

Daily Line Check and Food Safety Log

A printable operating pack: eight forms, a fifteen-minute routine, and the manager's guide to inspections

What this is: a complete, photocopy-ready food-safety and line-check system for an independent restaurant - opening line check, four-times-daily temperature log, cooking and cooling log, daily and deep-cleaning schedules, closing checklist, allergen and labelling control, receiving log and corrective-action log - plus the operating discipline that makes the paperwork worth filling in. It ends with a manager's section on what inspectors check first, the violations that recur in almost every kitchen, and how to use completed logs as coaching evidence rather than filing. Who it is for: owners, chefs, general managers and shift leads who want a system their crew will actually use.

Free operator resource · Version 1.0 · Updated August 2026

Temperatures, holding times and cleaning frequencies reflect widely used North American practice. Health, employment and licensing rules vary by province, state and municipality, and your local public health unit's requirements always govern. This is operational guidance, not legal advice.

Why the line check is the highest-leverage habit you have

A line check is a structured physical inspection of every station before service starts: taste it, smell it, look at it, temp it, count it. It takes one person fifteen minutes. Nothing else you do in a restaurant day returns as much for as little.

The reason is timing. Almost every expensive failure in a restaurant is cheap at 3:00 p.m. and ruinous at 7:30 p.m. A sauce that broke overnight is a two-minute remake in the afternoon and a comped table, a bad review and a re-fire at peak. A reach-in drifting at 9 °C is a thermostat adjustment before service and a full product dump plus an incident report afterwards. A container of demi at half par is a quick batch now and a 86'd entrée later. The line check is the mechanism that moves problems out of service and into prep, where they cost almost nothing.

The second reason is that it is the only routine that touches food safety, food cost and guest experience with the same fifteen minutes. Tempering the cold rail is a health-unit requirement. Tasting the dressings is quality control. Counting pars is inventory control. Confirming labels is allergen control. One walk, four systems.

The third reason is cultural and it is the one operators miss. A line check performed in front of the crew, by someone who tastes things and asks questions, sets the standard for the shift more effectively than any amount of pre-shift speech-making. Cooks calibrate to what management actually inspects. If you temp the rail every day, the rail is right every day.

OPERATOR TIP

Do the line check with a spoon in your hand and the log on a clipboard, not with a tablet you are also answering email on. The moment the check becomes a screen task it becomes a tick-box exercise, and a tick-box line check is worse than none because it produces a paper record asserting that a problem you did not find does not exist.

What a real line check covers

Six questions per station, in this order. Anything you cannot answer yes to becomes a corrective action before doors open.

1. **Temperature.** Is every cold item at or below 4 °C / 40 °F and every hot-held item at or above 60 °C / 140 °F, measured with a calibrated probe in the product, not the air?
2. **Quality.** Does it taste, smell and look the way it is supposed to? Taste sauces, dressings, soups and anything emulsified. Smell proteins and dairy.
3. **Par.** Is there enough to finish the shift at the covers you are forecasting, plus a margin for a rush?
4. **Labelling.** Is every container labelled with item, prep date and use-by date, and is the FIFO rotation actually in date order?
5. **Set-up.** Are the mise placement, pan sizes, tongs, spoons, wiping cloths in sanitiser and thermometer all present and correct?
6. **Equipment.** Are the flat top, fryers, holding units and refrigeration reading their target temperatures, and is anything making a new noise?

Who runs the check, and when

Four checkpoints per day. They are different checks with different purposes, and collapsing them into one is the most common failure mode.

Checkpoint	Timing	Who	Purpose and scope
Opening	At open, before any prep	Opening manager or opening cook	Overnight verification. Walk-in and freezer temperatures, equipment status, anything that failed while nobody was in the building. This is the check that catches refrigeration failures and it is the one most worth doing first.
Pre-service	45-60 min before doors	Chef, sous or senior line cook	Full station-by-station check: temp, taste, par, label, set-up. This is the check the printable form on the next pages is built around.
Shift change	At the lunch/dinner turnover	Incoming shift lead	Re-temp the rail and hot holding, re-par everything, confirm what was 86'd, hand over open issues in writing. Product has now been in service for hours.
Close	During and after breakdown	Closing manager plus each station	Cool-down verification, date-labelling of everything going into the walk-in, cleaning sign-off, security and equipment shutdown.

