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### Food service establishments face code changes

by Staff Report

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Soon restaurants and other food service establishments will face some public health rule and regulation changes. The Stokes County Family Health Center reports that on Sept. 1, North Carolina will become one of the final states to adopt the Food and Drug Administration's Food Code.

For the past few decades food service establishments have been held to state-level regulations enforced at the local level. With the new changes, permits and inspections will still be handled at the local level but will use regulations created at the federal level. Every three years the FDA updates its Food Code and publishes a new code; North Carolina has adopted the most recent version, the 2009 Food Code.

While the bulk of the food service establishment inspection program will remain the same, there are some substantial changes that operators will want to become familiar with, according to the health department. For example, effective Sept. 1, it will be impossible for an establishment to score higher than 100 on an inspection, which is currently possible if the facility's operator successfully completes a food safety course. And after January 2014, if the person left in charge of the facility has not successfully completed an approved food safety course, it will be a violation resulting in a 2-point demerit.

Some of the other changes include the mandatory use of gloves or utensils when handling ready-to-eat foods, date-marking open foods, a decrease in the cold holding temperature of foods, a hot water requirement for hand-dishwashing, and buffet-style food service monitoring.

The Stokes County Environmental Health office, which oversees restaurant inspections, is offering an informational training class to familiarize food service operators with the new regulations. The free class is voluntary and will be offered at three different locations and times to accommodate all schedules. The classes will be offered at the Walnut Cove Public Library on Aug. 22 from 1:30 to 3 p.m., King Public Library on Aug. 23 from 5:30 to 7 p.m., and the Ronald Reagan Building in Danbury on Aug. 27 from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

For more information about the upcoming changes or if you are interested in attending the training, call the Stokes County Environmental Health office at 336-593-2403. The 2009 FDA Food Code may be viewed online at [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov).

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