

## **Green-Yellow-Red**

### **DineSafe Durham One Year Later**

#### **The Results from an Evaluation of Durham Region Health Department's Food Safety Disclosure Program**

**March 2012**

In 2009, the Environmental Health Division of Durham Region Health Department (DRHD) launched *DineSafe Durham*, a new program aimed at increasing food establishment compliance with the Ontario Food Premises Regulation, as well as transparency of, and public accessibility to, food safety inspection results and information.

*DineSafe Durham* uses colour-coded Food Safety Inspection Summary Signs posted at the entrances of food establishments in Durham Region to indicate a level of compliance with the Ontario Food Premises Regulation. The signs are based on the results of the most recent food safety inspection, either a green (PASS), yellow (CONDITIONAL PASS), or red (CLOSED). Food Safety Inspection Summary signs must be posted in a conspicuous location at the main entrance of all food establishments. In addition, members of the public can request to view a copy of the most recent Food Safety Inspection Report at any time.

One year after the implementation of *DineSafe Durham*, an evaluation was conducted to gauge public awareness of the program, to determine the attitudes and behaviours of owners/operators and DRHD Public Health Inspectors (PHIs) towards the program, and to identify changes in the regulatory compliance of food establishments.

In 2010, Durham Region residents, owners/operators of food establishments and the PHIs were surveyed regarding their awareness, attitudes and perceptions of *DineSafe Durham* and food safety, and the potential impact of *DineSafe Durham* on business and food safety handling practices. In addition, inspection activity results were compared before and after the implementation of *DineSafe Durham*.

Since the launch of *DineSafe Durham*, there was no significant change in residents' perception of restaurant food safety: four out of five Durham Region residents felt that the food in restaurants in Durham Region was safe to eat. However, the percentage of residents who felt that the colour-coded food safety inspection signs influenced their decision of where to eat was 57%, significantly less than the pre-*DineSafe Durham* level of 69%. While the majority of food establishments, regardless of their compliance status, reported that it was easy to provide the latest food safety inspection report to customers (98%) as well as, easy to post the inspection summary signs in a convenient location for the public to view (96%), 72% Durham Region residents were not aware that they could ask for the most recent food safety inspection report.

All of the food establishments, regardless of compliance status in the year post-implementation, reported that *DineSafe Durham* had either positively affected their business (68%) or had little impact (32%), with none reporting a negative impact. The majority of food establishments (96%) also felt it was important for DRHD to maintain the current *DineSafe Durham* program.

Most PHIs felt that *DineSafe Durham* had positively affected the way they conduct inspections (70%). The majority of PHIs were in agreement that the implementation of *DineSafe Durham* had a positive impact on the food safety practices of owners/operators (90% strongly or somewhat agreed) and led to the correction of violations in a timely manner (70% strongly or somewhat agreed).

Compliance rates for critical and non-critical violations improved significantly since the launch of *DineSafe Durham*. The greatest improvement seen was the use of thermometers; an essential tool to verify that food is cooked, held and stored at the correct temperatures.

In summary, one year after the launch of *DineSafe Durham*, the results of the evaluation demonstrated progress in meeting the program objectives to increase compliance with the legislation, to increase the transparency of inspections, and improve the public's accessibility to information. Gains in improving the public's accessibility to inspection information may be realized with an improved understanding of the meaning of the food safety inspection signs and an improved awareness of the availability of food safety inspection reports. While about 80% of residents understood the meaning of the red and green signs, only 68% of residents correctly reported the meaning of a yellow sign as a conditional pass, with 17% indicating a "don't know" response. The degree to which *DineSafe Durham* influences the public's decision about where to eat may also improve with a greater awareness of and access to the actual food safety inspection reports. Since this evaluation, the Health Department has launched the *DineSafe Durham* website which provides online access to information regarding inspections of all food establishments in Durham Region.

## **DineSafe Durham Food Safety Disclosure Website**

### **The Results from an Evaluation of Durham Region Health Department's Website for Food Safety Disclosure Program**

**February 2014**

*DineSafe Durham* is a program designed to increase food establishment compliance with the Ontario Food Premises Regulation and increase transparency of, and public accessibility to, food safety inspection results and information.

The Environmental Health Division of the Durham Region Health Department (DRHD) launched the *DineSafe Durham* Website in January 2011 and further revisions and enhancements were completed by early 2012. The website provides a searchable application of the most recent inspection report results for all food establishments in Durham Region.

An evaluation of the *DineSafe Durham* website was undertaken to determine public awareness and user satisfaction with the website and also to gain a better understanding of the online behaviour of users.

A telephone survey on internet use among Durham Region residents aged 18 years and older was conducted. Results indicated that 5.1% of Durham Region adults have connected to the *DineSafe Durham* website. Households with children were more likely to connect with the website compared to those without children.

An online survey was also posted on the *DineSafe Durham* website for one month commencing October 22, 2012. This survey collected information on the reasons for visiting the website, frequency of visiting and the satisfaction with the information. A total of 21 surveys were completed. The survey indicated the users found out about the *DineSafe Durham* website through various methods which include the main Durham Region website, an internet search, advertising or from a Public Health Inspector. The reasons for visiting the site were to check the inspection history of a specific food establishment, to check the status of an infraction, to choose a location to eat out, to better understand the inspection process or just browsing for interest. The majority found the information they were looking for and most found the website useful and would recommend it to others.

In addition to the telephone and online surveys, monthly site traffic reports were generated by the Durham Region Corporate Services Department, Information Technology Division (CS-IT) for web activity from November 2012 to April 2013. The results showed an average of 1,041 visits to the site per month, the most popular page each month was the "DineSafe Inspection Results". Almost one third of the visits were for inspection results.

Some recommendations from the evaluation were to continue to promote the *DineSafe Durham* website utilizing social media (e.g. facebook, twitter) and improving the web design and consider mobile friendly web design practices.

In summary the DineSafe Durham website provides useful information. Improvements in web design are needed to facilitate navigation and to make content easily accessible. Further promotional initiatives are needed to improve, not only the awareness of the website, but how the public can use the inspection results when deciding where to eat.

Since the evaluation there have been improvements made to the *DineSafe Durham* website. A “QR code” (Quick Response Code) for the *DineSafe Durham* website was developed and promoted throughout the Region through local print media and were printed on the DineSafe summary posting signs. Language used within the website was improved to make the information more user friendly. Clarity was also made around the description of the Yellow (CONDITIONAL PASS) DineSafe posting sign.

Accessibility was also improved since the evaluation. It is easier to navigate to the inspection results page. The users no longer need to read through the disclaimer page before accessing the inspection results page. The DRHD has taken into consideration the recommendations from the evaluation and is continually evaluating and making improvements to the *DineSafe Durham* website for public accessibility.