COMMON MISTAKE

Checking air temperature instead of product temperature. A reach-in can read 3 °C on the door display while the top third of an over-filled insert sits at 10 °C because the pan is above the cold-air curtain. Always probe the product, always probe the pan that is fullest and closest to the heat.

How to run a line check in fifteen minutes

The trick is a fixed route. Walking the same path in the same order every day is what turns a twenty-five-minute wander into a fifteen-minute sweep, and it is what makes an anomaly jump out at you.

Min	Where	What you actually do
0-2	Walk-in and freezer	Read the unit thermometer and confirm with a probe in a product. Scan for unlabelled containers, product stored above ready-to-eat, standing water, frost build-up on the freezer coil. Log both temperatures.
2-4	Cold line / rail	Probe three items: the one at the back, the one nearest the pass, and whatever is most temperature-sensitive. Lift a pan and check the well underneath. Taste every dressing and cold sauce.
4-7	Hot holding and soups	Probe each hot-held item at the centre. Taste for seasoning and for scorch. Check the water level in the bain-marie. Anything under 60 °C / 140 °F either gets reheated to 74 °C / 165 °F or discarded.
7-10	Grill, sauté, fry	Surface temperature of the flat top, fryer oil temperature and colour, filter status. Check protein par by count, not by eye. Confirm tongs, spoons and a probe are at every station.
10-12	Prep and dry storage	Confirm today's prep list is complete or in progress, check the date order of the day-dot rotation, look at the oldest item in each shelf.
12-15	Expo and log-out	Plates warm, garnishes stocked, allergen reference and 86 board current. Write up every corrective action with a name against it and a time.

OPERATOR TIP

Fix the route and fix the hour. A line check that happens "sometime before service" happens on the days that are already going well, which are exactly the days it is least needed. Put it on the schedule as a task with a start time, the way you would a delivery.

Two things make the fifteen minutes hold. First, the person doing the check carries nothing else - no prep, no phone, no ordering. Second, corrective actions are written down and handed off, not remembered. A check that ends with "I'll tell Marc" is a check that ends with nothing.

How to use this pack

Everything from the next page onward is designed to be photocopied double-sided and filled in by hand on a clipboard. Print what you need, discard what you do not; a form nobody uses trains the crew to ignore forms in general.

A minimum viable set

- **Every day:** temperature log (four times), opening line check, closing checklist, receiving log for each delivery, and the daily half of the cleaning schedule.
- **Every time it applies:** cooking and cooling log, allergen and labelling control, corrective action log.
- **Weekly, monthly, quarterly:** the deep-cleaning tables, signed by the person who did the work, not by the manager who assigned it.

Six rules that keep the records worth something

1. **Pen, never pencil.** A pencilled record looks alterable and an inspector will treat it that way. If you make a mistake, single-strike it, initial it and write the correction beside it. Never white it out.
2. **Real values, never ticks.** Write 3.2 °C, not a checkmark. A column of identical checkmarks tells you and your inspector nothing except that somebody had a pen.
3. **Out-of-range readings get logged, not hidden.** A log with no exceptions in it is not a clean operation, it is an unused form. Exceptions plus a written corrective action is exactly what a competent inspector wants to see.
4. **Every corrective action names a person and a time.** "Adjusted" is not a corrective action. "14:10, product discarded (4.2 kg diced chicken), unit set point lowered to 2 °C, re-checked 15:00 at 3.1 °C - J.M." is.
5. **Calibrate your thermometers and log it.** Ice-water slurry should read 0 °C / 32 °F. Do it weekly, after any drop, and whenever a reading surprises you. An uncalibrated probe makes every record on this page fiction.
6. **Keep the records where your regulator expects.** Retention periods vary by jurisdiction; many health units expect current records on site and readily produced on request. Confirm the retention period with your local public health unit and file accordingly.

