



Contra  
Costa  
County

To: Board of Supervisors  
From: William Walker, M.D., Health Services Director  
Date: March 8, 2016

Subject: Introduce ordinance establishing an environmental health color-coded placard program for food facilities

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### **RECOMMENDATION(S):**

INTRODUCE Ordinance No. 2016-08, establishing an environmental health color-coded placard program for food facilities, WAIVE reading, and FIX March 15, 2016 for adoption.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

The costs to administer the food facility placard program will be covered by existing permit fees. There will be no impact to the county's general fund, as the Environmental Health Division is fully cost covered by fees.

### **BACKGROUND:**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are over 47 million food-borne illness outbreaks every year in the United States. And it is estimated that forty percent of the food-borne illness outbreaks are associated with retail food establishments.

Environmental Health is proposing amendments to the county code to implement the Green Yellow Red Food Placarding program. Placarding programs have been shown in other jurisdictions to reduce reportable food-borne illness. The placarding program is part of

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☒ APPROVE

☐ OTHER

☒ RECOMMENDATION OF CNTY ADMINISTRATOR

☐ RECOMMENDATION OF BOARD COMMITTEE

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Action of Board On: **03/08/2016** ☒ APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED ☐ OTHER

Clerks Notes:

### **VOTE OF SUPERVISORS**

AYE: John Gioia, District I Supervisor  
Candace Andersen, District II Supervisor  
Mary N. Piepho, District III Supervisor  
Karen Mitchoff, District IV Supervisor  
Federal D. Glover, District V Supervisor

I hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of an action taken and entered on the minutes of the Board of Supervisors on the date shown.

ATTESTED: March 8, 2016

David Twa, County Administrator and Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

By: June McHuen, Deputy

Contact: Marilyn Underwood,  
692-2521

Environmental Health's goal to improve food handling practices

## BACKGROUND: (CONT'D)

and protect public safety in Contra Costa food establishments.

The public is very interested in easily accessible information, and this placard system will provide easy access about food safety for that food facility. Food facility operators also have an interest because evidence of safe food handling practices tends to increase customers' trust and thus is good for business. The proposed placard program will supplement the online and smartphone app posting of food facility inspection results with a posting of the facility's food safety rating at its entrance.

In developing the placard program, Environmental Health considered food rating models that have been implemented, and chose to be consistent with other Bay Area counties in choosing the Green Yellow Red placard system. Currently, Alameda, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Marin, and Sonoma are using the Green Yellow Red placarding system. Environmental Health discussed and received feedback about the program details with 25 food facility operators at two focus groups held in October 2015. Additionally, a letter was sent in early December to 8,000 postal addresses and 2,300 email addresses associated with the 4,000 food facilities in the county reminding them of the proposed plan, inviting them to five meetings held in December, and referring them to the website where a video and other materials describe the placarding program ([cchealth.org/placard](http://cchealth.org/placard)).

The Green Yellow Red Program would visually inform the public of the compliance record of food establishments with a colored placard posted near the entrance to the facility. The colors will mimic a traffic light with green for "go" or "pass"; yellow for "conditional pass"; or red for "stop" or "closed". The color code placard is intended to:

- be easy to understand;
- increase public awareness;
- lead to increased compliance and food safety; and
- reduce food-borne illness factors.

The provisions of the ordinance are explained in more detail below:

The proposed ordinance adds Article 413-3.18 to the County Ordinance Code to establish a program consisting of color-coded placards and official inspection reports.

A placard indicates that Environmental Health has inspected a food facility to determine whether the food facility is in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws pertaining to the protection of public health. The placard color is based upon inspection results. Green is used to indicate that a food facility has passed an inspection. Yellow is used to indicate that a food facility has conditionally passed an inspection. A yellow placard signifies that two or more violations exist at a food facility, and that the food facility must meet certain conditions to receive a green placard. Red is used to indicate that a food facility has not passed an inspection, its environmental health permit is suspended, and it is closed.

When Environmental Health issues a placard, it will also issue an official inspection report. The report is a notice that documents whether the food facility complies with all

applicable federal, state, and local laws pertaining to the protection of public health, and describes all actions necessary to correct all violations noted in the report.

After a food facility is inspected and issued a placard, it is unlawful to operate a food facility unless the placard is posted so as to be clearly visible to the general public and to patrons entering the food facility. The ordinance makes it illegal to deface, mar, camouflage, hide, or remove a placard.

#### CONSEQUENCE OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

#### CHILDREN'S IMPACT STATEMENT:

#### ATTACHMENTS

Ordinance No. 2016-08