

The Daily Tar Heel

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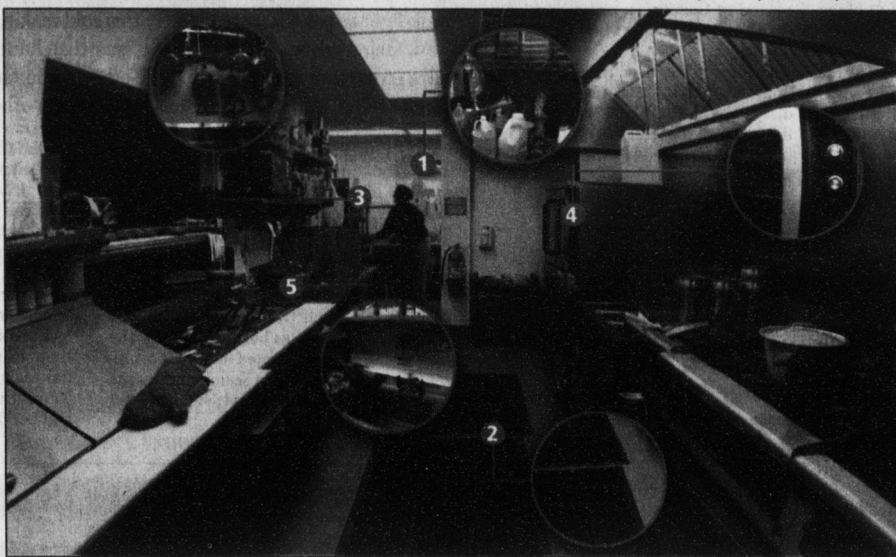
HEALTHY INVESTIGATIONS

MONDAY SPOTLIGHT

Top five restaurant inspection violations

The top five violations found in 69 downtown restaurants, according to an analysis of the restaurants' most recent inspection reports obtained from the Orange County Health Department.

- Nonfood contact surfaces unclean and in poor repair**
Restaurant employees must clean all parts of shelves, coolers, freezers and other equipment.
- Floors, walls and ceilings are poorly maintained**
Floors, walls and ceilings must be kept clean. Owners must make timely repairs, if needed.
- Equipment and utensils are improperly air-dried, stored and handled**
Pans should be air-dried before stacking. Shelves and other areas where dishes are stored must be kept clean and dry.
- Potentially hazardous food does not meet correct temperatures**
Foods requiring refrigeration must be kept at or below 45 degrees. Other foods should be cooked at correct temperatures.
- Food is improperly stored or handled**
Food should be properly covered when stored. Cleaning chemicals should be kept separate from food storage. Separate sinks should be used for meat and vegetable preparation.



*the illustration does not represent any specific kitchen but is intended to show the areas most violations occurred
PHOTOS BY ALICIA TOWLER, GRAPHIC BY KURT GENTRY

SOURCE: ORANGE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION

Downtown eateries fighting to meet inspection standards

BY SHANNAN BOWEN AND SARAH RABIL
SENIOR WRITERS

Incorrect food temperatures, dirty kitchen utensils and improper hand washing — all can lead to passing along bacteria that can cause food-borne illnesses.

And those are just some of the top violations found in many downtown Chapel Hill restaurants. Many restaurantgoers rely on a restaurant's posted inspection grade in deciding where to eat.

According to an analysis of 69 downtown restaurants, the average recent inspection score is 93. The scores range from 85 to 102.

McAlister's Deli, which was investigated as the cause of a recent E. coli outbreak, scored 91 on Oct. 24 — the same day at least three infected people reported eating there.

"The posted grade is a reflection of how well a restaurant is managing the various risk factors associated with storing, preparing and serving food," Tom Konsler, interim environmental health director for Orange County, stated in an e-mail.

"While it indicates only the snapshot in time when we observed the operation, it can be an important tool for consumers to make decisions about where they eat."

Konsler said he's been pleasantly surprised to see how aware restaurantgoers are of the posted grades. As an inspector, he said he takes note of a restaurant's grade before dining.

