

Common Prerequisite Programs

Prerequisite programs are basic food safety policies and procedures (also known as Standard Operating Procedures). These programs establish operations and sanitary conditions that are needed to make and serve safe food.

Food Preparation and Holding

- Preventing cross-contamination
- Cooking
- Thawing
- Cooling
- Date marking
- Reheating
- Hot holding
- Cold holding
- Allergen management
- Fish tanks for service
- Brine treatment and testing

Purchasing

- Supplier specifications and credentials
- Certificate of Analysis (COA)
- Letters of guarantee
- Raw material management
- Truck/carrier inspection
- Water quality treatment and testing

Receiving and Storage

- Purchasing
- Receiving
- Storage
- First In, First Out (FIFO)

Manufacturing

- Packaging
- Labeling
- Reduced Oxygen Packaging

Recalls

- Procedure for recall
- Product traceability

Equipment Maintenance

- Preventative maintenance
- Calibration
- Equipment operation and design
- Compressed air filtration

Cleaning and Sanitizing

- Food-contact surfaces
- Maintaining equipment
- Housekeeping
- Period cleaning
- Pest control
- Outside property
- Handling chemicals

Facilities

- Flow of food
- Utilities
- Ventilation
- Building structure

Personnel Training

- Employee hygiene
- Handwashing
- Restriction/exclusion of sick employees
- Glove use
- Safe employee practices
- New employee training

Identifying Risk Factors

The prerequisite programs in each establishment depend on the risk factors in that establishment. Prerequisite programs should be selected based on an establishment's food preparation processes, facility, procedures, and potential hazards. Some risk factors vary, but some are nearly universal. The following is a list of common risk factors that can help restaurant managers begin identifying potential hazards in their own establishments:

- Food from unsafe sources
- Inadequate cooking
- Improper holding temperatures
- Contaminated equipment
- Poor employee hygiene

Prerequisite Program Questions

The following is a sample list of prerequisite program questions. These questions can help managers apply prerequisite programs to the circumstances in their establishments.

Food Preparation and Holding

- What processes and practices do employees need to know to prepare each menu item?
- How do employees take the temperature of different foods? How often are temperatures taken and where is this information recorded?
- What procedures are followed to ensure that customers with food allergies are served safe food?

Purchasing

- What food safety programs do suppliers use?
- How do suppliers guarantee that food and supplies are protected during sorting, storage, and delivery?

Receiving and Storage

- How should employees verify the safety of a food shipment?
- When should a product or supply be rejected?

Recalls

- What is the notification system for recalled products?
- How is inventory tracked? How are shellfish tags recorded and organized?
- Who is responsible for tracking suppliers and product?

Equipment Maintenance

- Is the equipment operating as designed?
- Are all parts of the equipment present and in good condition?
- Who is responsible for monitoring equipment conditions?
- How often are thermometers calibrated, and by whom?

Cleaning and Sanitizing

- Are there special procedures for cleaning pieces of equipment?
- How often are large items cleaned and sanitized?
- Where are chemicals stored?
- How is each chemical used safely?
- Who provides pest control services? How are these services recorded?
- How does the establishment prevent pests and monitor pest prevention efforts?

Facilities

- Do the layout of the kitchen and receiving area provide an effective flow of food?
- Are the walls, floors, and ceiling in each area in good condition?
- Who is responsible for monitoring the facility conditions? How often is a monitoring walk-through conducted?

Personnel Training

- Do staff hygiene practices meet regulation requirements?
- How are employees monitored and corrected, and by whom?
- How is each employee trained on prerequisite programs? When is this training refreshed?