

Time as a Public Health Control

Time as a Public Health Control (TPHC) means the use of time (instead of temperature) to control for the growth of microorganisms and ensure product safety. TPHC allows an establishment to hold Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods in the temperature danger zone for a maximum period of time only if the proper procedures are followed.

When TCS foods are removed from heat or refrigeration and allowed to remain at room temperature, disease-causing organisms (pathogens) multiply more rapidly. In addition to the threat present from the pathogens themselves, some pathogens also produce poisons (toxins) as they grow. These toxins cannot be removed from the food once they are present. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has established guidelines to safely hold TCS foods at room temperature for a short period of time. There are two different time control options – 4 hours or 6 hours.

REQUIREMENTS FOR USING TIME AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CONTROL:

- Have Written Procedures
- Keep Track of Time
- Discard Food After Time Limit

WRITTEN PROCEDURES

- The facility must have written procedures on-site and available for review explaining the food operations. This must include the method for keeping track of time i.e. stickers with a time, timer, or time logs. Indicate the “Throw-Away/Expiration” time from when the food is removed from temperature control.
- If foods are cooked, cooled and kept cold before being held using time as a public health control, written procedures must be available for each process. Temperatures must be monitored and recorded for the cooking, cooling and cold holding processes to ensure the foods reach the proper temperature within the required amount of time and are held at the proper temperature.

TIME

- 4-Hour Option
 - The food must begin at 41°F or below; or 135°F or above.
- 6-Hour Option
 - The food must begin at 41°F or below.
 - The food may not rise above 70°F while held using time as a public health control.
 - Temperatures of the food must be taken periodically to ensure the food does not rise above 70°F OR the food must be held in equipment that has an ambient air temperature cold enough to maintain the food at 70°F or below.
 - Food that rises above 70°F must be discarded immediately

DISCARD

- Foods shall be cooked and served or discarded, within the applicable time limit from the point in time when the food is removed from temperature control.
- Foods placed on TPHC MAY NOT be returned to temperature control regardless of the length of time it was removed from temperature control. This means foods on TPHC may not be returned to the refrigerator, be reheated, or placed in a warmer for later use.
- Food in unmarked containers/packages or marked to exceed a time limit must be discarded.

RESTRICTION

If you serve a highly susceptible population such as immunocompromised persons of any age, preschool-age children, or older adults, you cannot use TPHC for raw eggs.