

Safety Corner

What is HACCP?

A hazard analysis and critical control points system (HACCP) is commonly used in the food industry to systematically and proactively identify food safety hazards that may cause a food to be unsafe for human consumption at all stages of a food chain, from food production, packaging and distribution, to preparation and serving. Control measures can then be applied to control or eliminate physical, allergenic, chemical, and biological hazards in production processes, rather than relying on inspection of finished food product. HACCP consists seven key steps:

1. Conduct a hazard analysis to identify food safety hazards and design preventive measures to control these hazards.
2. Identify critical control points (CCP) which is a point, step, or procedure in a food manufacturing process at which control can be applied and, as a result, a food safety hazard can be prevented, eliminated, or reduced its risk to an acceptable level. The intent of HACCP is to focus on controlling the risks at CCPs. Redesign of the operation should be considered if a hazard which must be controlled is identified but no CCPs are found.
3. Establish critical limit, which is the maximum or minimum value to which physical, biological, or chemical risk must be controlled to an acceptable level at each CCP.
4. Establish a system to monitor activities that are necessary to ensure that the process is under control at each CCP at defined frequency.
5. Establish corrective actions to be taken when monitoring indicates that a deviation from an established critical limit at a particular CCP.
6. Establish verification and validation procedures to confirm that the HACCP system is adequate and working effectively.
7. Establish documentation concerning all procedures and records related to the above steps.

HACCP should be applied to each specific operation separately, reviewed and necessary changes made when any modification is made in the product, process, or any step.

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