MANAGER CHECK

Once a week, pick one line at random from a completed log and reconstruct it: who wrote it, what they would have been doing at that moment, whether the value is plausible for that unit at that hour. If the log says 2 °C at 15:00 on a day the walk-in door was propped for a delivery, you have found something more useful than a temperature - you have found out whether your records are real.

A note on the numbers in this pack

The temperatures, holding times and cooling rules quoted here reflect widely used North American food-safety practice. Requirements differ between provinces, states and municipalities, and your local public health unit's requirements always govern. Use these forms as a starting structure and confirm every threshold against the food premises regulation that applies to your address before you print at volume.

Form A - Opening line check

One line per station. Probe the product, taste the sauces, count the pars. Any 'No' becomes an entry on Form H before doors open.

Date	Shift (AM / PM)	Completed by

Station / item	Temp °C / °F	Quality check (taste, smell, look)	Par OK?	Init.	Notes
GRILL - proteins					
GRILL - surface temp					
GRILL - mise / sauces					
FRY - oil temp					
FRY - oil quality					
FRY - breading / batter					
SAUTÉ - stocks & sauces					
SAUTÉ - pasta / starch					
SAUTÉ - mise					
COLD LINE - rail top					
COLD LINE - rail bottom					
COLD LINE - dressings					
COLD LINE - proteins					
PREP - today's list					
PREP - reach-in					
PREP - day-dot rotation					
EXPO - hot holding					
EXPO - garnish / plates					
EXPO - 86 board					
DESSERT / PASTRY					

Corrective actions raised (transfer to Form H):

Form B - Temperature log

Four checks per day. Record the actual reading. Probe the product where possible, not the air.

Date	Unit / location	Thermometer ID

Target ranges

Application	Target	Action threshold
Refrigeration / walk-in / reach-in	4 °C / 40 °F or below	Above 4 °C: investigate immediately. Product above 4 °C for more than 2 hours needs assessment; treat prolonged exposure as unsafe.
Freezer	-18 °C / 0 °F or below	Above -18 °C: check door seal and defrost cycle. Partially thawed product must not be refrozen once it has warmed above 4 °C.
Hot holding	60 °C / 140 °F or above	Below 60 °C: if under 2 hours, reheat rapidly to 74 °C / 165 °F. If duration is unknown or over 2 hours, discard.
Cold holding / rail	4 °C / 40 °F or below	Above 4 °C: ice down or move to the walk-in, correct pan depth, reduce over-filling above the cold-air line.
Danger zone	4-60 °C / 40-140 °F	Cumulative time in this band is what matters. Track it; do not reset the clock each time product goes back in the fridge.
Dish machine - high temp	Final rinse per data plate	Verify with a max-registering thermometer or temperature-sensitive label at plate surface. Log the result, not a checkmark.

Unit	Open (time / temp)	Mid-day	Pre-dinner	Close	Corrective action if out of range	Init.
Walk-in cooler						
Walk-in freezer						
Reach-in 1						
Reach-in 2						
Under-counter / drawer						
Cold rail - top						
Cold rail - bottom						
Hot holding / bain						
Soup well						
Dessert fridge						
Beverage / dairy						

Form C - Cooking and cooling log

Complete for every batch cooked for later service, and for every item cooled for storage.

Date	Completed by	Verified by

Minimum internal cooking temperatures

Product	Internal temperature	Notes
Poultry, stuffed meats, stuffing, casseroles	74 °C / 165 °F	Measure in the thickest part, away from bone, and hold for the time your regulation specifies.
Ground meat, mixed or mechanically tenderised	71 °C / 160 °F	Grinding moves surface bacteria throughout, so a rare burger is a risk decision, not a doneness preference.
Whole cuts of beef, pork, veal, lamb	63 °C / 145 °F	Followed by a rest period before carving or serving.
Fish and shellfish	70 °C / 158 °F (or per local code)	Some jurisdictions specify 63 °C / 145 °F for finfish. Confirm locally.
Reheating previously cooked food	74 °C / 165 °F	Reach it rapidly, commonly within 2 hours, then hold at 60 °C / 140 °F or above. Steam tables reheat nothing; they only hold.
Eggs cooked to order	63 °C / 145 °F	Held egg dishes should reach 74 °C / 165 °F. Microwave reheating needs a stir, a cover and the stand time before re-probing.

