Food safety assessments are an integral part of an overall food safety program, but they cannot be the whole program. Look at each element to determine which combination of components would strengthen your brand protection, food safety culture, and standard of excellence.
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In today’s highly competitive market, your customers have more choices than ever before. Customers visit your foodservice establishment because they desire a certain brand experience, but they wouldn’t step foot in the door if the food was considered unsafe.

A pioneer in the food safety audit industry, Steritech has been helping restaurant, foodservice, grocery, convenience store, and retail brands develop meaningful solutions for nearly 30 years. Beginning with baseline criteria from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s Model Food Code and augmented by Steritech’s extensive food safety expertise, our detailed, rigorous assessment addresses every aspect of food safety in your business. Ultimately giving you peace of mind that your processes are delivering the safest food possible to your customers. Our goal is not to simply conduct an audit, it is to deliver a consultative, educational, and uplifting program to help you improve your business through exceptional execution of the things that matter most to your customers.

This guide will help mature your food safety program to a best-in-class model and strengthen your brand protection.
THE FUNDAMENTALS

UNDERSTAND PROTOCOLS, STANDARDS, & DESIGNS

■ REGULATORY COMPLIANCE PROTOCOL

Create written expectations to ensure locations are in compliance with all regulations and managers understand how to participate in and respond to regulatory inspections.

Talk to Steritech about helping you prepare for regulatory visits. Check out these helpful resources.
- White paper: Building Good Relationships with Health Inspectors
- White paper: A Detailed Look at Types of Assessments and Scoring for Health Inspections
- Informational briefs on FDA and state code updates available for the following states:
  California     Tennessee
  Florida        South Carolina
  North Carolina

■ FOOD SAFETY MANAGER CERTIFICATION

Train and certify managers about the importance of food safety and how to minimize risk so that they can train employees and monitor their food safety and sanitation behaviors. The FDA Food Code requires that there be a certified food safety manager on duty at all times – they must have passed an ANSI accredited exam such as ServSafe®.

Have Steritech train and certify your managers in ServSafe. Also, ask about other training programs.

■ FOOD HANDLER CERTIFICATION

Ensure that your employees are trained on how to comply with food safety standards, written protocols, and policies. Food safety and good retail training is required in many states.

Allow Steritech to train your employees or advise on how to improve your current training materials.
FACILITY & EQUIPMENT DESIGN STANDARDS

Evaluate materials and designs for floors, walls, plumbing, refrigeration, equipment, exhaust, etc. for compliance with health codes. This promotes ease of cleaning and maintenance, confirms the ability to maintain safe temperatures, and reduces cross-contamination risks.

Let Steritech review your facility’s design standards and any proposed changes that you may be planning for your facility.

MASTER CLEANING & SANITATION SCHEDULE

Utilize a chart of proper cleaning frequencies for each surface with different task lists for each day. Check off each task as it is completed to make sure no area is overlooked.

Allow Steritech to work with you to create ideal frequencies and procedures for a master cleaning and sanitation schedule. View this resource for an example of cleaning tips that Steritech provides:
- Infographic: 4 Cool Tips for Maintaining Your Ice Machine

PRODUCT SPECIFICATIONS

Maintain detailed written standards for ingredients, allergens, and nutritional content to ensure that suppliers and receivers understand expectations. Help improve product and quality consistency, as well as provide due process for when an ingredient change occurs as a way to ensure nutritional information is updated.

Talk to Steritech about reviewing your current specifications from manufacturers and suppliers to ensure the list is comprehensive. Check out this resource:
- Informational Brief: Nutritional Labeling of Menu Items

SUPPLIER APPROVAL PROCESS

Evaluate and approve suppliers and distributors based on ability to supply safe food products. Consider a GFSI benchmarked certification scheme to ensure thoroughness, consistency, and traceability.

Contact a supply chain auditing company for more information.
BOOST YOUR OPERATIONS TO HELP MATURE YOUR FOOD SAFETY PROGRAM

■ DAILY OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE & POLICY

Write protocols [Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), Standard Sanitation Operating Procedures (SSOP), hygiene standards, food handling processes, allergen control, etc.] to provide clear direction, scheduling, and ensure consistent execution.