"Personally, I would hesitate to eat at a restaurant with a 'B' grade or below," Konsler said in an e-mail. "I will make another choice when I see the 'B' on the wall."

Restaurants are graded on a 10-point scale. A score between 80 and 90 would be a 'B'.

Bon's Home Cookin', located at 133 W. Franklin St. in University Square, received the only perfect score — 102 — of all downtown restaurants' most recent inspections.

Restaurants can receive two extra points if an employee passes a class that teaches basic food-handling safety.

Julia "Bon" Smith, owner of Bon's Home Cookin', said she and her employees continually clean the restaurant.

"We keep everything top-notch all the time," she said. "Just think about when you go out to eat, how you would want the restaurant to look."

Smith said customers notice her perfect score and often ask how she keeps her restaurant so clean.

"I'm real picky," she said, noting that she mops, scrubs and washes before, during and after each shift.

But regardless of how clean a restaurant is, most restaurant owners get a little nervous when health inspectors walk in, Smith said.

Inspectors' visits are not announced to restaurant owners and managers. Accompanied by a restaurant manager, inspectors will spend about an hour making their way around the prem-

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E. coli link troubles McAlister's

BY ANDREW DUNN
STAFF WRITER

Since McAlister's Deli on Franklin Street was linked to an E. coli outbreak that sickened nine people, the business has been facing a challenge that not all restaurants connected to food-borne illnesses can meet — bouncing back.

Health department officials have not been able to pinpoint the direct source of infection, but seven of the nine sickened people reported eating at McAlister's between Oct. 23 and Oct. 25, shortly before they became ill.

"We've pretty much wrapped up," said Judy Butler, a communicable disease nurse involved in the investigation. "We don't know what the problem was."

Regardless of a definitive cause, being linked to a food-borne illness can have varying effects on restaurants.

"It definitely made us think twice about coming," said freshman Leslie Bridger after she finished eating dinner Friday at McAlister's. "My suitmates wouldn't come. They were too scared of the E. coli."

Stephen Brown, senior director of support services at McAlister's Corporation, said there has been a slight decline in business at the Franklin

Street location since the E. coli outbreak.

"There has been a decrease, but I wouldn't say noticeable," he said.

He also said that the restaurant is continuing to work with the health department and will redo the standard sanitation course given to workers.

"Hopefully we'll be able to put this incident behind us."

In January 2004, the Top of Lenoir salad bar was linked to a norovirus outbreak that infected about 170 students. In response, officials increased emphasis on hand washing, and business has returned to normal.

But Big Bowl restaurant at Southpoint Mall in Durham was unable to recover from a link to hepatitis A in July and August 2004. The Chinese and Thai eatery closed as a result.

When a restaurant is definitively linked to a food-borne illness, there is no mandatory closure, said Tom Konsler, interim environmental health director for Orange County.

The health department may request a restaurant to close for investigation if incidents of infection persist.

During an investigation, the environmental

SEE MCALISTER'S, PAGE 6

Best downtown restaurant scores

restaurant	date of inspection	score
Bon's Home Cookin'	6/29/06	102
India Palace	10/17/06	100
Ye Olde Waffle Shop	8/4/06	100
The Pita Pit	8/11/06	99.5
3 Cups	10/25/06	99

Worst downtown restaurant scores

restaurant	date of inspection	score
Kurama	8/28/06	85
Skylight Exchange	11/6/06	86
Penang	10/3/06	87.5
Asia Cafe	10/19/06	88.5
Patlo Loco	10/31/06	90

Restaurants may earn two points if an employee passes a class on basic food-handling safety.

Visit www.dailytarheel.com for your favorite downtown restaurant's inspection score.

SOURCE: ORANGE COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION

Downtown plan to get new look

Council seeking public response

BY JAMIE WILLIAMS
STAFF WRITER

Residents will have the opportunity to share their opinions at a public forum tonight about a revised plan to bring major changes to downtown.

