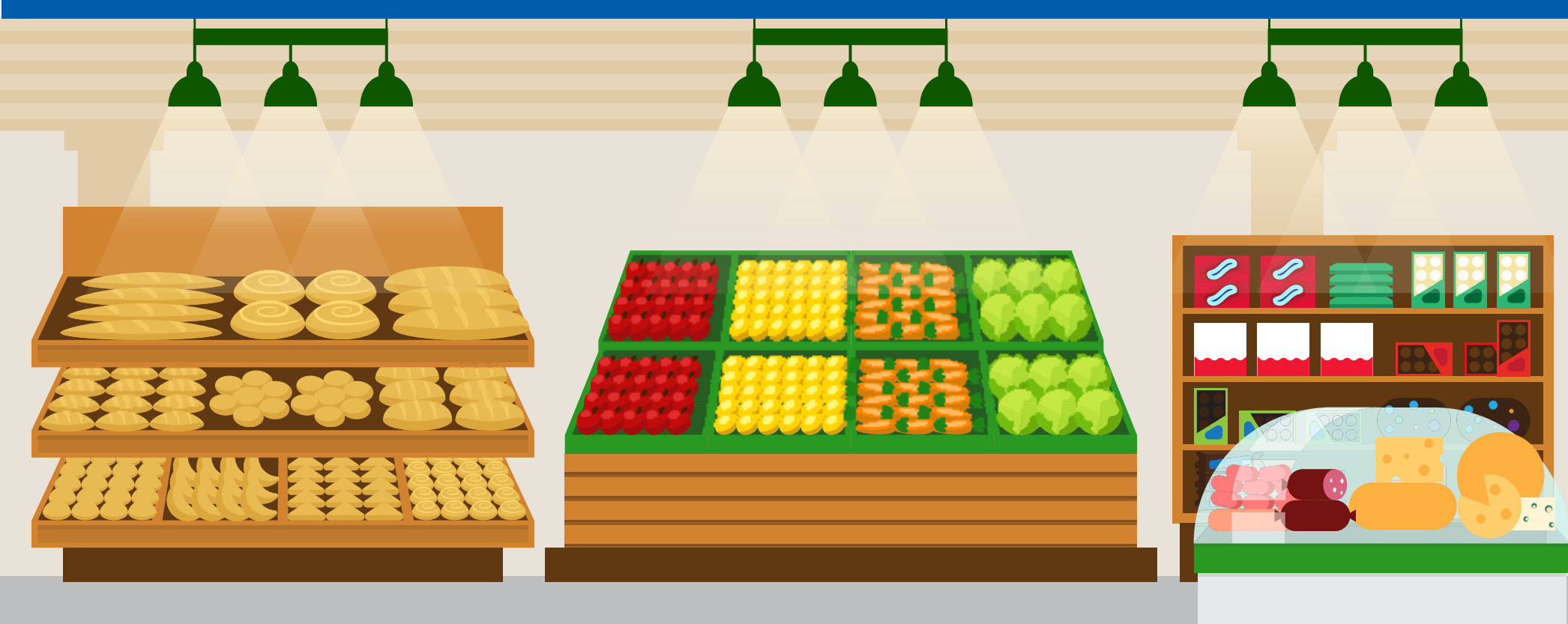


Top 10 Food Safety Challenges

GROCERY STORES AND SUPERMARKETS



In Grocery Stores and Supermarkets, several food preparation environments exist under one roof and food safety can look very different between them. However, in an analysis of data based on 6,000 assessments from OnBrand360® conducted in the first seven months of 2023, Steritech found that delis, bakeries, and produce departments overwhelmingly experienced the same challenges – with varying degrees of significance – ranked on average below.



