

# Health Wise Quarterly

Brought to you by the friendly staff at your

## Environmental Health Services Division



Environmental Health Services Division (EHSD) offers monthly Food Safety Presentations from 3:00PM - 4:30PM.

Trainings are held at Rutherford Lane Campus [1520 Rutherford Lane, Building 1, Suite 205](#).

Interested in attending? Register by phone 512-978-0300 or via email: [EHSD.service@austintexas.gov](mailto:EHSD.service@austintexas.gov)

October 18, 2016	Requirements for Starting a Food Enterprise and the Inspection Process
November 15, 2016	Requirements and Processes for Submitting a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP)
December 20, 2016	Temporary Events and Mobile Vendor Inspections



### OFFICES CLOSED

EHSD will be CLOSED on Wednesday, September 28<sup>th</sup> for a division wide training for all staff. We will reopen for business for regular office hours on Thursday, September 29<sup>th</sup>. Please plan accordingly.

### GET YOUR FLU SHOT!

Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department is providing multiple flu clinics this September and October. Flu vaccines are available for those 6 months old or older who are uninsured or Medicaid recipients. To find out more, including how to schedule an appointment, call 512-972-5520. For more about the flu, go to our [Immunizations Unit](#) or the [CDC](#).

### MOSQUITO SURVEILLANCE

The Environmental Health Services Division (EHSD) has specially trained inspectors that:

- Conduct assessments upon request of properties to help identify areas on the property that should be addressed to reduce mosquito breeding sites,
- Regularly drive assigned areas looking for stagnate water that meets larvicide guidelines (larviciding means applying a pesticide to water to kill mosquito larvae),
- Regularly set mosquito traps for surveillance of the mosquito population for disease presence (from May-November).

If you would like a site assessment of your property please call 311, provide the operator your contact telephone number with address and the area inspector will call you to schedule.



### PUBLIC HEALTH NUISANCES: TALL GRASS AND WEEDS

EHSD has staff dedicated to work in contracted areas outside of the City of Austin including unincorporated areas of Travis County and other municipalities. Staff responsibilities in these areas are slightly different than the responsibilities of their colleagues assigned to the City of Austin. One such difference, in Travis County, San Leanna, and Rollingwood, is the investigation of these public health nuisances: trash, rubbish, debris, junk vehicles, tall weeds and grass, mosquito harbors, unmaintained pools and substandard structures.

With the recent rains, the landscape around Central Texas is lush and green. This might be considered beautiful scenery, however it can potentially be a harborage for rodents, insects, and stagnant water. All of which can pose a public health threat. Travis County, San Leanna, and Rollingwood all consider tall weeds and grass to be a public health nuisance if they have grown more than 36 inches in height. Within the City of Austin, Austin Code Department investigates complaints of tall grass over 12 inches. To report a complaint of tall grass and weeds, call 311. Still curious? Check out the links below.

[Travis County Code Public Nuisances](#)

[Austin Code Department](#)

[Texas Health and Safety Code](#)





Danny Hawbaker Photo Credit



# LEGAL COMPLIANCE INFORMATION

For City of Austin and Travis County Food Enterprise Operators



## City of Austin Food Permits: (Chapter 10-3, Article 3: Permits)

A person must hold a permit issued by the health authority to operate a food enterprise. A person must comply with the requirements of this chapter to receive or retain a permit. A permit issued under this chapter is not transferable. A permit holder or person in charge of a food enterprise shall post a permit required by this chapter in a prominent public location clearly visible to the general public and to patrons. To avoid legal charges and court fines, the person in charge must comply by having the permit issued by the Health Authority posted at all times. This offense is punishable by a fine not to exceed \$2,000. For more information on the City of Austin Food Permit code, click [HERE](#)

## Travis County Food Permits: (Chapter 47 - Food Establishment Permits)

A Person shall not commence operations of or operate a Food Outlet or as a Mobile Food Vendor within the County unless that Person has a valid, subsisting Permit issued. Only a Person who complies with the Food Laws is entitled to receive and retain a Permit. A Person shall post a valid, subsisting Permit in plain view in or on all Food Outlets or mobile Food vending units regulated by this Order. To avoid legal charges and court fines, the person in charge must comply by having the permit issued by the Health Authority posted at all times. For more information on the Travis County Food Permit code, click [HERE](#)

