

Walk-Throughs: From Chaos to Success

Retail Food Establishments – Food Safety

From Chaos...



It is the middle of lunch rush. Earlier the lead cook called in sick. The cook on duty, who has only been working two months, says that the special sauce used on the featured menu item is almost gone. Someone reports that the dishwasher slipped and fell in a puddle of water, caused by a leaking pipe under the pre-rinse sink, and can't get up off the floor. Someone else yells, "Why does the walk-in cooler feel so warm?!"

In the middle of all this chaos the food inspector walks into the establishment. The entire food team is frustrated and at their wits end.

Sound familiar? The example above may not exactly reflect your experience, but most food staff have suffered through at least one similar event.

Using the example of events above, chaos could have been minimized:

- If notified before the lunch rush of the limited supply of the special sauce, the manager may have had time to decide, for example to make more sauce, or temporarily remove the featured item from the menu.
- Improper cold holding temperatures encourage the growth of harmful bacteria and other germs. Routinely checked walk-in cooler temperatures may have allowed time to:
 - Contact a repair service if needed, **and**
 - Determine best options for [Time/Temperature Control for Safety \(TCS\) Food](#) ([Español](#), [中文](#)):
 - Temporarily relocate food to other refrigeration units within the establishment, **or**
 - Use other corrective action(s) for foods with internal temperatures above **41°F**.
- If the leaking pipe had been reported earlier, an accident may have been prevented and allowed time to:
 - Contact a plumber, **and**
 - For example, temporarily place a bucket or pan under the leaking pipe to capture sewage for proper disposal in a service sink or drain.



...To Success

Performing regular walk-throughs help minimize or prevent some unexpected events from occurring.

Managers may be thinking, "My duties already include walk-throughs, but I'm not really sure how much they help." Is the walk-through process structured? Without a structured process each person tends to rely on memory, which may lead to critical areas being overlooked.



Checklists created for use on digital devices (e.g., tablet, smartphone, etc.) or paper help to make the walk-through process more consistent. Along with the management team, key food staff (e.g., cook, dishwasher, server, etc.) should be included in the checklist creation. Input from food staff can provide crucial information on items that affect day-to-day operations.



Checklist(s) should be organized by each area or station, and shift. Some items may only apply to a specific shift. A separate list(s) may be created for items that only need to be checked weekly or monthly (e.g., floors, walls, ceilings). An effective list should include a section(s) for notes to provide information on any corrective actions taken or needed.

For the system to be successful, it is important for the on-duty manager to review the checklist from the previous shift. Using the example above, the night shift manager may have noted something like *"Leaking pipe under pre-rinse sink. Bucket placed under it. Please call plumber"* on the checklist.

All members of the food team play an important role in preventing chaos by alerting managers as soon as possible of any concerns that could affect food service operations.

Regularly scheduled reviews of the checklist(s) (e.g., monthly, every three months, etc.) to assess its effectiveness and make any adjustments, are an important part of a successful walk-through system.

You are probably thinking, "Wow, more paperwork!" Time spent on prevention helps to avoid or at least minimize the impact of the goblins that cause chaos.

