Virtual Food Safety Inspection Guide

Virtual Food Inspections
- Useful for low-risk activities (i.e., follow-ups, education, compliance assistance)
- Should be used as an additional tool, not in place of in-person inspections

In-Person Food Inspections
- The gold standard
- Critical for high-risk public health threats (i.e., complaints, permit renewals, major non-compliance)

Elements of a Successful Virtual Food Inspection:

Documents
- Required:
  - Facility Layout
  - Equipment List
  - Menu(s)
  - List of Special Food Processes
  - Food Handler’s Certificate
- If Applicable
  - Completed Permit Application
  - Paid Inspection Fee

Tools
- Required by Business Owner:
  - Device capable of video and audio
  - Sufficient Internet/Wi-Fi Connection
  - Light Meter or access to a Light Meter Application
  - Calibrated Thermometer
  - Sanitizing Test Kits

Facility Evaluation
- Sink Areas (Water Temperatures)
- Dishwashing Areas (Sanitation Levels)
- Food Holding/Refrigeration Areas (Heating/Cooling Temperatures)

Final Report
Instead of receiving a physical signature from the business owner, inspectors must now request an acknowledgment email for receipt of the final report.
Virtual inspections involve business owners and people-in-charge to a higher degree, which improves dialogue between the business and inspectors, develops better relationships between the parties, and leads to valuable experience.

**Featured States:**

**Hawaii**
Established a checklist for the Owner/Operator of a Food Establishment that prepared them for the pre-operational inspection.

**South Carolina**
Developed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that includes a checklist and picture references for virtual inspections, which facilitated over 42,000 virtual food inspections in 2 years during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Virginia**
Created inspection guidance that addressed special considerations allowing pre-operational, complaint, and follow-up inspections to be conducted virtually.