



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Public health website now provides all food inspection scores

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health now makes scores for the more than 23,000 restaurants and food service establishments throughout Alabama available to the public through the department's Web site, www.alabamafoodscores.com. Users may search by county, city or establishment name.

State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson said, "The inclusion of all recent inspection scores provides useful information for the general public so that they can make informed choices about where they purchase food and the restaurants where they eat. We anticipate this initiative may lessen the incidence of foodborne illnesses by encouraging our establishments to improve their food service sanitation practices."

For the past several years a number of county health departments have made their food establishment inspection scores available on the Internet, but this new offering will allow anyone to review ratings for permitted establishments in urban and rural areas anywhere in the state. Establishments inspected include the restaurants, day care facilities, grocery stores, schools, convenience stores and mobile food carts.

The inspection and regulation of restaurants and other food service facilities in Alabama, other than red meat and poultry processed in Alabama, is the responsibility of the Alabama Department of Public Health environmental staff at the county health departments and state Bureau of Environmental Services. The county health departments enforce the rules.

State law requires any facility selling food to have a current food service permit that is issued by the local county health department. Food service establishments are generally required to be inspected a minimum of three times per year depending on the type of food being prepared. The average convenience store may be inspected once a year, again depending on the type of food sold there.

Standards relate to food storage and protection, employee hygiene, water and sewage issues, waste disposal, pest control, proper storage of toxic materials, and the cleaning and sanitizing of utensils.

Inspection reports and permits are required to be posted in conspicuous view within the establishment. A numerical scoring system on a 100-point scale is used with points deducted for each violation. Scores represent the conditions found at the time of inspection and are weighted based on how they affect a person's health.

Critical violations have a higher point value and are identified in red on the inspection report. Critical items are required to be corrected as soon as possible but not to exceed 10 days regardless of the overall score. Any food items found out of compliance with public health standards are removed from sale and discarded regardless of the overall score.

The overall score determines the reinspection schedule and the use of enforcement actions. The maximum score is 100 percent, and points are subtracted for various violations.

Establishments scoring between 85 and 100 are considered to be in satisfactory compliance and are inspected on routine schedule.

Establishments that score between 70 and 84 require a follow-up inspection within 60 days.

Establishments scoring 60 – 69 require follow-up and reinspection within 48 hours.

Scores below 60 result in immediate closure of the establishment.

Scores reflect the conditions found at the time of inspection. Inspections for the previous week are updated by the following Monday.