



Scores on Doors

Hygiene and food safety



Retail food business rating program: guideline

December 2015

1 Scores on Doors program

1.1 Greater visibility of compliance, enables consumer choices

The Scores on Doors program publishes the hygiene and food safety inspection result achieved by NSW retail food premises. The program rates participating food business' compliance with NSW food safety legislation with an emphasis on the food handling practices linked to foodborne illness. This assessment, using a standardised checklist and points scheme, results in a score that summarises the outcome. When displayed prominently consumers can use this score to help them decide where to eat or buy food. The score can also be published on websites.

Scores on Doors is designed to reward well-performing businesses, drive food safety culture and ultimately reduce foodborne illness.

It is an incentive for businesses to improve and maintain a high level of hygiene and food safety. Additionally, it is designed to create incentives for businesses to improve their compliance with regulatory requirements. Scores on Doors demonstrates to customers the business has been inspected and they can be confident about food safety.

For councils, better compliance means less follow up inspections and can free up valuable resources to target other areas.

1.2 Participating in Scores on Doors

Scores on Doors is open to eligible retail food businesses operating within participating council areas. The program is currently voluntary and has been operating in various forms since July 2010.

In 2013, at the Minister's request, a working group was formed to make a range of improvements to the program to make it easier for councils and businesses to participate. These guidelines reflect those improvements.

2 How the program works

2.1 Applies to higher-risk retail food service businesses

The Scores on Doors program is for retail food businesses which process and sell food in NSW that is:

- ready-to-eat
- potentially hazardous (i.e. requires temperature control)
- for immediate consumption.

These businesses include:

- restaurants
- take away shops
- pub bistros
- hotels
- cafes
- bakeries
- clubs.

The program is not intended for supermarkets, delicatessens, low risk food premises or those selling pre-packaged food such as petrol service stations or greengrocers, temporary markets, mobile food vending vehicles or retail premises licensed and separately audited by the Food Authority such as butchers.

2.2 Uses existing council inspection program

Council officers use the unannounced periodic inspection system currently in place to conduct Scores on Doors inspections using the standard Food Premises Assessment Report (FPAR). They calculate a hygiene and food safety score as part of that inspection process.

- Council officers do not conduct additional inspections solely for the purposes of determining a hygiene and food safety score unless the business has requested a follow up visit (and this service is available from council – see 2.6 Reinspection requests from businesses, below).

Please note that a rating is only determined during an unannounced inspection which looks at all the elements set out on the FPAR. Announced or partial inspections, e.g. short follow up inspections, are not used to determine the score.

2.3 Uses standardised inspection checklist

During an inspection, food businesses are assessed using the Food Premises Assessment Report (FPAR). The content of the FPAR has been developed in consultation with NSW councils and is based on legislative requirements of the Food Standards Code (FSC)¹, *Food Act 2003* (NSW) and Food Regulation 2015. The FPAR is designed to be used as a compliance checklist and includes a points system from which a hygiene and food safety score (Good, 3 stars; Very good, 4 stars; Excellent, 5 stars) is determined. An example of the FPAR can be viewed at:

[www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/ Documents/industry_pdf/food_premises_assessment_report.pdf](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/Documents/industry_pdf/food_premises_assessment_report.pdf)



¹ Australian and New Zealand Food Standards Code, chapters 1 and 3.

Points on the FPAR are issued for certain breaches related to level of potential food safety risk, ranging from 1 point (minor) to 8 points (critical). Guidance on assigning demerit points in particular circumstances is contained in *Food Premises Assessment Report (FPAR) guideline*, which should be used where a range of points could be assigned because of a particular breach. The guideline is available at:

www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/rp/scoresondors/local-council-resources

Where a 'critical' food safety breach is found during the inspection – that is, a score of 8 points in the categories listed on the FPAR – the business is automatically ineligible for a rating and is assigned to 'No Grade', irrespective of the total points accrued.

