



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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HAWAII STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'S RESTAURANT INSPECTION WEBSITE GOES LIVE STARTING WITH OAHU INSPECTION DATA

HONOLULU -- The Hawaii State Department of Health has launched a new online portal that lets consumers see how Hawaii restaurants and other food service organizations fare in food safety inspections, starting first with Oahu inspection data.

Access to data from food safety inspection reports, complete with descriptions of violations, gives consumers a behind-the-scenes glimpse at food safety and sanitation practices -- or a lack of them -- at the food outlets they frequent.

"We're taking transparency to an entirely new level," said Peter Oshiro, who manages the food safety inspection program. "Information from the inspection reports empowers consumers and informs their choices."

The online portal, which has taken nearly a year to develop and refine, is a companion component to the the Hawaii State Department of Health's placard program, which was launched in July 2014. Under the placard program, food outlets are given a green, yellow or red placards, and are required to post them in visible location at their entrances.

The color-coded placards indicate whether a food establishment has passed its health inspection, received a conditional pass, or has been closed due to permit suspension. Restaurants are fined for not posting them.

"Data from the inspection reports give consumers the details behind the green, yellow or red placards, which many have become accustomed to seeing near the entrances of restaurants or other places that serve food," Oshiro said.

"Our observant inspectors are capturing every detail for their reports using established science-based criteria," he added. "With this degree of disclosure, we believe the online reports will make restaurants and other food service organizations pay closer attention to their food safety and sanitation practices."

Just as the publicly-posted placards provide an incentive for restaurants and other food service organizations to rectify any food-handling or other safety issues, the publicly-available data from the inspection reports are expected to motivate restaurants to take a closer look at their own practices since these reports become a permanent, historical record accessible to the public.

“About 25 percent of the locations we inspect receive a yellow card. We hope to see this rate steadily decline with this new website,” Oshiro said. “We can now show what a bad inspection looks like on a public site. This should be a great catalyst for the industry to improve their food safety practices and make internal quality control a priority before our inspections.”

Oshiro’s team has manually posted all of the previous Oahu inspections to the public portal and currently has nearly 7,000 inspection reports in the database. This represents about 80 percent of all the inspections completed statewide since the program began in July 2014. Oshiro anticipates the remaining Oahu inspection reports will be uploaded by May 2016. Past neighbor island inspections will be uploaded by the end of the year. Going forward, all inspection reports from all islands will be posted in near real-time, depending upon the availability of secure, wireless access.

More than 10,000 food establishments statewide prepare or serve food and require a Department of Health permit to operate their business. There are roughly 6,000 such establishments on Oahu, 1,800 on Hawaii Island, 1,700 on Maui, and 700 on Kauai. This includes restaurants, hotels, caterers, food warehouses, markets, convenience stores, lunch wagons, push carts, and institutional kitchens for healthcare facilities, schools, adult and child day care centers, and prisons.

The Hawaii State Department of Health began posting color-coded placards as part of the state’s “Food Safety Code” (Hawaii Administrative Rules, Title 11, Chapter 50, Food Safety Code) adopted in 2014. The placards are posted after each health inspection is completed at every food establishment that holds a Department of Health permit.

The Hawaii restaurant inspection website is at <http://hi.healthinspections.us/hawaii>.

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