

San Mateo County Proposed Food Safety Placarding Frequently Asked Questions for Operators

Environmental Health Services

Why is San Mateo County implementing the color-coded placarding system?

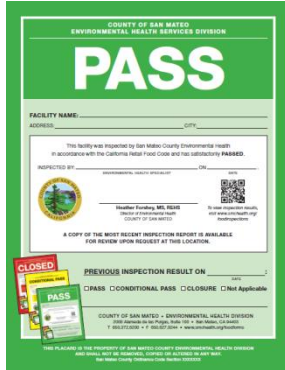
San Mateo County will join other counties throughout the Bay Area and northern California in using the colored-coded placarding system. The system consists of using green (pass), yellow (conditional pass) and red (closure) placards to determine the facility's food safety status. The status is based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) five critical risk factors. Taking a regional approach to grading and placarding provides consistency for food operators who operate restaurants in multiple counties, and benefits the public by presenting an easy and consistent way to make an informed decision when eating out.

What are the CDC's critical risk factors?

They are the most common causes of foodborne illness. When observed during an inspection, they are considered major violations.

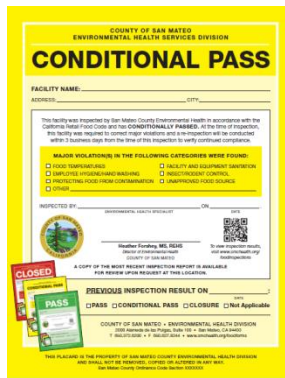
- Food from unsafe sources
- Inadequate cooking
- Improper holding temperature
- Contaminated equipment
- Poor personal hygiene

What does each color placard mean?



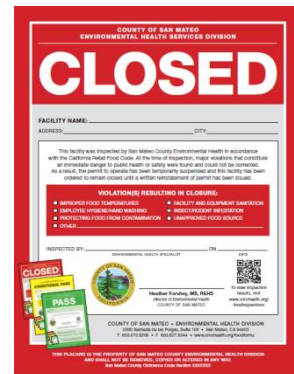
Green Placard

The facility can have no more than one major violation observed during the inspection. The major violation must be corrected at the time of the inspection.



Yellow Placard

The facility has two or more major violations observed during the inspection. All major violations must be corrected at the time of the inspection. A re-inspection will be conducted within **3 business days**.



Red Placard

The facility is closed due to violations that are an imminent health hazard or major violations and remains closed until the unsafe conditions are corrected.

What determines the color of the placard?

The color of the placard issued will be determined based on the number of major violations observed during a routine inspection or if an imminent health hazard is observed.

What is major violation?

A major violation is a CDC risk factor that contributes to foodborne illness outbreaks and, therefore, poses an imminent health hazard that requires immediate correction. Examples: no hot water, no handwashing capabilities, cooking, cooling or holding temperature violations.

What is an imminent health hazard?

An imminent health hazard is an uncorrected major violation that poses a significant threat to public health and requires immediate correction. Examples: sewage overflow, no water or lack of hot water, vermin infestation, lack of electricity/power.

What is a minor violation?

A minor violation does not constitute an imminent health hazard, but creates an unsanitary condition that requires correction. Examples: leaking faucets, missing light covers, missing thermometers.

Which types of food facilities will require placarding?

Placards will be required at all permanent food facilities that *prepare food*, such as restaurants, mobile food trucks, bakeries, schools, licensed health care facilities, and some gas stations and convenience stores. In San Mateo County, this represents approximately 3,000 facilities.

How is this placard program different than the existing inspection process?

The methods and procedures of the inspection, as well as closure criteria, will remain the same. Inspections will continue to be conducted using CDC risk factors as the primary focus of safe food handling practices.

After an inspection is performed by a County of San Mateo Environmental Health Specialist, a colored placard would be issued, summarizing the food safety status reflected on the inspection report. Posting a placard will benefit food facility operators and customers by providing a simple and easy-to-read sign that summarizes the conditions of the food facility during the inspection.

Will there be training on how to get a Green placard?

Yes, there will be several "How to Get Green" classroom training sessions for food facility operators starting in June 2015. The training will be provided in English, Spanish, Cantonese, and Mandarin.

Where will placards be placed?

Placards will be required to be posted in clear view of prospective customers entering the facility.

When will the placarding program be implemented?

The date for rollout is January 1, 2016.

Who can I contact if I have questions?

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