If a critical food safety issue is identified during the inspection, it is dealt with by the inspector according to the council's enforcement guidelines, based on *NSW Food Authority Compliance & Enforcement Policy*. Under the enforcement guidelines, council officers use a range of enforcement tools depending on the severity of the issue. Enforcement tools can include warning letters, penalty notices, prohibition orders, seizure notices and prosecution. View the Food Authority's enforcement policy at:

www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/Documents/industry/compliance_enforcement_policy.pdf

2.4 After an inspection, generates a hygiene and food safety rating

After the council officer completes the inspection checklist, the points received by the business are tallied and a corresponding hygiene and food safety rating is assigned.

Points	Score	Definition
0-3	Excellent ★★★★★	The highest expected level of compliance with hygiene and food safety standards.
4-8	Very good ★★★★	Very good hygiene and food safety practices. Some minor areas need to be addressed to get a higher result.
9-15	Good ★★★	Good general standard of hygiene and food safety. Some non-critical areas need attention to get a higher result.

At the end of the inspection, the council officer can discuss the rating with the business contact, explain the program and offer them the appropriate display certificate on the spot. This proactive approach has been shown to increase participation in the Scores on Doors program. The Food Authority has produced a business brochure for council officers to give to businesses with the certificate, available from:

www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/rp/scoresondors/local-council-resources.

2.5 Hygiene and food safety score displayed at premises

The council officer provides participating business with a certificate for prominent display which shows the hygiene and food safety score achieved during the inspection. The certificate can be provided by council immediately after the inspection – the preferred and easiest option. Alternatively, it can be mailed to the business.

The certificate should be displayed at each public entrance to the food business or in a prominent location where food is ordered. The certificate should be displayed until:

- it expires, as marked on the certificate by the issuing officer
- it is replaced by a new certificate from the council –the businesses must display only the most current certificate
- the business becomes ineligible for the certificate – see section 2.7 for more information.



Displaying an out-of-date or false certificate is considered misleading conduct and action may be taken as appropriate.

2.6 Reinspection requests from businesses

From time to time a business may request a reinspection in order to improve its rating.

It remains optional for councils to decide whether to make reinspections available in their council area. The Food Authority recommends that councils provide advice to businesses about their reinspection policy. For councils that do offer a reinspection option, the Food Authority recommends:

- councils determine clear guidelines for businesses making requests for reinspection
- businesses should be advised whether their request is accepted and a reinspection will be undertaken
- only one reinspection should be undertaken during the standard inspection period
- unannounced reinspections should be undertaken within three months of council approving the request to reinspect
- reinspections are charged at the rate recommended in the Food Regulation 2015.

Irrespective of whether reinspection is available complaints from businesses about how inspections were conducted should be dealt with under councils' standard complaints handling processes.

Councils without the resources to accommodate the provision of reinspections may wish to consider outsourcing this to third party providers.

2.7 Certain instances may result in removal of certificate

Council officers often conduct inspections outside the routine inspection program due to complaints or other information. In these circumstances a new score can be calculated if the inspection is unannounced and all elements in the FPAR are covered by the inspection. If this results in a change to the businesses' rating the previous certificate must be removed and a new certificate may be issued (depending on the score received).

In circumstances where inspection of all FPAR elements is not undertaken, but the inspection indicates a critical food safety breach that would automatically render the business ineligible for a grade, the existing certificate may be removed.

2.8 Participating is voluntary

The Scores on Doors program is currently not legislated and is based on voluntary participation by councils and food businesses falling within the scope of the program.

Businesses participating in the program:

- should display the certificate on the front window of the premises or in a prominent location where food is ordered
- can promote their participation in the program and score in their own marketing, including utilise the appropriate scoring web badge provided by the Food Authority on their own websites
- be aware that councils and/or the Food Authority may publish scores on their websites.

2.9 Disclosure of information

Councils may display information about the businesses that participate in the Scores on Doors program and their scores consistent with relevant legislation. Councils should seek their own legal advice in this situation.

2.10 Expiry date for certificates

Expiry date of the certificate should be set based on the councils expected minimum frequency, which takes into consideration the businesses' food safety risk profile and compliance history. Where compliance history is considered it should be based on the results of at least two inspection cycles.

For most businesses eligible to participate in the program, the expiry period will usually be the end of the next 12 month inspection period. For medium risk businesses that achieve an 'Excellent (five star)' score in two consecutive inspections, expiry dates may be set on an 18 month cycle. High risk businesses may be inspected more frequently, as appropriate.