The two-stage cooling rule

Cool from 60 °C to 21 °C (140 °F to 70 °F) within **2 hours**, then from 21 °C to 4 °C (70 °F to 40 °F) within a further **4 hours** - six hours in total. Miss stage one and you reheat to 74 °C / 165 °F and restart the clock once, or you discard. Shallow pans, ice wands, ice baths and portioning exist because a stock pot on a counter will not make stage one.

Item / batch	Cook temp	Time at 60 °C	At 21 °C (max 2 h)	At 4 °C (max 4 h more)	Method	Init.

Form D - Cleaning and sanitation schedule (daily)

Signed by the person who did the work. A manager signature verifies; it does not replace.

Week beginning	Location	Manager verifying

Daily task	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Sanitiser buckets made fresh, cloths submerged							
Sanitiser concentration tested with strips (log below)							
Hand sinks stocked: soap, paper, hot water, signage							
Food-contact surfaces washed, rinsed, sanitised							
Cutting boards and small wares through the dish machine							
Slicer and can opener broken down, cleaned, sanitised							
Flat top scraped and degreased; fryer skimmed							
Hood filters wiped; grease cups emptied							
Ice machine scoop stored outside the bin							
Reach-in and rail interiors wiped, drip trays emptied							
Floors swept, degreased, drains flushed; mats washed							
Garbage, recycling and organics out; bins washed							
Grease trap checked							
Dish machine drained, screens cleared, tanks refilled							
Chemical storage tidy, labelled, below food level							
Washrooms cleaned and restocked (record times)							

Sanitiser concentration log

Time	Chemical (chlorine / quat / iodine)	Strip reading (ppm)	Within label range?	Water temp	Corrective action	Init.

Use the concentration stated on your product label and confirmed by your health unit. Commonly used ranges are chlorine 100-200 ppm, quaternary ammonium 200-400 ppm and iodine 12.5-25 ppm, each at the label's specified water temperature and contact time. Strips have an expiry date - check it.

Form D2 - Weekly, monthly and quarterly deep cleaning

Month	Location	Manager verifying

Weekly

Task	Wk 1 init / date	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4
Walk-in shelving emptied, washed, sanitised				
Behind and under all cooking equipment				
Reach-in gaskets cleaned and inspected for tears				
Dry storage shelves wiped; oldest stock pulled forward				
Ovens and combi units deep-cleaned; fryer boiled out				
Ice machine exterior, drip pan, beverage guns and soda lines				
Thermometers calibrated in ice-water slurry (0 °C / 32 °F)				
Pest-monitoring stations checked and logged				

Monthly

Task	Date	Done by	Verified
Hood system and filters professionally cleaned or inspected			
Refrigeration coils and condensers cleaned			
Freezer defrosted or defrost cycle verified			
Deep-clean under and behind the dish pit			
Wall and ceiling surfaces in prep areas; dry-goods bins washed			
Full pest-control service visit; report filed			
Chemicals inventoried, safety data sheets and first aid current			

Quarterly

Task	Date	Done by	Verified
Grease trap pumped and manifest filed			
Fire suppression system inspected; tags current			
Fire extinguishers inspected and tagged; backflow device tested			
Refrigeration preventive-maintenance service			
Thermometer accuracy audited against a reference probe			
Food-handler certifications reviewed for expiry			

Form E - Closing checklist

Front of house and back of house close in parallel. Both columns are signed before the manager sets the alarm.

