



County of San Diego

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FOOD AND HOUSING DIVISION



OPERATOR GUIDANCE - COCKROACHES: HOW TO RESPOND?

The Food and Housing Division (FHD) of the Department of Environmental Health (DEH) is the local agency responsible for the oversight of retail food facilities. DEH-FHD protects public health and safety by implementing the Food Safety program throughout San Diego County. Permit Suspensions due to cockroach activity within critical areas of your food facility are serious. Ordering you to cease food service is necessary to immediately protect the general public from imminent health risks caused by cockroach infestation. Ceasing food service can also protect you, the operator, from incurring liability due to possible cockroach contamination of your customers' food.

This guidance document will assist the Food Facility Manager or Person in Charge (PIC) make necessary changes to reduce the amount of time your facility is closed due to cockroach activity and ensure that the facility can safely resume operations.

STEPS TO ELIMINATE COCKROACH ACTIVITY AT YOUR FACILITY

1. Pest Control - Eliminate the Cockroach Activity Safely and Quickly

We strongly recommend that a certified pest abatement/elimination company be contacted to eradicate the infestation that caused your permit to be suspended. While you could try eliminating the problem yourself, complicated issues such as cockroach activity are best left up to professionals that can treat your facility quickly and most importantly, safely. The chemicals that will be used to rid your facility of cockroaches are very poisonous, so it is important that you contract with a certified pest control operator licensed with the State of California. You can find lists of certified pest control companies in your local directory.

If you already have a service company under contract, call them and let them know that you need their services to abate a roach infestation at your facility. A certified pest control company will treat your facility, provide documentation of the service and let you know when it is safe to re-enter the building and begin the clean-up. Upon re-inspection, your Environmental Health Specialist (EHS Inspector) will request to see this documentation in order to ensure that it is safe to enter your facility. Inspectors will not conduct a re-inspection before you provide this information. Be advised that your permit will not be reinstated until all live cockroach activity has been completely eliminated.

2. Remove Dead and Dying Cockroaches, Clean and Sanitize

Effective treatment by your certified pest control company will abate the roach infestation. Once it is safe to re-enter your facility, it is time to clean up. Ensure all dead and dying cockroaches are removed, including the egg casings carried by the adult female cockroaches. Failure to remove the egg casings could result in re-infestation weeks later as numerous live nymph-staged cockroaches that survived the initial pesticide treatment can emerge. Ensure all affected surfaces are thoroughly washed and sanitized. Your health permit can only be reinstated after all affected surfaces are cleaned and sanitized properly.

3. Eliminate Harborage Areas Associated with the Infestation

Now that you have successfully eliminated all cockroach activity and removed the evidence of infestation through cleaning and sanitizing, it is important to take steps to prevent reoccurrence. Eliminate gaps in the walls, ceiling, shelving, or other deteriorated surfaces that can serve as future harborage areas and pose a barrier to effective pest control. **BE SURE TO DO THIS BEFORE** requesting a re-inspection.

4. Use this Checklist to Track your Progress Prior to Reopening

Do not call for a re-inspection until all of the following items have been completed:

Eliminate live cockroaches by approved methods

Use a certified/licensed pest control operator. Make sure to remove all excess clutter, cardboard and personal belongings from the facility. This will allow for effective pest control service and prevent future harborage of cockroaches and other vermin.

Enter your facility only after it is safe to do so; clean and sanitize all food contact surfaces

This includes all food contact surfaces that were exposed to the spotting, live or dead cockroaches and any pesticides used. It is vital to remove egg casings left behind by dead/dying cockroaches, since each egg case can contain up to 32 viable "baby" cockroaches capable of surviving the initial pest control service. Break the life cycle of the cockroaches.

Eliminate harborage points/areas completely

The EHS Inspector assigned to conduct the re-inspection will be looking specifically at the area in your facility where the original infestation occurred. Harborage areas must be eliminated. After which, a full routine inspection will be conducted and any further evidence of live cockroach activity will result in your facility not being reopened.

Have your pest control service documentation available

The EHS Inspector will review this documentation to ensure that it is safe to enter the facility for re-inspection. You must have documentation available for re-inspection.

SAVE TIME AND MONEY

If you have not completed the above checklist, **DO NOT REQUEST A RE-INSPECTION.** The assigned EHS Inspector will not be able to reinstate your Health Permit unless all the actions listed above have been completed. Repeat inspections will be subject to re-inspection fees.

AFTER-ACTION PREVENTION STEPS

The Food Facility Manager or PIC is responsible for conducting initial and ongoing food facility assessments to ensure consistent compliance with food safety requirements and for training employees to prevent future cockroach infestations.

To maintain a cockroach-free facility, it is important that you train employees so they routinely complete the following procedures:

- Inspect all deliveries and refuse any that have signs of cockroach activity
- Reject any products that show signs of infestation to prevent future cockroach activity
- Regularly and thoroughly clean your facility to remove accumulated food residues and debris
- Regularly repair and maintain your facility to eliminate possible harborage for cockroaches
- Routinely inspect your own facility and look for signs of cockroach activity
- Contract and maintain a monthly service with a certified pest control operator