

# JL HOSPITALITY ADVISORS

A LEADING SERVICE INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMPANY

## Regulating the Food Delivery Market

The food delivery effort across the country is on a steep ascent, from restaurants, supermarkets, and through other forms of services. Industry professionals need to step back for just a second and consider the trend deliveries are taking and the risk each of us may incur without regulation on these alternate methods. To not underscore this as an important subject, or disregard regulation of these developing conveniences exposes a business and the general public to the potential of food-borne illness and other possible risk factors.

There is no regulation on food items after they leave your place of business, and you do not know who is transporting your product or how your items are being handled or mishandled. Businesses as a whole used to deliver their own product in their own vehicles by employees of the business. This is all beginning to change with the growing use of on-call personal vehicles hired for such services. The potential for a business to be liable for the food they place in a vehicle belonging to someone they do not know is a valid consideration, and now is the time to discuss this.

The importance of maintaining proper heat or refrigeration temperatures in the food industry has mandatory regulation governed by Health Departments all over the country. Between 40 degrees and 140 degrees is the danger zone regulation standard in the US. The risk of overexposing food items inside the danger zone for too long exposes great risk to the public for food-borne illness. Food service businesses must work hard every day maintaining these standards to protect the public, and they can receive a reduction in points if a Health Inspector observes any food that is not temperature controlled or not maintained under these regulatory guidelines. We have all had Inspectors demand food to be destroyed when found sitting on the counter or to be within the danger zone for any length of time. The time and temperature factors on deliveries during transfer are critical to a safe transfer. There is no regulation on these deliveries, and we must also consider what else or who else is in the vehicle at the time of delivery.

A recent article in Canada mentioned the start of in-place vehicles that dish out food from warming or cooling bags in their vehicle trunks, which restaurants provide, just like a mobile food truck. The article further states that meal service can run from 11:00 AM to 1:30 PM, but that no meal sits in the warming or cooling bags for more than a couple of hours. Anyone reading this with Serve-Safe or other food handlers training can understand the implications of what this says, especially when the time-frame for the program is set at 2.5 hours from the onset.

In addition to the aforementioned, there is Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) regulations that generally fall within the receiving and preparation of product at the business. There is nothing preventing a biological, chemical, or physical hazards associated with HACCP coming into play with a delivery of product in a vehicle that has no regulation. We must be concerned with other items that are in the vehicle and how they are handled during transfer, otherwise without such regulation anything can be transported along with your food, including animals.

Who is delivering your food? Have they washed their hands? How are they washing their hands? Are they wearing gloves? What else is in the vehicle? Is there potential for a hazardous chemical or biological incursion during the transfer? Can the delivery take over 2 hours from end of prep to door to door with no temperature controls? If for no other reason think about this; can someone deliberately influence your products time and temperature, or influence a non-food ingredient, chemical, biological or physical hazard to make someone ill and damage your reputation?

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These are all bonified questions that must be addressed or they create risk to the consumer and to the establishment. The obligation for us to review and regulate this potential risk is primary to your business success and the growing demand of these services.

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If you have a concern about how your food is handled during vehicle transfer we would like to know.

Reach us on Twitter at the following accounts.

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<https://twitter.com/phijimchan>  
<https://twitter.com/DiningGrades>  
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