TRAINING GAPS



LABOR SHORTAGES



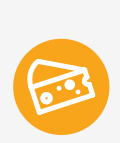
BUDGET LIMITATIONS



BAKERY



PRODUCE



DELI

1 Cleanliness of nonfood-contact surfaces: 8,574 violations

PRIMARY DRIVERS:

In produce, items like plastic curtains, drying racks, and wrapping machines quickly accumulate organic matter. Humidity can promote pathogen growth and cross-contamination in bakery proofers. Grease build-up is common on deli equipment like fryers and rotisseries. Create a structured schedule to ensure items are wiped down consistently.

2 General facility cleanliness: 6,120 violations

PRIMARY DRIVERS:

Food matter, dust, and other organic debris accumulate in high-traffic areas, as well as under hard-to-move equipment like ovens, refrigerators, range hoods, and display cases – which creates hospitable environments for pests and pathogens. Assign specific cleaning tasks for each shift and set aside time every week to deep clean under fixed equipment.

3 Condition of nonfood-contact surfaces: 4,717 violations

PRIMARY DRIVER:

Rising to one of the top three challenges across all departments, nonfood-contact surfaces include knife handles, cooler gaskets, shelves, and other objects that do not touch food directly. Cross-contamination can occur when items become worn, rusted, or damaged. Proper use and proactive maintenance can prolong the function and safety of these items.

NOTEWORTHY INCREASE IN 2023

4 Expired Food: 4,321 violations

PRIMARY DRIVERS:

Time- and temperature-controlled foods like rotisserie chicken, produce, dairy, and deli meats can become unsafe for consumption if not maintained in the correct conditions. It's important to keep accurate timers and logs, and develop procedures to ensure curbside orders are properly stored until pickup.

5 Potential contamination: 4,244 violations

PRIMARY DRIVERS:

Foods in deli cases, customer facing reach-in coolers, and walk-in freezers are vulnerable to dust accumulation and dripping moisture from fans or condensers. Covering food and regularly cleaning the storage environments can help prevent cross-contamination.

6 Cleanliness of food-contact surfaces: 2,158 violations

PRIMARY DRIVERS:

One of the top three challenges reported by all departments last year, the cleanliness of food-contact surfaces appears lower on the list of 2023 concerns. Nevertheless, it's important to monitor equipment like cutting boards, fruit corers, dough mixer paddles, tongs, and water chillers. Timers can help ensure items are cleaned every four hours.

7 Cold holding: 1,938 violations

PRIMARY DRIVER:

Improper cold holding of deli meats, dairy, and salad bar items can result in food spoilage and pathogen growth. Regular temperature monitoring and the use of chilled, insulated containers can help maintain food safety. Be sure to keep perishables at or below 41°F.

8 Date marking: 1,821 violations

PRIMARY DRIVER:

Food can become spoiled and spread pathogens if preparation and storage dates are not correctly recorded. Establish clear labeling guidelines that standardize the format and location of the date. A color-coded system can help simplify this process.

NEW IN 2023

9 Condition of food-contact surfaces: 1,626 violations

PRIMARY DRIVER:

Surfaces such as cutting boards, knife blades, meat slicers, whisks, and cooling racks deteriorate over time, which can cause cross-contamination and pose physical hazards. Maintaining a list of worn items can help stores prioritize replacements as budget allows.

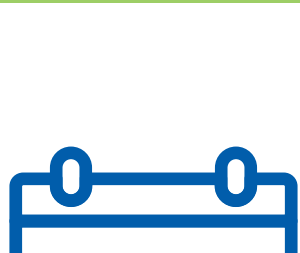
10 Department-specific challenges of note

- Clean food-contact surface storage: 161 violations
- Product identification: 160 violations

- Country of origin labeling: 378 violations
- Food/packing conditions: 151 violations
- Pest infestation: 109 violations

- Time alone - procedures/documentation: 490 violations

Are labor shortages, budget limitations, and training gaps causing departments to report nearly identical issues?



Sundays are shown to have the least amount of food safety violations on average.



Q4 had a 6% lower rate of food safety violations per assessment than the annual average in grocery stores.