### POOL OPERATOR TO DO LIST FOR THE OFF SEASON

It is that time of year for kids of all ages begin to go back to school and pool operators may feel that the pool on their property does not need as much attention as during the summer months. This is actually false, a pool is required to be properly maintained throughout the entire year. Some items to think about during the off season:

- ✓ Make sure you walk your pool fence enclosure to inspect for any opening greater than 4 inches, such as missing pickets or erosion of the ground beneath the fence
- ✓ Make sure your fence gates self-close and self-latch
- ✓ Make sure your pool chemistry is within proper range and you can see the drains at the bottom
- ✓ Make sure your safety equipment is present and in good condition for future use

There are some changes happening to the pool inspection program. The department is working on a new expanded pool inspection report. Also a letter regarding main drain separation distance has been posted to our website regarding the separation requirement for dual hydraulically balanced drains. Please keep checking the [EHSD Pool website](#) for more information as this process develops, a new section titled updates has been added to highlight this new information.

### TEMPORARY EVENTS



Be they benefits, a tailgate get together, festivals, special events or fundraisers, temporary events are for serving foods and beverages to the public for only a limited time. The nature of the temporary event may invite the opportunity for foodborne illness due to the lack of adequate refrigeration, lack of sanitary facilities or improper food handling by staff or volunteers. The Austin/Travis County Health Department (A/TCHHSD) requires that all temporary food event operators are informed of the current guidelines for Temporary Food Handling as defined in the Texas Food Handling Rules - 25 TAC §§228. If you are thinking of holding a temporary food service event, please check out our [permit application and set up guidelines](#).





## FOOD SAFETY DURING WEATHER EMERGENCIES, FLOODS, AND POWER OUTAGES: USDA Updates Food Safety Tips for Areas Affected by Flooding

Food Safety Education Staff  
Press Inquiries (202) 720-9113  
Consumer Inquiries (888) 674-6854

**WASHINGTON, Aug. 23, 2016** — The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is issuing food safety recommendations for those who may be impacted flooding.

FSIS recommends that consumers take the following steps to reduce the risk of foodborne illness during severe flooding events.

### Food Safety After a Flood:

- Do not eat any food that may have come into contact with flood water – this would include raw fruits and vegetables, cartons of milk or eggs.
- Discard any food that is not in a waterproof container if there is any chance that it has come into contact with flood water. Food containers that are not waterproof include those packaged in plastic wrap or cardboard, or those with screw caps, snap lids, pull tops, and crimped caps. Flood waters can enter into any of these containers and contaminate the food inside. Also, discard cardboard juice/milk/baby formula boxes and home canned foods if they have come in contact with flood water, because they cannot be effectively cleaned and sanitized.
- Inspect canned foods and discard any food in damaged cans. Can damage is shown by swelling, leakage, punctures, holes, fractures, extensive deep rusting, or crushing/denting severe enough to prevent normal stacking or opening with a manual, wheel type can opener.

### Steps to follow in advance of losing power:

- Keep appliance thermometers in both the refrigerator and the freezer to ensure temperatures remain food safe during a power outage. Safe temperatures are 40°F or lower in the refrigerator, 0°F or lower in the freezer.
- Freeze water in one-quart plastic storage bags or small containers prior to a storm. These containers are small enough to fit around the food in the refrigerator and freezer to help keep food cold. Remember, water expands when it freezes so don't overfill the containers.
- Freeze refrigerated items, such as leftovers, milk and fresh meat and poultry that you may not need immediately—this helps keep them at a safe temperature longer.
- Know where you can get dry ice or block ice.
- Have coolers on hand to keep refrigerator food cold if the power will be out for more than four hours.
- Group foods together in the freezer—this 'igloo' effect helps the food stay cold longer.
- Keep a few days' worth of ready-to-eat foods that do not require cooking or cooling.

### Steps to follow if the power goes out:

- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. A refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if the door is kept closed. A full freezer will hold its temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours if half-full).
- Place meat and poultry to one side of the freezer or on a tray to prevent cross contamination of thawing juices.
- Use dry or block ice to keep the refrigerator as cold as possible during an extended power outage. Fifty pounds of dry ice should keep a fully-stocked 18-cubic-foot freezer cold for two days.

