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# The Boston Globe

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By **[Matt Rocheleau](#)**

GLOBE STAFF MAY 15, 2015

Next week, The Boston Globe data team will look at the city's [database of food service establishment inspections](#), which lists restaurants that passed the periodic reviews, those that failed, and details about any health, sanitary, or other violations that were found.

Want to know if a restaurant in your neighborhood passed its most recent inspection? Or which eatery in Boston has been cited with the most violations? It's all in this data set, which is updated regularly and goes back to 2007.

Over the coming days we'll explore more of this database and plan to report our conclusions soon. We hope you will, too. Tell us what you find interesting in the data by leaving a comment here or tweeting us [@globedatadesk](#). We'll include your questions and findings in the story, too.

## What to know about Boston's food inspection process:

Any establishment that offers food to the public is subject to inspections, which are based on regulations defined by the state's sanitary code.

The Health Division of Boston's Inspectional Service Department inspects each food service establishment citywide at least once per year, and new restaurants cannot open without an inspection and approval from the

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division, according to the city's website.

Some inspections are prompted by consumer complaints.

The inspections are conducted by professionally certified food safety inspectors.

If serious violations are found, the establishment could have its license temporarily suspended by the city, forcing it to close until the violations are rectified.

The city rates violations as being either: a foodborne illness risk factor critical violation; critical violation; or noncritical violation.

A noncritical violation is one that does not seriously affect the public health. A critical violation is one that is more likely than others to contribute to food contamination, illness, or environmental health hazard, or has the potential to seriously affect the public health. A foodborne illness risk factor critical violation means improper practices or procedures that research has identified as the most prevalent contributing factors of foodborne illness or injury.

### Some early findings from the data:

- The database indicates the city inspected just over 3,000 licensed food establishments in 2014.
- The city found some 42,000 violations at those restaurants, the majority – about 76 percent – were noncritical violations. However, about 18 percent were classified under the most serious violation type.
- The descriptions on some of the violations do not seem terribly alarming: “clean all light fixtures” or “remove all cardboard boxes from premises.”
- Particularly when compared to other descriptions “sewage line in basement open and waste spilling on floor” and “live baby cockroaches present.”

[Download the data](#)

Remember to tell us what you find by leaving a comment or tweeting us [@globedatadesk](#).

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