

BETTER DOCUMENTATION = BETTER AUDIT SCORES



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Service records explain what the pest management professional did during every visit to the facility.

If you were to ask ten food safety auditors to name the most important thing a food manufacturer can provide during inspection, you can bet that detailed documentation would come up time and time again, especially when it comes to pest control. The fact is, facilities with thorough documentation will score better than those without it.

For fruit and vegetable processors, maintaining an effective pest control program and documenting it carefully should be a top priority for two reasons. The first, of course, is the low “acceptable threshold”—typically zero—for pest presence in a setting where food safety is a top priority. The other is the high stakes at audit—on many assessments, the pest control evaluation can count for up to 20 percent of the total score, so a few lost points can hit hard.

So exactly what kind of documentation is needed? Food safety auditors are primarily concerned with seeing comprehensive written descriptions of pest management programs and accurate, up-to-date copies of pest control service records, labels and material safety data sheets (MSDS).

Service records explain what the pest management professional did during every visit to the facility. These records should include:

- a record of pests found, why they were found and treatment options;

- the names of any pesticide products used, the quantities applied, the methods of application, the types of equipment used and the sites of application; and

- a record of whether each treatment was performed on a proactive or reactive basis, i.e., was the technician treating an existing problem or taking steps to prevent a new one?

Providing this kind of information in an organized fashion will win you points with the auditors, but be aware of two common issues that send up red flags to auditors and can result in deductions.

First, it is imperative that the pesticide products listed in the service records be appropriate for the target pests. If records show that a technician applied a product designed to control ants in response to a cockroach problem, the auditor will almost certainly question the discrepancy and deduct points. The lesson is: Be sure your pest management professional is cautious in selecting pesticide products during treatments and is accurately recording both the

products used and the target pests. Consider implementing a facility-approved product list to reduce the margin of error.

Up-to-date product registration numbers are equally important. Product labels list the product registration and establishment numbers as assigned by the U.S. Environ-



mental Protection Agency, but anytime a chemical company goes through a major change—such as a merger or acquisition—registration numbers may be updated. While these occurrences are pretty rare, labels with out-of-date registration numbers can be costly errors in pest management audits. You can double-check registration numbers online via the EPA's Pesticide Product Information System.

While keeping track of all of this information might seem like a lot of work on top of daily job responsibilities, it doesn't necessarily have to become a time-intensive task. An organized logbook containing all the written documentation for audits should be kept on site and updated regularly as part of every pest control activity. Reputable pest management providers supply and maintain such logbooks as part of their standard service. But, whether you contract with a provider or not, a centralized service record can be easily maintained



if it is readily accessible to the person providing the service and is made part of the standard service routine.

In addition to the written service records, IT applications that collect data from handheld monitoring devices are becoming the norm in the food industry. These systems capture large amounts of pest-activity data electronically during regular service visits and collect it in a central database from which numerous reports can be generated. Again, when it comes to audit, the more readily available information, the better.

Better pest control documentation for your next audit starts today. Is your pest management program generating the kinds of records your auditors need or does it need some fine-tuning? Take steps now to build better reporting into your program and your facility will be on its way to earning an "A+" on your next food safety audit.

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