### Steps to follow after a weather emergency:

- Check the temperature inside of your refrigerator and freezer. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, seafood, eggs or leftovers) that has been above 40°F for two hours or more.
- Check each item separately. Throw out any food that has an unusual odor, color or texture or feels warm to the touch.
- Check frozen food for ice crystals. The food in your freezer that partially or completely thawed may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is 40°F or below.
- Never taste a food to decide if it's safe.
- **When in doubt, throw it out.**

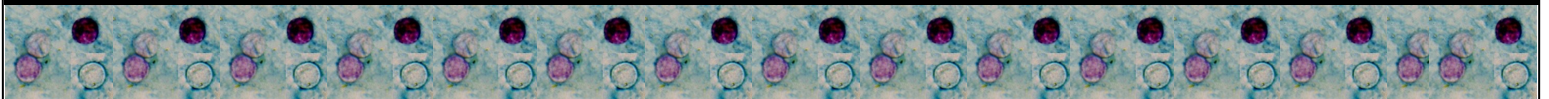
To see full article from the USDA click [here](#) and to view the entire infographic in a larger format, click the image.





### ZIKA NEWS IN THE AUSTIN AMERICAN STATESMAN

Did you read the *Austin American Statesman* article “Faster test will help experts find Zika-infected mosquitoes in Texas” written by Jane Wester published on June 22, 2016? *Austin American Statesman* staff went out into the field with Environmental Health Officer III, Danny Gonzalez, Registered Sanitarian. Read the [full article](#) and check out [all the photos](#). Below are just a few of the shots, *Austin American Statesman* photographer, Rodolfo Gonzalez, captured. Reprinted with permission.



### Cyclospora Health Advisory

On August 1, 2016 the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) issued a Health Advisory: Recommendation to Test patients with consistent symptoms for *Cyclospora*. “...Within the last month, 55 cases of *Cyclospora* infection have been reported to the Texas Department of State Health Services. Public Health is investigating the increased number of cases of *Cyclospora* infections to identify the possible common exposures. ...Although no common exposure source for the increase in cases this year has been identified, past outbreaks in the U.S. have been associated with consumption of imported fresh produce, including fresh cilantro, pre-packaged salad mix, raspberries, basil, snow peas, and mesclun lettuce. Thorough washing of fresh produce is recommended, but may not eliminate the risk of transmission since *Cyclospora* can be difficult to wash off all types of produce. Infection is generally not transmitted person to person.” If a food handler is ill with nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, exclude from work. See the full Health Advisory Here: [Texas DSHS](#) For more information on *Cyclospora*: [CDC](#)



**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION CUSTOMER WALK IN HOURS**  
**Lobby Hours** Rutherford Lane Campus 1520 Rutherford Lane 7:45AM - 3:30PM Monday - Friday  
**One-Stop Shop** 505 Barton Springs Road 8:00AM -12:00PM Monday - Friday  
**Mobile Vending Physical Permitting Inspections** Rutherford Lane Campus  
1520 Rutherford Lane 7:45 AM - 11:00AM Tuesday and Thursday



EHSD is partnering with Austin 3-1-1 to handle all citizen complaints and environmental investigations. To request services, get general assistance or submit a citizen complaint, dial 3-1-1 or 512-974-2000 if you are calling from outside the Austin service area.

If you feel an inspection issue or complaint investigation has not been satisfactorily addressed, or to speak with a manager regarding administrative issues, please call us directly at 512-978-0300 between the hours of 7:45AM - 4:45PM Monday - Friday.

Mailing Address: EHSD Post Office Box 142529, Austin, TX 78714

Physical Address: Rutherford Lane Campus 1520 Rutherford Lane Building 1 Suite 200 Austin, TX 78754

Email Address: [EHSD.service@austintexas.gov](mailto:EHSD.service@austintexas.gov)

Web Address: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/environmental-health-services>

Feedback: Please complete our online survey to help us better serve our customers: [www.surveymonkey.com/s/EHSDSurvey](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/EHSDSurvey)

