
ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH & SAFETY

INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN

To: UCSD Retail Food Facility Owners/Operators

Subject: Food Handler Card Guidelines

In 2011, the California Health and Safety Code (CalCode) was amended to require all food handlers at food facilities across the state to be formally trained in food safety and issued food handler cards. All employees of food facilities that handle, prepare, or serve foods will be required to comply with this training. Certain food facilities are exempt from this requirement (see below). Beginning January 1, 2012, enforcement of this law will begin. All food facilities under UCSD Environment, Health and Safety oversight, not exempted below will be required to comply with this new regulation.

San Diego County Environmental Health has its own food handler program. Its program has been in effect since the 1980s. It does not exempt any food handler from its training. UCSD EH&S will recognize the San Diego County food handler cards as valid along with the California ANSI standard issued cards.



Who Needs a Food Handler Card?

Any employee in a food facility or mobile food facility (catering or produce trucks, carts, etc.) involved in the preparation, storage or service of food needs a valid food handler card. Food handlers must obtain a Food Handler Card within 30 days of being hired.

Exemptions: There are a variety of exemptions where a Food Handler Card is not required:

1. Food handlers hold a current and valid Food Safety Manager's Certificate
2. Grocery stores and convenience stores. (Separately owned food facilities in a supermarket are required unless another exemption criteria applies to that store)
3. Public and private school cafeterias
4. Temporary food facilities
5. Certified farmers markets
6. Commissaries
7. Retail stores where a majority of sales are from a pharmacy
8. Any city, county, city and county, state, or regional facility used for the confinement of adults or minors, including, but not limited to, a county jail, juvenile hall, camp, ranch, or residential facility.
9. An elderly nutrition program administered by the California Department of Aging, pursuant to the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C Sec. 3001 et seq.), as amended
10. Food facilities with their own food safety training that has been approved by another state that has adopted the requirements described in the 201 edition of the FDA Model Food Code.
11. Licensed health care facilities
12. Food facilities with food handlers subject to a collective bargaining agreement
13. Restricted food service facilities
14. Mobile food support units (a mobile unit used in conjunction with a commissary to support the mobile food facility)

How do I get a Food Handler Card?

The new California Food Handler Card law requires food handlers throughout the state to obtain a food handler card by taking a food safety training course and passing a test. At UCSD, there are three ways to obtain a food handler card:

1. Take an ANSI certified food handler course either online or by an instructor and pass an exam of 40 questions or more with a passing grade of 70 percent or greater. Thus, a state wide certificate will be issued that is valid for 3 years in all counties except San Diego, Riverside and San Bernardino. **San Diego, Riverside and San Bernardino County have their own food handler programs and thus they do not recognize the ANSI certified course.**
<https://www.ansica.org/wwwversion2/outside/ALLdirectoryListing.asp?menuID=212&prqID=228&status=4>
2. Take a San Diego County certified food handler course at a school location. This food handler card is only valid in San Diego County and at UCSD. See the county website for names and locations of schools.
<http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/deh/food/foodhandler.html>
3. The food safety manager of a food facility may train and test their food handlers at that location by providing a food handler study guide, demonstrating a how to do certain food safety activities, and then administering a multiple choice test. The test scores must be kept on site and serve as the food handler card. The food handler card is specific to that food manager. If that food manager leaves, then the food handlers must be retested under the new food safety manager. This study guide and test are the same ones that San Diego County Environmental Health uses. Your UCSD EH&S health inspector can provide the food safety manager with the study guides and exams in English and Spanish. The study guides are available on the EH&S website.
<http://blink.ucsd.edu/safety/occupational/food/>

All food handler cards, regardless of where they are issued are valid for 3 years from the date of the exam.

What is the Difference between a Food Manager Card and a Food Handler Card?

A food manager card is an 8 hour course that is nationally recognized. The card is valid for 5 years in California and in most other states. One is required for each food facility in California. They can be approved to teach food safety training courses, and in #3 above are the ones that administer the testing of the food handlers in their food facility.

A food handler card is a 2 hour course of training and a brief exam. The card is either recognized state wide or is county specific (San Diego, Riverside or San Bernardino). All food handlers in non-exempted food facilities are required to have this card. The card is valid for 3 years.

What is the UCSD Housing and Dining Food Handler Training?

UCSD Housing and Dining provides its own in house food safety training to employees. It covers principles of food safety, sanitation and employee hygiene. Housing and Dining is exempt from the food handler requirements (#12 exemption), thus food handlers are not required to have food handler cards. Housing and Dining maintains their training to ensure the highest level of food safety and sanitation is being provided to their customers and the UCSD community.

As an Employer, What is my Responsibility?

The law requires employers to maintain records at the food facility documenting that each food handler employed at that facility possess a valid food handler card. An acceptable method would be to maintain copies of the individual food handler cards or passing exams. The employer is not required to pay for the food handler's training and/or testing but is required to ensure that all food handlers who require a card has obtained one.