Date	FOH closer	BOH closer

Front of house	Init.	Back of house	Init.
Sections reset: tables, chairs, banquettes aligned		All hot-held product discarded or cooled per Form C	
Condiments wiped, topped up, capped		Rail and reach-ins broken down, wrapped, dated	
Menus wiped; damaged copies pulled		Everything in the walk-in labelled: item, prep date, use-by	
Bar: guns flushed, rails cleaned, fruit dated and covered		FIFO rotation corrected; oldest to the front	
Bar: bottles wiped, speed rail cleaned, spouts soaked		Waste and spoilage recorded before it hits the bin	
Beer lines checked; draught tower cleaned		Cutting boards, tongs, spoons through the dish machine	
Glassware polished and racked away from spray		Slicer, mixer, robot coupe broken down and sanitised	
Coffee machine backflushed; grinder hopper emptied		Flat top scraped; fryers off, covered, filtered if due	
POS: all checks closed, no open tabs left overnight		Ovens off; combi rinse cycle run	
Cash-outs completed; tips declared and recorded		Hood off after the fryers have cooled	
Till counted to float; drop bagged and witnessed		Floors swept, degreased, drains flushed	
Card terminals batched / settled and reconciled to POS		Mats lifted, washed, stood on edge to dry	
Reservations reviewed; tomorrow's notes handed over		Garbage, recycling, organics out; bins washed	
Guest incidents logged (Form H)		Dish machine drained; screens cleared; door left open	
Washrooms final check and restock		Dry storage tidy; nothing on the floor	
Patio furniture secured or brought in		Prep list written for tomorrow from actual pars	
Music, TVs, signage off; patio lights off		Gas confirmed off; pilot lights as per SOP	
Front door locked; windows checked		Walk-in and freezer doors sealed; temps logged	

Manager sign-off - alarm set at: _____ Signature: _____

Form F - Allergen and labelling control

Date	Location	Completed by

Prep label discipline

Every container that leaves its original packaging gets a label with three things, in this order and no exceptions: **what it is, the date and time it was prepped or opened, and the use-by date.** "You can tell by looking" is how cross-contamination and stale product both happen, and it is the first thing an inspector photographs.

Rule	Why it matters in practice
Write the item name in full, not a code	The person who reads the label at 7 p.m. on Saturday is not the person who wrote it. Abbreviations that are obvious to prep are not obvious to a new cook.
Date and time, not date alone	Two-stage cooling, 24-hour holds and shift-life items all need the hour to be auditable.
Use-by is a decision, not a guess	Set a written shelf life per item in your recipe book and label from that standard, so the same product always gets the same life.
Label before it goes in the fridge	"I'll label it after service" produces the unlabelled tub that gets thrown out, which is waste, or gets used, which is risk.
Dissolvable or removable labels only	Adhesive residue on a container is a cleaning failure and it prevents the next label from sticking.

Cross-contact prevention

- Separate, colour-coded boards and utensils, and a written key posted where they are stored.
- Ready-to-eat above raw, always. Raw poultry on the bottom shelf, then ground meat, then whole cuts, then fish, then produce and ready-to-eat above all of it.
- Allergen orders get a fresh pan, fresh utensils, changed gloves and a washed hand in between - gloves alone transfer allergens exactly as well as bare hands do.
- Shared fryers cannot be made allergen-safe. If gluten, fish or shellfish share oil, say so out loud rather than promising something the kitchen cannot deliver.
- Allergen orders are called on the ticket, verbally at the pass, and carried to the table separately with a verbal hand-off to the guest.

COMMON MISTAKE

Answering "is this gluten free?" with "it should be fine." Train the crew that there are exactly two acceptable answers: a definite yes based on a checked recipe, or "let me check with the kitchen and confirm." Everything in between is a liability sentence spoken by a nineteen-year-old on their fourth shift.

Form F (continued) - Allergen communication

Server script - allergen and dietary requests

- 1. **Acknowledge and escalate.** "Thank you for telling me. So I get this exactly right - is it an allergy, or a preference?"
- 2. **Confirm the severity.** "And how severe is it? Does it need to avoid any contact at all, or just not be an ingredient?"
- 3. **Never guess.** "Let me check the recipe with the kitchen and come straight back."
- 4. **Flag it in the POS on the item, not in a note nobody reads.**
- 5. **Tell the kitchen verbally as well as on the ticket.**
- 6. **Deliver it yourself, named.** "This is the gluten-free plate for the guest who asked." Never hand an allergen plate to a runner without a verbal hand-off.
- 7. **Be honest about shared equipment.** "Our fryer is shared, so I can't guarantee no cross-contact from fried items - here is what I can guarantee."

