



New Safety Regulations Coming to Virginia Restaurants July 1, 2018

Two hundred eighty-eight. According to the CDC's Foodborne Outbreak Online Database Tool (FOOD Tool), that's the number of individuals in Virginia affected by foodborne illness outbreaks in 2016 that were derived from restaurants.

To put that into context, those 288 individuals represent nearly half — 46.7 percent of a 615 total — of all individuals affected by a foodborne illness in the state. On average, each restaurant-related foodborne illness outbreak resulted in 22 people falling ill, five of whom were hospitalized.

Here's another statistic to further illustrate the severity of foodborne illnesses in Virginia. From 2011 to 2016, restaurants were found responsible for 78 outbreaks that affected 2,515 individuals, of whom 279 were hospitalized.

That is a significant number of potentially preventable illnesses and hospitalizations.

And it is why the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) published a revised Food Code in 2013. The Code, among other things, included the introduction of the Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM) requirement for the foodservice industry.

Three years later, in 2016, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) also adopted the CFPM requirement into the Virginia Food Regulations, which take effect on July 1, 2018.

Under Virginia Administrative Code 12VAC5-421-55 [Certified Food Protection Manager] adopted on July 12, 2016, all restaurants must employ at least one certified food



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protection manager. The full extent of the Virginia Administrative Code is below:

12VAC5-421-55. Certified Food Protection Manager.

At least one employee with supervisory and management responsibility and the authority to direct and control food preparation and service shall be a certified food protection manager, demonstrating proficiency of required knowledge and information through passing a test that is part of an accredited program.

This section does not apply to food establishments that serve only non-temperature control for safety food and food establishments where food handling does not exceed reheating, cold holding, and hot holding of commercially processed and packaged ready-to-eat foods.

For purposes of enforcement, this section will take effect on July 1, 2018.

What does this mean for your restaurant?

Simply put, by July 1, 2018, all restaurants (including temporary ones) must have a supervisor/manager on staff who qualifies as a certified food protection manager. The goal here is not to impose undue, complex regulations on restaurants. Instead, it is to further help restaurants understand and implement basic food safety measures to ensure public safety. Studies have shown that having a CFPM means your restaurant is likely to have better overall safety ratings, fewer inspection violations, and, ultimately, fewer foodborne illness outbreaks.

How do I obtain a CFPM certificate?

The FDA and VDH consider the CFPM requirement fulfilled when a member of your restaurant's management team can demonstrate that he or she has taken a food safety training course and successfully passed an accredited certification

program.

While there are a few options available for this, the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association has worked with the National Restaurant Association to offer the nationally recognized ServSafe Manager Certification.

It is one of the top certification programs in the U.S., and Virginia certified nearly 20,000 ServSafe managers in 2017 alone. With a little bit of advanced studying, the program and exam can be completed in as little as one day through one of VRLTA's established class dates or a number of reliable certified instructors.

While Virginia's Code may not dictate the requirement until July 1, 2018, the VRLTA highly recommends pursuing the certification as soon as possible...not only for the safety of your guests and restaurant, but because historical records indicate that more outbreaks occur during the months of January through May — before the requirement goes into effect.

Restaurateurs can also help protect their restaurants and guests with additional training classes in allergens, alcohol service, and food handling. All are available online from ServSafe.com.

Let's work together to ensure that Virginia is one of the safest places to eat, sleep, and play in 2018 and beyond.

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