PEAK SHIFT

Building a Food Safety Culture

Make the next shift easier to run safely

Before opening: verify readiness

Physically check: handwashing access and supplies; clean, sanitized utensils; a suitable working food probe; the correct sanitizer, directions, and matching test device. If a control is missing, notify the person in charge and resolve it or use a verified safe alternative before the affected task starts.

During service: protect, correct, verify

Protect: pause the affected task and keep questionable food out of service.
Correct: follow the proper procedure; assess food, utensils, and surfaces already affected.
Verify: confirm the control works before restart. A new bucket or repaired machine does not automatically resolve earlier unsafe work.

At handoff: pass along the next action

State what and where the food is, the actual readings and times, the next check and deadline, who owns it, and who makes the decision if it fails. Have the incoming person repeat the next action. This handoff format is a restaurant practice, not a required FDA form.

Coaching that fits a busy kitchen

"What did you observe?"
"What needs to stop or be protected right now?"
"Show me the safe step."
"What made that step hard to do?"
"Who checks that this is working on the next shift?"

A response someone can use

"Thanks for catching the damaged probe. Take it out of use. Use the verified backup. I will arrange the replacement and confirm it with the next manager."
Notice the structure: actual problem, immediate control, next owner, follow-up.

Source links: FDA Food Code 2026 | FDA food safety culture overview
The Food Code is a model. Follow locally adopted requirements and approved procedures. Exam review retains 2022+2024; the provider's 2026 transition is unconfirmed.

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Know the difference: a rule and a house practice

Missing required date versus missing initials

Model rule: qualifying refrigerated ready-to-eat TCS food held more than 24 hours needs a date/day mark, subject to exemptions. TCS means food needing time/temperature control for safety; cooked chicken is one example. Food missing its required date/day is discarded; do not guess a new date. **House practice:** missing employee initials alone are not the same Food Code discard condition. Sources: 3-501.17-.18.

A reliable cooling handoff

Normal measured cooling of cooked TCS food: **135 F to 70 F within 2 hours; 135 F to 41 F or below within 6 hours total.** Example: 135 F at 2:00 p.m.; 68 F at 3:30 p.m.; 41 F or below by 8:00 p.m. at the latest. Plan checks early enough to act. A shift change does not restart the clock. Sources: 3-501.14(A); 2-103.11(H).

Missing history is not repaired by a neat log

Keep the batch out of service while the person in charge assesses reliable facts. A current cold reading cannot establish earlier cooling times. In this lesson's unknown-history example, if safe cooling cannot be established, discard. Do not invent readings or assume reheating fixes an unknown history. This does not mean every blank log automatically requires discard. Separate approved cooling processes must be verified in advance. Sources: 3-501.14-.15; 3-701.11.

Sanitizer: the right test for the actual product

Use the correct device and meet applicable label and Code concentration, contact-time, temperature, and other conditions. For sanitizers OTHER than chlorine, iodine or quat, use at least 75 F (24 C) unless the EPA-registered label states otherwise. Do not add extra chemical by eye or mix chemicals. Assess affected work, not just the failed solution. Sources: 4-501.114(E); 4-501.116; 4-703.11.

One next-shift commitment

Action I will perform: _____

Support or supplies needed: _____

Person who will verify it and when: _____

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