



Safe Food, Water, & Air

Objective:

Protect the health of communities

Strategy:

Ensure safety of food, air, and water

Why is this strategy important?

Safe food, water, and air are critical to the overall health of the community, and King County works in several areas to preserve the safety of these factors.

How is our performance?

King County monitors restaurants for five critical risk factors. Inspections with red violations indicate the presence of risk factors that increase the risk of foodborne illness. Currently, King County Environmental Health staff finds that about 38 percent of their inspections result in at least one violation, such as inadequate hand washing. This proportion of inspections that include detection of violations is slightly lower than in recent years.

King County had no waterborne outbreaks in 2011 and 22 confirmed foodborne outbreaks. An outbreak is occurrence of disease greater than would otherwise be expected at a particular time and place. In 2011 there were 37 confirmed foodborne illness complaints, which are individual reports of illness related to food exposure. Given that King County has over 1.9 million residents, King County's monitoring and inspection and enforcement efforts are successful.

Asthma hospitalization is a marker for poorly controlled asthma. A portion of asthma hospitalizations is caused by outdoor air pollution, although risk of hospitalization is also related to exposure to indoor air triggers, other triggers and availability of adequate primary care and effective medication and management. King County averages 1,311 asthma hospitalizations per year, a rate of 72 per 100,000 population. Asthma hospitalizations are highest for our youngest and older residents, but over the past ten years, rates have declined for children, young adults and adults over 65.

What can you do?

To protect the quality of food in our community and your own health, you can

- Follow permit/licensing regulations.
- Follow food preparation and hand washing instructions if you work in the food industry, and stay home from work if you're sick.

- Don't harvest shellfish when beaches are closed..

To protect the quality of air in our community and your own health, you can:

- Use less energy and use energy more efficiently.
- Heat smart with wood stoves and fireplaces.
- Make sure your indoor air quality at home is safe from mold and minimize other common asthma triggers such as tobacco smoke.
- Encourage your place of work, worship or other community establishment to go smoke-free.
- Bike or walk to work or use public transportation or carpool to reduce vehicle air emissions.

To protect the quality of water in our community and your own health, you can:

- Take your car to a car wash -- in order to avoid run-off of soaps and chemicals into storm drains.
- Avoid dumping or allowing chemicals into storm drains, even accidentally -- look for natural yard care alternatives without pesticides, dispose of pet waste, and take chemicals to appropriate recycling or waste facilities.
- Build and operate pools and spas safely to avoid water-borne illness.
- Keep your on-site septic system repaired and up-to-date to avoid water contamination.
- Safely dispose of old household hazardous wastes through local collection services.
- Properly dispose of your left-over medicines at a drug take-back program.

As a business, you can:

- Follow Federal, state and local regulations that protect our food, air and water quality.
- Learn about how you can be certified as an environmentally-friendly business through King County's EnviroStars program.

Moving forward

Measuring the safety of food, water, and air is challenging given funding constraints and multiple jurisdictions with responsibility for multiple parts of these broad areas. King County will improve measurements for safe food and water and air by promoting cross-departmental efforts in King County government, working with local partners, and using limited resources efficiently.

King County hopes to increase the proportion of food establishments meeting safety standards through training efforts, increasing the accessibility of training materials for non-English speakers, and educational visits that complement inspection visits.

King County will continue to support efforts to expand residents' access to healthy foods, smoke-free environments and clean water, through policies, systems and environmental changes that can contribute to our community's health.

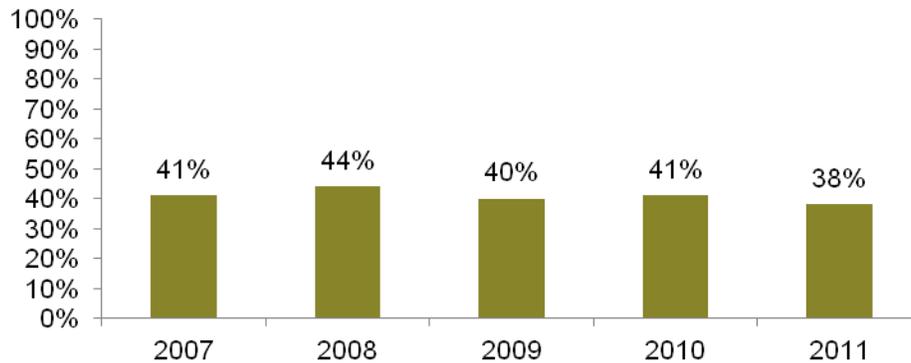
Related Links

[King County Food Protection Program](#)

[King County Community Health Indicators \(including asthma hospitalization detail data\)](#)

Charts and Maps

Proportion of Restaurant Inspections with Red Violations



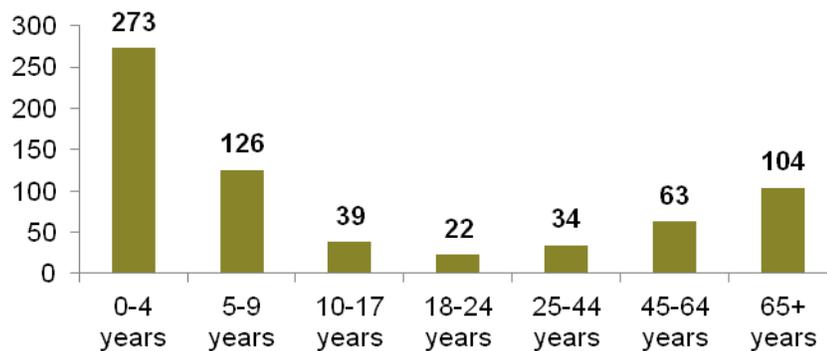
Data Source: Public Health-Seattle & King County, Environmental Health Division

2011 King County Food and Waterborne Disease Outbreaks

	Number Confirmed
Foodborne outbreaks	22
Foodborne illness complaints	37
Waterborne outbreaks	0

Data Source: Public Health-Seattle & King County, Environmental Health Division

Asthma Hospitalizations per 100,000 King County Residents



Data from Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics. Rate calculated based on data averaged from 2006-2010 and prepared by Public Health-Seattle & King County

Rate of Asthma Hospitalization