Allergen request logged	Table	Item	Confirmed with (BOH)	Server	Time

Form G - Receiving log

Check it before you sign for it. A signature on a delivery note is an assertion that the product arrived safe and correct.

Date	Received by	Manager on duty

Receiving standard

- Refrigerated product arrives at 4 °C / 40 °F or below; frozen product arrives frozen solid, with no ice crystals, freezer burn or evidence of thaw and refreeze.
- Probe between two packages rather than piercing sealed product; for produce and dry goods, check ambient and condition.
- Reject anything with damaged packaging, swollen or dented cans on the seam, off odours, insect evidence, or a temperature you cannot verify.
- Put refrigerated and frozen items away first - within about fifteen minutes - before you count the dry goods.
- Record rejections on the delivery note itself, take a photo, and notify the supplier in writing the same day. A verbal complaint to a driver is not a credit.

Time	Supplier	Product / lot	Temp on arrival	Condition	Accepted / rejected	Signature

Rejections and supplier follow-up:

Form H - Corrective action and incident log

One line per exception. This is the most valuable page in the pack: it is the evidence that your system detects problems and closes them.

Month	Location	Manager

[illegible]

Guest illness or injury complaints

Handle these on this form too, and handle them the same way every time. Take the report seriously and in private. Record what the guest ate, when, what symptoms and when they started, and their contact details. Do not admit liability, do not diagnose, and do not offer a settlement on the spot. Notify the owner and, where your jurisdiction requires it, your public health unit. Preserve any suspect product and its label rather than discarding it. If more than one complaint points at the same item or the same day, stop serving that item and call your health unit yourself - the operators who get destroyed by an outbreak are almost never the ones who called first.

What a health inspector looks at first

Inspectors are not looking for perfection. They are looking for evidence of control: does this operator know what their risks are, and is there a system that catches problems without the inspector's help? Almost every inspection follows the same opening sequence, and you can rehearse it.

Order	What they check	How to be ready
1	Handwashing stations	Accessible, unblocked, hot water, soap, single-use towels, signage. A hand sink with a bus tub in it is the fastest way to lose an inspector's confidence in the first ninety seconds.
2	Cold-holding temperatures	They will probe your rail, not read your display. Keep pans below the fill line and rotate the ones nearest the heat.
3	Hot-holding temperatures	Probe your own before service and again mid-shift. Hot holding is where the afternoon lull quietly produces a violation.
4	Date labelling and rotation in the walk-in	One unlabelled container invites a full-shelf inspection. Walk your own walk-in with an inspector's eyes every Friday.
5	Raw over ready-to-eat storage	Post the storage order inside the walk-in door and enforce it at receiving, which is when it actually gets broken.
6	Sanitiser concentration and test strips	Have unexpired strips, use them in front of the inspector, and show the concentration log on Form D.
7	Your records	Produced without hunting. A clipboard in a known place beats a binder in an office nobody can find the key to.
8	Employee practices	Bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat food, glove changes, drinking containers, hair restraint, jewellery, illness policy.
9	Certification and posting	Current food-handler certificates and any required posted certificates and notices.
10	Structure and pests	Sealed gaps, intact surfaces, working ventilation, current pest-control reports.

MANAGER CHECK

Do an unannounced self-inspection once a month, in the same order as the table above, at the busiest hour rather than at 10 a.m. when everything is clean. Write it up on Form H. Two things happen: you find what an inspector would find, and you build a documented history of self-correction that is worth a great deal if you ever need to demonstrate due diligence.

The violations that recur, and how to pre-empt them

The same handful of findings account for most of what gets written up in restaurant kitchens. None of them are difficult. All of them are systems problems disguised as people problems.

