


Root Causes Overview

Root causes are the reasons outbreaks occur. They are sometimes called environmental antecedents. Identifying root causes can help determine the steps needed to stop the outbreak and prevent future ones. Explore the **five categories of root causes** below, along with **examples** of each within the context of restaurant outbreaks.

For more information on root causes and reporting them through CDC's National Environmental Assessment Reporting System, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/restaurant-food-safety/php/investigations/nears.html>


People


- Lack of food safety culture
- Lack of managerial oversight
- Language barrier
- High turnover
- Lack of employee training on specific processes
- Insufficient staffing


Equipment

- Insufficient capacity of equipment
- Improper use of equipment
- Lack of preventive maintenance of equipment
- Poor facility layout


Economics

- Lack of needed supplies for operating the restaurant
- Lack of sick leave or other financial incentives to adhere to good employee health practices


Processes

- Insufficient processes to mitigate the hazard
- Employees or managers not following the facility's processes


Food

- Food not treated as time-temperature control for safety



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