do you document corrective actions?

Completing the AMC Cycle for Continual Improvement

When you find areas of non-compliance in your establishment, such as TCS food not being reheated to at least 165°F, try to determine the root cause. Was it because your employees need additional training? Or are their gaps in your policy that you can adjust to make your policy more complete?

Think about how you can prevent this issue from happening again.

Was it a problem with the...

Policy?	Or Training?
Calibrated thermometers are broken or missing	Employees don't know how to properly calibrate/verify thermometers
Insufficient equipment available to rapidly reheat food to required temperatures	Employees are not stirring food during process to ensure rapid reheating
A system for logging temperatures is not in place	Staff do not take food temperatures or complete logs regularly
Instructions for reheating food are incomplete or missing	Staff do not know the required temperatures for reheating food

If the issues are related to an incomplete policy, then you may wish to consider these steps.

In some cases, you may want to create a completely separate policy. For example, instructions for reheating previously cooled food are different than commercially prepackaged food.





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Similarly, if you notice a reheating issue due to staff using a steam well to reheat food (not rapid enough), you may want to write a separate policy on proper reheating equipment.

If the issues are related to training, then you may wish to think about these interventions.

Staff may need additional training in a particular area. Do staff know to stir the food during the process and to check food temperatures in the coolest part of the food? Do your staff know which food require reheating to 165°F vs. 135°F? Remember to provide feedback to staff quickly, so that bad habits are not formed.

Who is failing to follow policies? Maybe your training has focused on new staff, and your senior staff may need a refresher training.

Perhaps you need to have more frequent food safety check-ins or training. Brief, frequent trainings are more effective than a one-time lecture on food safety.

You may want to focus a training on corrective actions. Sometimes staff see a problem but do not take action because they think that it is someone else's responsibility. Or your staff may not feel that they have the authority to take action on a particular issue. For example, a new employee may think they are not allowed to discard food, even if they find a food item, such as chicken noodle soup, at 110°F being placed into the steam well. Be sure that you explain your corrective action process to staff, for example, by showing them an area in the kitchen where they can place food that will be recorded and "wasted out" by a manager.

Do your employees know who to ask when they have a reheating question? Be sure that there is someone available for food safety questions on every shift. Ideally this person will be the Person-In-Charge during that shift.

The last part of a verification process for managers to review verification documents and logs to look for patterns and problem areas. These may be times of day when reheating is occurring, such as during pre-opening activities when food is being reheated for the cook line, or between lunch and dinner shifts when the line is restocked. Make sure staff are not getting too busy and using shortcuts to meet the demand. Use insights from





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your review to suggest changes to your food safety team, and modify your reheating policy.

To summarize, here are the key steps to consider with any verification process:

- **Use your verification process for feedback about whether your policy is being followed**
- **Implementing logs works well to verify that your systems are working**
- **When you identify problems, quickly provide feedback to staff**
- **Regularly review logs and verification results to look for patterns and problem areas**
- **Look for the root cause of issues that you identify. Was it policy or training related?**
- **Modify policies or schedule additional training based on information you gather during your verification step.**

Remember, after making changes to your reheating policy, be sure to retrain your employees. You may wish to reread the Manager's Guide to Creating a Policy, and the Manager's Guide on Training your Employees.