The \$75-million plan, which is part of the Chapel Hill Town Council's Downtown Economic Development Initiative, calls for expansive development of lot 5, located on Church Street between Rosemary and Franklin streets.

Ram Development Co., the

ATTEND THE PUBLIC FORUM

Time: 7 p.m. today
Location: Chapel Hill Town Hall
Info: www.townofchapelhill.org

town's partner in the public-private endeavor, presented the council with conceptual plans in March that called for the development of the Wallace Deck at the same time as lot 5. The new plan delays that growth indefinitely.

It also eliminates plans to develop lot 2, located behind Spanky's on Rosemary Street.

The lot 5 development would include a 345-space underground

SEE DOWNTOWN, PAGE 6

What will downtown Chapel Hill look like?

The old plan:

- Develop parking lots 2 and 5 and the Wallace Deck into mixed-use residential and retail facilities
- Begin construction on lot 5 and the Wallace Deck in 2007
- Create 375 parking spaces, mostly underground, at lot 5
- Include 24,000 square feet of retail area at lot 5

The new plan:

- Develop only lot 5
- Develop the Wallace Deck at a later date and leave the door open for other downtown projects
- Build an underground parking garage with 345 spaces
- Include about 28,540 square feet of retail area

Town reels from tornado's destruction

Cleanup process starts, Easley declares disaster

BY LINDSEY NAYLOR
ASSISTANT STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

Kacy Fortner, a UNC freshman from Riegelwood, got a troubling call at around 6:30 a.m. Thursday from his girlfriend, who had just heard the tornado warning issued for their hometown.

Minutes later and a half-mile away from Fortner's home, the tornado struck. It ultimately left eight people dead and 13 homes destroyed.

"It was kind of hard for me to take in," Fortner said.

"Because our community is so small, I felt like I should be there doing something. But I couldn't because I was here."

Fortner's home was not affected, and his family members are all OK, he said.

As of Sunday evening, seven victims remained hospitalized, most in stable to good condition. But two children at UNC Hospitals were in critical condition.

Gov. Mike Easley visited the community Friday and issued a disaster declaration that evening, securing avenues for those affected to apply for assistance from the state disaster aid fund and from the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Kip Godwin, chairman of the Columbus County Board of Commissioners, said volunteers have begun to help those eligible apply for aid. But victims mainly are concerned with sifting through the debris and coming to terms with their losses.

"They are still very much in a daze," he said.



Brianna Latham, 5, stands amid what is left of neighbor Tomeka Jenkins' home Friday. Jenkins had already left to take her three children to day care and go to work when the storm hit.

"It really has not sunk in, exactly, all that has happened to them and the severity of their loss, in human life as well as property."

Damage from the tornado affected 42 properties in the area, and early estimates put the damage at \$500,000. Godwin said the final figure probably will be higher.

"In terms of economic impact or death toll, we just have not had a storm like this in modern times."

Reid Hawkins, science officer at the National Weather Service in Wilmington, said the timing of the tornado was unusual

but not unprecedented for the southeastern part of the state. He said people should be prepared for inclement weather regardless of the season.

"In case there's a tornado or a bad storm, know where you need to go in a moment's notice."

And early-morning storms such as that in Riegelwood, he said, present a greater need for warning systems and fast action.

Godwin said the quickly orchestrated com-

SEE TORNADO, PAGE 6

online | dailytarheel.com

ANIMAL ACT Congress members pass a bill they say protects animal researchers

WHAT WOMEN WANT Survey assesses what female faculty consider important

TOP BRANCH Chapel Hill receives award on Arbor Day for its dedication to trees



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PROM NIGHT

UNC service fraternity Alpha Phi Omega hosts a prom at a local assisted-living home, crowning two residents prom king and queen.

campus | page 5

MOVING AHEAD

A UNC professor helps conduct research on head injuries by placing sensors on ice-hockey helmets to assess what type of impacts lead to concussions.

this day in history

NOV. 20, 1938 ...

Frank Porter Graham gives the keynote address at the first Southern Conference for Human Welfare. His involvement with the interracial coalition is criticized.

weather

Partly cloudy
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