Recurring finding	What actually causes it	The pre-empt
Cold-holding above 4 °C / 40 °F	Over-filled inserts above the cold-air line; pans left out during prep; rail lids open through a slow afternoon.	Fill to the line and no higher. Half-pans for slow movers. Probe the rail at shift change, not just at open. Ice bath anything that sits in the window.
Unlabelled or undated food	Labels stored across the kitchen from where prep happens.	Label gun, marker and tape at every prep station and inside the walk-in. Make labelling the last step of the recipe card, not a separate task.
Improper cooling	Hot stock pots going straight into the walk-in, which also warms everything around them.	Shallow pans under 5 cm, ice wands, ice baths, portion before chilling. Log on Form C every time so the failures are visible.
Hand sink blocked or unstocked	It is the most convenient flat surface in the kitchen.	Nothing is ever set on a hand sink. Assign restocking to the opening checklist and again at shift change.
No sanitiser test strips / wrong concentration	Strips expired or nobody was shown how to read them.	Buy two tubes, date them on receipt, and make the concentration log part of the daily form rather than an occasional exercise.
Raw stored above ready-to-eat	A rushed delivery put away by whoever was free.	Post the storage order inside the walk-in door and make receiving put-away a named, trained job.
Bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat food	Garnish, bread, lemon wedges and salad - almost never the protein.	Tongs and gloves at the garnish station and the bread station specifically, because that is where it happens.
Working while ill	No written policy and an unspoken expectation that shifts get covered.	A written illness policy, a stated exclusion list, and a realistic way to call out. If calling in sick is punished, people will not do it.
Chemicals stored near or above food	Under-sink storage that grew organically.	A dedicated, labelled chemical shelf below and away from food, with safety data sheets in the same place.
Thermometers uncalibrated or missing	One probe shared by six cooks.	A probe per station, calibrated weekly in ice water and logged. They are inexpensive relative to a single discarded batch.

Using logs as coaching evidence, not paperwork theatre

Most food-safety documentation fails in the same way. It starts as a genuine check, degrades into a signature, and ends as a page filled out in one sitting at the end of the week. At that point the paperwork is worse than nothing: it is a written record asserting that everything was fine, which is precisely the document that will be read back to you if something was not.

The fix is not more supervision. It is making the log useful to the person filling it in.

Four practices that keep logs alive

1. **Read them out loud in pre-shift, once a week.** Thirty seconds: "Walk-in ran warm Tuesday afternoon, Marc caught it, we moved product and the tech came Wednesday. Good catch." Now the log is a thing that gets noticed, and catching something is a thing that gets credit.
2. **Reward the exception, never punish it.** The first time a cook writes down an out-of-range temperature and gets criticised for it, you have trained your whole kitchen to write 3 °C forever. Praise the entry, fix the cause, and say so publicly.
3. **Make the corrective action the interesting part.** Temperatures are data. Corrective actions are decisions, and decisions are where you can coach - was the disposition right, was the root cause found, did it recur?
4. **Trend the exceptions monthly.** Count Form H entries by category. Three cooling failures on the same product is a recipe and equipment problem, not three careless cooks. This is the single highest-value ten minutes a manager spends on food safety each month.

Turning a finding into a coaching conversation

Step	What you say and do
1. Separate the person from the system	"The rail was at 8 degrees at four o'clock. I'm not looking for who - I want to know what made that likely." Nine times in ten the answer is a pan, a door, a lid or a workflow.
2. Show the record, not your memory	The log removes the argument about whether it happened. Now the conversation can be about why, which is the only conversation worth having.
3. Re-teach at the equipment	Never at a desk. Stand at the rail, fill the pan to the line, show the difference on the probe. Physical demonstration outperforms explanation.
4. Write what you agreed	One line on Form H: what changed, who owns it, when you will re-check. This is also your documentation if the same issue ever becomes a performance matter.
5. Re-check and close the loop visibly	Go back the next day, probe it, and tell them it was right. Confirmation that the fix worked is what makes the next correction stick.

OPERATOR TIP

Keep completed logs for the period your health unit requires, filed by month, and keep them somewhere you can produce them in under two minutes. If you ever face a complaint, an insurance question or a due-diligence defence, a complete and honest run of logs - exceptions, corrective actions and all - is far stronger evidence of a controlled operation than a spotless run of checkmarks that nobody believes.