

# Food Safety Scoop



Brought to you by the Yavapai County Food Safety Industry Council

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## Special Points of Interest

- Mobile Devices, Friend or Foe?
- Dirtier than a Toilet Seat
- Preventive Measures
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This newsletter is brought to you by the Yavapai County Food Safety Industry Council, which is a joint collaboration between Yavapai County Community Health Services and the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension.

The FSIC meets bimonthly to discuss issues in the food service industry and ways to bring food safety information to the public.

For more information, please call 928-445-6590 ext. 227 or visit our website at: [extension.arizona.edu/yavapai/](http://extension.arizona.edu/yavapai/)

## Mobile Devices, Friend or Foe?

Today's restaurants are increasingly using digital technology in kitchens and moving away from clipboards and pens to streamline and simplify restaurant operations. Mobile phones, tablets and other PEDs (personal electronic devices) are used for a variety of reasons including reviewing online

menus, taking customers orders, paying bills, or tracking inventory; however, this technology comes with a price. Topping the list of complaints of PED use in restaurants from food service managers are interference with work, reduction in productivity, speed, quality, and safety.

Newly developed industry "best practices" are emerging to help restaurant employees focus on using this technology safely throughout their daily operations.

This issue focuses on PEDs as they relate food safety in food establishments.

## Dirtier than a Toilet Seat

Did you know that PEDs are dirtier than toilet seats? A study by the University of Arizona found that cell-phones carry 10 times more bacteria than most toilet seats. E.coli, salmonella, norovirus, staph, and gonorrhea are a few examples of the bacteria and viruses identified on PEDs.

A survey conducted by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), released information on the use of PEDs in the kitchen while preparing food.

The survey covered three areas about using PEDs: 1.) usage frequency and purpose while cooking, 2.) hand washing and PED washing while cooking, and 3.) level of concern for cross-contamination from PEDs while cooking.

Survey sample questions included, "Do you ever use a telephone, cell phone, smartphone, tablet, laptop, or computer while preparing food (to look up a recipe or take a call)?", "Which one do you handle most often while preparing food?", "After you touch your (most frequently used device) while preparing food, what do you do next?"

The results of the survey concluded that 49 percent of respondents reported using a PED while cooking, from a few times per week to every day. Cell phones (including smartphones) were the PEDs most commonly used while preparing food. Sixty-five percent of the participants reported the use of a cell phone for finding or checking a recipe, texting, using social media sites, watching videos, and listening to music.



The link between PEDs and the potential cross-contamination of microorganisms reflects the hand washing behavior of food handlers. Many respondents reported being vigilant about washing their hands with soap and water when preparing raw meat or poultry and less likely to wash their hands after touching a PED.

When directly asked about the concern for cross-contamination from PEDs to food, about half of the participants were more concerned about transferring bacteria from food onto their phones, potentially ruining them.

## Preventive Measures

A variety of preventive measures exist to prevent cross-contamination from PEDs, such as “clean screens” procedures. “Clean screens” means that your team must commit to consistent and thorough cleaning of all PEDs and shared screens in the establishment.

Consider the schedules for cleaning other equipment in a facility. Is the cleaning schedule hourly, per shift, or daily? What methods sanitizers will be used to thoroughly clean the PEDs on the premise? How can restaurants successfully decrease the number of bacteria and virus on screens?

Here are three simple steps to include in your current food safety plan.

1. **Clean everything.** Every surface, every tool, every item in a restaurant is in need of cleaning at regular intervals during hours of operation. Add cleaning screens to this work list. Additionally, require employees to wash their hands after using mobile devices and before touching food, surfaces and/or equipment.
2. **Make a schedule.** Scheduling when a Point of Sale (POS) system or other PEDs get disinfected is an effective way to ensure everyone is

participating. This will eliminate your staff from wondering when a screen was last wiped down.

3. **Sanitize.** Keeping up on cleaning during hectic shifts is hard to do; not every job gets done according to schedule. End shifts with a more thorough sanitizing step of the restaurant’s electronic devices. Screen wipes or touchscreen-safe *antimicrobial spray* and a *microfiber cloths* help reduce the growth of harmful bacteria.

## Mobile Hygiene Movement

A movement begins when a community forms around a common goal. Creating a personal electronic device policy for your establishment begins with knowing the action you want your employees to take to reduce contamination from electronic screens.

Experienced restaurant owners understand what is at stake and some employers restrict the use of personal PEDs in both the front of the house and the back of the house. Restricting the use of these devices

reduces problems related of interference with work and cross-contamination.

Consider the following steps when creating a movement in your establishment.

1. Lay out the specific policy changes.
2. Educate your employees on why you are making the policy change.
3. Make it popular by showing your staff how the media is covering this topic and how the industry is

approaching the movement as a whole.

4. Set up communication and encourage employees to participate.
5. Get noticed by reaching out to the press and let your local community know about the movement in your facility.
6. Allow for mistakes and time to implement the policy change.
7. Provide encouragement and be the source of motivation for your staff.

## Quiz

1. Cell phones are \_\_\_ times dirtier than toilet seats.
  - A. 2
  - B. 50
  - C. 10
  - D. 100
2. Preventive measures for “clean screen” procedures include:
  - A. Clean everything
  - B. Make a schedule
  - C. Sanitize
  - D. All of the above
3. Food handlers report being vigilant about washing their hands with soap and water after
  - A. Touching PEDs
  - B. Preparing raw meat or poultry
  - C. Fixing their hair
  - D. Drinking from a cup
4. There is an increase in the use of digital technology in food establishments.
 

True or False?
5. Food handlers were more concerned about transferring bacteria from food onto their
  - A. Aprons
  - B. Cutting Boards
  - C. Phones
  - D. Shoes
6. PEDs stand for personal electronic devices.
 

True or False?

### Resources:

1. Smartphones, tablets, other PEDs bringing bacteria into the kitchen. [www.foodsafetynews.com](http://www.foodsafetynews.com)
2. Lando, A., Bazaco, M., & Chen, Y. (2018). Consumers' use of personal electronic devices in the kitchen. *Journal of Food Protection*, 81(3).

Answers: 1.C 2.D 3.B 4.T 5.C 6.T