Rely on Steritech to help you build basic templates for SOPs, develop food safety manuals, and prepare new documents, or review existing documentation.

■ EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

Have an external party perform unannounced assessments to provide an objective measurement of compliance to regulatory requirements, written protocols, and procedures, individualized improvement plans for each location, required documentation of corrective actions, track trends across all locations, and evaluate employee food safety knowledge and behavior. The approach should highlight things done well, evaluate opportunities for improvement, and provide clear expectations for corrective actions.

Trust Steritech to provide the most comprehensive, rigorous, technically accurate and consistent assessments in the industry. We are a recognized leader in food safety assessments. Our people are the best and brightest in the industry, passionate about providing world-class service with genuine care and concern. Our breakthrough technology, OnBrand360®, is the industry's first integrated enterprise compliance management platform that can be customized to your organization, your business processes, your needs, providing online Corrective Action Plans with automated emails to management. Give us a call today to handle your external assessment program.

■ EMPLOYEE WELLNESS POLICY

Increase awareness around the symptoms and dangers of those foodborne illnesses. Create a policy for sick days and obtain a commitment by each employee not to come to work when ill.

Let Steritech help you develop an employee wellness policy and improve employees’ compliance with the protocol.
**JOB AIDS & POSTERS**

Post simple visual aids at a spot where they are needed to remind and reinforce proper food handling and food safety procedures – pictures will help overcome any language barriers.

Consult with Steritech to help you prepare new aids for client-specific policies and SOPs, and/or review existing visual aids such as these infographics:
- Infographic: 6 Key Things to Know About Cooling Foods
- Infographic: 4 Cool Tips for Maintaining Your Ice Machine

**SELF-ASSESSMENTS OF OPERATIONS**

Schedule assessments to be performed by internal personnel (in between external assessments) to verify program effectiveness, identify any issues, and ensure food safety every day.

Have Steritech help you develop a self assessment program and customize a form to meet your needs.
- Infographic: 5 Ways to be SMART about Corrective Actions

**OSHA COMPLIANCE**

Document all procedures and provide training to ensure compliance with OSHA standards. Avoid fines by reducing claims associated with slips, trips, falls, repetitive cuts, lifting, burns, equipment misuse, etc. Maintaining bodily fluid clean up kits help reduce risk.

Talk to Steritech about our Workplace Safety Assessments to evaluate physical and environmental safety, documentation, and training points – giving you an objective assessment of safety in your facility. Take a look at these helpful resources:
- Infographic: Workplace Safety in Foodservice
- Webinar: How a Real-time View Helps You Drive a Proactive Workplace

**PEST PREVENTION PROGRAM STANDARDS**

Review standards and develop policies to make sure that each location manager understands the minimum standards for an effective pest prevention program, the expectations for hiring a pest prevention vendor, and how they should respond to service reports.

Steritech is a leading commercial-only pest prevention provider. Have our team survey your current pest program and provide effective recommendations. Talk to us about delivering pest-free facilities through our Zero Tolerance® Pest Prevention Program in the safest, most effective manner possible with our EcoSensitive® approach. Check out this infographic:
- Infographic: 8 Easy Things Restaurants Don’t Do to Stop Pests
PLAN YOUR INTERNAL PROGRAMS

■ GAP ASSESSMENT

Have an independent consultant review documents, observe locations, and interview management to identify gaps in food safety program documentation and implementation. Having an objective third-party evaluate the food safety program is a good way to measure the food safety culture and establish a baseline for future initiatives.

Allow Steritech to help you identify areas in your food safety program that need improving. Our team has deep subject matter expertise to address your needs regarding quality management, operations, regulatory compliance, and sanitation.

■ PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE

Develop a written plan or schedule to maintain and repair your equipment regularly as a way to maximize lifespan of equipment and prevent interruption of business. You will reduce risks such as introduction of foreign objects from breakage and unsafe temperatures in hot/cold holding units.

Talk to Steritech about creating a regular preventative maintenance plan.

■ HAZARD ANALYSIS & CRITICAL CONTROL POINT (HACCP) PLAN

Create a proactive program that identifies critical control points in food preparation. Monitor the critical limits for the critical control points in order to minimize food safety risks. A HACCP Plan may be required in some jurisdictions and for some specialized processes. Voluntary HACCP can also be an effective part of your active managerial control.

