



Reference Document: 2013 Food Code

Provision(s): 2-301.12; 5-202.12

Document Name: Handwashing water temperature

Date: October 1, 2015

Question: Does the FDA Food Code specify a specific water temperature at which hands are to be washed?

Response:

No, the FDA Food Code does not specify that hands are to be washed using water at a specific temperature.

Section 5-202.12 of the 2013 FDA Food Code establishes criteria for the installation of handwashing sinks used in a retail food establishment. Paragraph 5-202.12(A) states that a handwashing sink must be capable of delivering running water that is at least 38°C (100°F). Section 2-301.12 establishes criteria for how food employees are to clean their hands and exposed portions of their arms at a handwashing sink and specifically indicates that hands should be rinsed under warm running water. The word “warm” is not a defined term in the Food Code. Therefore, while the handwashing sink must be capable of delivering running water that is at least 38°C (100°F), flexibility is provided such that a food employee can adjust the temperature of the running water to suit his or her preference. In practice, this means that per the Food Code food employees may wash their hands under running water that is less than 38°C (100°F). Always check with applicable state and local codes, including plumbing codes, for specific jurisdictional requirements.

*The FDA Food Code is neither federal law nor federal regulation and is not preemptive. It represents FDA's best advice for a uniform system of regulation to ensure that food at retail is safe and properly protected and presented. The FDA Food Code provisions are designed to be consistent with federal food laws and regulations, and are written for ease of legal adoption at all levels of government.*

References:

1. 2013 Food Code, Section 2-301.12 Cleaning Procedure; Section 5-202.12 Handwashing Sink, Installation

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