

The HACCP Plan

Facilities that vacuum seal Temperature Control Safety (TCS) foods **MUST** develop and maintain an HACCP plan.

HACCP stands for Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points. HACCP is a management plan designed to control the risks to food throughout the food process.

An HACCP plan for vacuum sealing must include information such as:

- A complete description of the processing, packaging, and storage procedures;
- A description of how you will monitor and control the dangers to food;
- A list of acceptable products to be vacuum sealed;
- A list of equipment and supplies used;
- A description of the employee training program;
- A description of the procedure along with the frequency for cleaning and sanitizing food contact surfaces;
- A description of action to be taken if there is a deviation from your approved vacuum sealing process.



Hamilton County Public Health's Level 2 Food Safety Course is more extensive and encompasses two full days of training. The course offers food protection manager certification covering, in detail, microbiological concepts, HACCP and employee health, among other topics. All course materials are covered by registration costs. Please contact the Division of Environmental Health at 513-946-7800 if you have any questions regarding this opportunity.

Work With Us




Developing an HACCP plan will involve a lot of work and organization. If you have any questions during the process, we are always available for guidance.



Food Safety Training

HCPH offers a 2-hour Person in Charge Food Handler Training. Registration for the course is \$100 for any number of students. This fee includes all course materials and a certificate of attendance for all participants. Contact us to schedule training at your facility by calling the Environmental Health Division at (513) 946-7847.

**Contact us at
513-946-7800**

or on social media:   
@HamCoHealth



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Hamilton County Public Health

Vacuum Sealing + Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP)

The vacuum sealing process is becoming more common in food facilities. This process has some unique hazards. Because of this, there are certain requirements you must take to vacuum seal food in your facility.



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What is it?

Vacuum sealing food is the most common form of reduced oxygen packaging (ROP). Vacuum sealing foods essentially removes all oxygen from the packaged food item. This is desirable for many operators because removing oxygen from an environment will usually extend the shelf life of foods.

What is the Hazard?

Clostridium Botulinum or Botulism toxin (poison) can be produced by bacteria under anaerobic (no oxygen) conditions. Botulism is a serious illness that can lead to dry mouth, double vision, nervous system damage, paralysis, and death. Because botulism only grows in no oxygen environments, vacuumed sealed food is a big concern. *Listeria Monocytogenes* is also a pathogen of concern if a facility vacuum seals deli meats and cheeses.

What Needs to be Done at the Facility Level?

- The facility must develop and maintain an HACCP plan regarding the ROP process.
- Employees must be properly trained on ROP procedures and safety requirements.
- All ROP foods must be kept refrigerated under 41 °F or kept frozen at all times.
- Packaged ROP foods must be labeled “keep refrigerated” or “keep frozen.”
- Packaged ROP foods must have a use-by date on their label. This date can be a maximum of 14 days from the date of the vacuum sealing process.
- Foods must possess at least 2 of the following safety barriers before they can be vacuum sealed:
 - Refrigeration under 41 °F
 - Water activity (Aw) below .91
 - pH of less than 4.6
 - High levels of other organisms that prohibit the growth of *Clostridium Botulinum*
 - Meat/poultry products cured at a U.S. Department of Agriculture or Ohio Department of Agriculture regulated food plant
 - Frozen foods, provided that the product is maintained frozen before, during, and after the vacuum sealing. *Note: This is the ultimate safety barrier, and if foods are kept frozen before, during, and after, then this is the only safety barrier required.

- If fish products are going to be vacuum sealed, they must remain frozen before, during, and after packaging.



- You may repack commercially obtained products. These products must come from unopened packages, be vacuum sealed within 30 minutes of opening the package, and meet the safety barrier requirements.
- If not sold after 14 days, vacuum sealed foods must be discarded or destroyed.
- If food products are kept frozen before, during, and after the vacuum seal process, they must bear the label “Keep Frozen—use within 4 days of thawing.”
- Vacuum sealing must be performed in an area designated solely for this purpose.
- Vacuum sealing may only be done using commercial grade/NSF listed equipment.



Keep in Mind >>>

These requirements are in place to keep the food you offer to your customers safe for consumption.