

Guide to Critical Violations

September 2025

In an inspection, critical violations are the most likely to make a customer sick. A critical violation may lower your inspection score by 4 or 5 points. The Health Department will send a warning letter if an inspector finds a repeated violation.

This document can help you understand the most common critical violations of [Vermont Health Regulations for Food Service Establishments](#), but if you'd like to learn more, you'll need to review the specific regulation. Also see [How to Read a Food Inspection Report](#).

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact FoodLodging@vermont.gov.

Report item number	Critical violation category	How to avoid critical violations
1(a)	Food is obtained in sound condition and from acceptable sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food is not spoiled, misbranded or otherwise contaminated.• Food is purchased from an approved source for commercial sales.
3	Potentially hazardous food temperature requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hot foods are held at or above 135 °F.• Cold foods are held at or below 41 °F.• Food is cooled from 135 °F to 41 °F or below within four total hours.• A consumer advisory is posted where applicable (for example, undercooked eggs or meat).• Refrigerated, ready-to-eat potentially hazardous food that was prepared more than 24 hours ago is properly date marked.• You have a variance or Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point plan approved by the Health Department for a specialized processing method.• Food is marked or identified with the time it must be cooked, served or discarded.• Food is served or discarded within four hours from the time it was removed from temperature control.

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4	Preventing cross contamination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees wash their hands in handwashing sinks as appropriate. • An employee handles ready-to-eat food with gloved hands or tongs. • Raw animal foods are properly separated from each other or arranged according to minimum cooking temperatures. • Your facility does not use unapproved additives.
7	Unwrapped foods: return and reservice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food that was served or a customer returned is not offered again to a new customer.
11	Restriction of employees with infections and communicable diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees on site who show symptoms of illness are restricted from food service and preparation.
12	Acceptable hygiene practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees wash their hands appropriately. • Employees' outer clothing is clean. • Employees eat or drink from closed beverage containers inside designated break areas. • Employees use tobacco inside designated areas.
22	Sanitation rinse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanitizer is available at an appropriate concentration based on the manufacturer's directions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chlorine (bleach) sanitizer: 50 to 100 ppm ○ Quaternary ammonia sanitizer: 200 to 500 ppm • Dishwashers that use high temperatures for sanitizing reach at least 160°F. • Dishwashers that use a chlorine chemical sanitizer must reach 50 to 100 ppm.

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27	Water supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your facility has enough hot water for peak times of demand. Water comes from an approved source. If your facility uses a well, you have tested it annually for <i>E. coli</i> and coliform bacteria.
28	Sewage system and disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sewage system is properly sized to meet your facility's needs. Your seating is limited to what is outlined in your facility's wastewater permit and license. The sewage disposal system is properly maintained and operated.
30	No cross-connection, backflow or back siphonage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sinks have the required air gap or backflow prevention. Sewage system does not connect to a drain where food, portable equipment or utensils are placed.
31	Fixture requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your facility has enough toilets and handwashing sinks. Your facility has enough soap and paper towels for handwashing. Handwashing sinks are easily accessible for use at all times. Handwashing sinks are clean and maintained. Handwashing sinks are not used for activities other than handwashing. Your facility has a mop sink as required.
35	Establishment free of insects, rodents and pests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rodents and insects are not found in food service, preparation or storage areas. External doors and windows are properly screened and secured against pests. Insect electrocution or trapping devices are installed in an appropriate location.

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41	Poisonous or toxic materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liquids are labeled. • Containers of poisonous or toxic materials and personal care items have a readable manufacturer's label. • Unapproved poisonous or toxic materials are not found in your facility. • Personal care items, first aid supplies and medicine are stored properly to protect food, equipment, utensils, linens or single-service items from contamination.