Let Steritech help you develop and implement a successful HACCP program to ensure product safety and effective risk management. Our knowledgeable professionals will provide a comprehensive review of your facility and processes, and work with your team to identify areas of risk. Check out these informative resources:
- FDA Guide to Retail HACCP
- White Paper: Reduced Oxygen Packaging in Foodservice

■ FOOD DEFENSE PLAN

Reduce risks of intentional contamination by controlling unauthorized entry, pre-hire screening of employees, and training employees to monitor for intentional food adulteration and the proper response and escalation if an incident occurs.

Talk to Steritech about providing you a list of government resources for food defense planning.
CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Be prepared to avert or handle a crisis. Document protocols and standardize communication procedures for preventing and responding to crises such as foodborne illness claims, imminent health hazards, boil water advisories, utility interruptions, etc. in order to minimize damage and ensure information control as a crisis becomes public.

Let Steritech review your existing procedures or help prepare new documents so that you will be prepared if a disaster strikes. And, rely on our expert advice during crises on how to respond, recover, and revise your plan. Take a look at these informative documents:
- White paper: Power Outage Recovery
- Informational Brief: Response to Water Service Interruption/Boil Water Advisory
- Informational Brief: Hurricane Preparation and Recovery Tips
- Informational Brief: Tornado Recovery: Food and Operational Safety Following a Tornado
- White paper: Guidelines for Response to Vomiting and Diarrheal Incidents in Foodservice Establishments
- Foodborne Illness Crisis Guide: Steps to Help Prepare Your Facility for a Potential Foodborne Illness Crisis

HEALTH INSPECTION REVIEW & COMPLIANCE

Have all regulatory inspections reports from across the country flow into a standardized database with a consistent format so you can track trends and ensure proper response to regulatory action.

The Steritech Health Inspection Information Management System (HIIMS) offers a solution to health department retail food inspection reporting. Our highly trained HIIMS team will compile reports from all your locations and convert them into one common format, as laid out in the FDA Food Code Inspection Form. This report makes the vast array of styles and formats used across the country easier to compare. Steritech’s online reporting system enables quick and easy analysis of information, with the capacity to trend data in the same manner that the FDA trends retail food establishment performance outcomes.
FOLLOW INDUSTRY TRENDS & GLOBAL STANDARDS

■ INTEGRATED FOOD SAFETY CULTURE

Exemplify a food safety culture to employees. Leadership should model ideal food safety behaviors every day and keep food safety in mission statement, core values, budget, job descriptions, Key Performance Indicators (KPI), performance reviews, etc. Have Steritech assess your programs and identify opportunities to expand and improve food safety culture in such areas as your mission statement, management and team member’s proper food safety behaviors, and more.

■ NEW TECHNOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION

Stay aware and utilize the latest technological advancements such as remote automated temperature monitoring, automated checklists and reporting, online training, and more. Discuss the industry’s leading technology with Steritech to best evaluate what specific features would be important to your business.

■ INDUSTRY MEETINGS

Attend professional organization meetings to stay current on food safety trends, research, and regulations. Network with other food safety professionals to benchmark programs and share best practices. Check with Steritech regarding upcoming events. Our experts often speak at many of these meetings and can advise clients on appropriate options. Steritech could also stage and host meetings.

■ EXTERNAL CERTIFICATION

Align certification processes to global standards such as ISO 22000 or HACCP to enhance and challenge your food safety management programs and be prepared for compliance to applicable sections of FSMA for your organization. As your food safety programs mature, participation in a program such as the Malcolm Baldrige Performance Excellence Program can help shift focus from only food products and customer service to a much wider focus on performance excellence in a role-model organizational management system that can give your brand a competitive edge in the industry.

Check out these helpful resources:
- White Paper: Understanding FSMA of 2010
- White Paper: A Summary of the Proposed Rules for the Food Safety Modernization Act
If you’re ready to elevate your food safety program, connect with the experts at Steritech. Let’s have a discussion about which Integrated Food Safety Management System components can help your locations operate with best-in-class food safety and strengthen your brand protection. Give us a call at 800.868.0089.