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INTERPRETIVE MEMORANDUM

TO: All Local Health Departments  
Attn.: Health Officer/Director of Environmental Health/Chief Sanitarian

FROM: Food Service Sanitation Section  
Food and Dairy Division

SUBJECT: **Guide To Ventilation Requirements in Food Service Establishments**

The purpose of this memorandum is to summarize the responsibilities of local health departments (LHDs) regarding ventilation requirements in food service establishments under the Michigan Food Law of 2000. This document covers:

- Background of the state and local health department responsibility
- Summary of the requirements of the Michigan Food Law of 2000 on ventilation
- Three options available to the local health departments

**Background of the state and local health department responsibility**

MDA and LHDs, as delegated, have responsibility and authority to ensure adequate ventilation exists in food service establishments. The Michigan Department of Consumer and Industry Services (MDCIS), Mechanical Division, has responsibility for the design, construction, and installation approval of mechanical ventilation systems in Michigan. All commercial exhaust systems installed in Michigan must obtain a mechanical permit prior to installation. These must all be engineered systems.

The MDCIS – Mechanical Division is in the process adopting the 2000 version of the International Mechanical Code, which will become the Michigan Mechanical Code and the requirement in every jurisdiction in Michigan. This is expected by December 2000 or early in 2001. The department will reference FI -189, “Description of Ventilation - Food Service Establishments” for this document so that local health departments and all mechanical inspectors statewide will be referencing the same guidelines for design, construction, and the installation of ventilation systems for food service establishments

**Summary of the requirements of the Michigan Food Law of 2000 on ventilation**

The Michigan Food Law of 2000 specifies that MDA and LHDs have the responsibility and authority to enforce the following:

1. Exhaust ventilation shall be designed, constructed, and installed in compliance with applicable state law.
2. A ventilation balance report shall be provided to the director for all new or remodeled ventilation systems in food service establishments. The ventilation balance report shall agree with the air quantities stipulated on the approved plans and specifications for the installation.
3. The total building exhaust and make-up air, if provided, shall be balanced to within plus or minus 0.02-inch water gauge, according to the approved plans.
4. All cooking equipment and exhaust systems shall be at operating temperature during the ventilation test. Containers of water shall be placed over ignited open flame burners to minimize the jet influence of open burners.
5. A smoke test (or equivalent method to determine capture) shall be performed to determine reasonable performance of the ventilation system.

**Options available to local health departments**

Under the Michigan Food Law of 2000, and in conjunction and cooperation with the MDCIS – Mechanical Division, three options are available to local health departments to assure that exhaust ventilation systems will be designed, constructed and installed according to law. Your department's three options are as follows:

1. A local health department may choose to continue as required prior to November 8, 2000. They would assume responsibility for reviewing the plans, watching construction, and assuring the system is installed according to law. (**NOTE:** Because a permit is required by MDCIS for commercial ventilation systems, the mechanical inspector will still review and approve construction and installation of any installed system.)
2. A local health department reviews the ventilation plan proposal and determines based upon the plans, and subsequent calculations that the ventilation system would work as proposed. They would then work in conjunction with MDCIS - Mechanical Division or their local mechanical inspector to assure the ventilation system met construction standards and was installed correctly. They would receive some form of notification from the mechanical inspector of this.
3. The MDCIS – Mechanical Division performs the review of the ventilation system, and approves the installation. They would accept the engineered plans, and if a problem arose due to the plans, work with the engineer to resolve any issues prior to approval.

Irrespective of which option is chosen, the local health department must receive an air balance test report with the results agreeing with the air quantities stipulated on the approved plans. The local health department then performs a smoke test (or equivalent) to determine reasonable performance of the ventilation system.

A system of communication must exist between the local health department and the subsequent mechanical inspectors to assure that ventilation systems have been reviewed, constructed and installed correctly, and for questions or problems that may arise as a result of design, construction, installation and testing.

A complete listing of the state mechanical inspectors may be found attached.

NDF:ALA:khg

cc: MDA Food Program Staff  
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