

California Food Handler Safety Topic

CALIFORNIA FOOD HANDLER CARD LAW

SB 602 requires workers to receive food safety training

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed the California Food Handler Card bill into law on Sept. 25. The California Food Handler Card law is designed to ensure that restaurant employees receive a reasonable level of training in food safety practices to reduce the potential for foodborne illness.

Food handlers must have a California Food Handler Card on or before July 1, 2011. Employees hired after June 1, 2011 will have 30 days from the date of hire to acquire a food handler card.

To obtain a California Food Handler Card, food handlers will need to successfully pass a food handler test with a minimum score of 70 percent. The course and test may be online or through a trainer-led program. Food handlers must maintain a valid food handler card for the duration of his or her employment.

The cards are valid throughout most of the state and are valid for three years from issuance. Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego counties have pre-existing food handler card programs and are exempted from the state mandate. Each food facility must maintain records documenting that each employee possesses a valid California Food Handler Card that can be provided to local enforcement officials upon request.

WHO IS A FOOD HANDLER?

A food handler is defined by the law as a person who is involved in the preparation, storage or service of food in a food facility.

How much will it cost?

The law stipulates that one training course must be available at no more than \$15 to ensure affordability and prevent hardship on the food handler.

Employers are not responsible by this law to pay for an employee's time and expense to take the training and test unless a food facility provides in-house food safety training during normal working hours, and the training course must be approved for use in another state that has adopted requirements described in Subpart 2-103.11 of the 2001 edition of the model Food Code to comply with the California Food Handler Card law.

How will it be enforced?

Local health department enforcement officials are responsible for ensuring food facilities meet their obligations under the law, including ensuring food handlers possess a valid food handler card, and keeping records that can be provided to local enforcement officers upon request.

Timeline

Food handlers hired before June 1, 2011 must obtain a food handler card on or before July 1, 2011. Food handlers hired on or after June 1, 2011 must obtain a food handler card within 30 days of the date of hire.

Examples:

- Food handler hired Feb. 1, 1987 must obtain a card on or before July 1, 2011
- Food handler hired May 31, 2011 must obtain a card by July 1, 2011
- Food handler hired June 1, 2011 must obtain a card within 30 days of hire Food handler hired Jan. 15, 2015 must obtain a card within 30 days of

Exemptions

Some foodservice employees are exempt from the California Food Handler Card law requirement, including individuals holding a valid manager's food safety certification such as ServSafe Food Protection Manager Certification pursuant to current law; food handlers in temporary facilities; food handlers subject to an existing local food handler card program, such as Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego counties; food facilities that are subject to a collective bargaining agreement with its food handlers; as well as food handlers who are employed by any of the following:

- certified farmers market
- commissaries
- grocery stores, except for separately owned food facilities
- licensed health care facilities
- mobile support units
- public and private school cafeterias
- restricted food service facilities
- retail stores where a majority of sales are from a

A food facility that provides in-house food safety training to all employees involved in the preparation, storage or service of food if all of the following conditions are met:

1. The food facility uses a training course that has been approved for use by the food facility in another state that has adopted the requirements described in Subpart 2-103.11 of the 2001 edition of the model Food Code, not including the April 2004 update, published by the federal Food and Drug Administration.
2. Upon request, the food facility provides evidence satisfactory to the local enforcement officer demonstrating that the food facility training program has been approved for use in another state pursuant to above provision;
3. The training is provided during normal work hours, and at no cost to the

Under the law, employees must secure training and obtain the food-handler card. Employers aren't required to provide the training.

To obtain California food handler card, employees must score at least 70 percent on a test from an accredited food protection manager certification organization, such as the [National Restaurant Association's ServSafe Starters online course and assessment](#). Food handlers can take the course and test online or through a trainer-led program. Food handlers must maintain valid cards throughout their employment.

The cards are valid throughout most of the state for three years. Employers must maintain records documenting that employees possess valid California food handler cards. Employees must provide the cards to enforcement officials upon request.

The NRA's ServSafe Starters course covers basic food safety, personal hygiene, cross-contamination and allergens, time and temperature controls, and cleaning and sanitation. The course takes about 60 to 90 minutes to complete and is followed by a 40-question, non-proctored test.

The course follows the same principles and instructional design as the [NRA's ServSafe Manager program](#) and is based on the most recent FDA Food Code. It uses common workplace terms and real-life examples. That makes the information easy to understand and retain, and relevant to work situations. The online course and printed employee guide are available in English and Spanish. The online course is \$15, and the employee guide is \$5.