

HFPEs – Overview and Survey Responses

APRIL 30TH, 2025

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Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing - Food Safety Bureau



HFPEs – Brief History

HF 2431 signed in May 2022, effective on July 1, 2022.

Regulatory Framework had to be built in a few months

Several work groups put together to work on different aspects of the new program

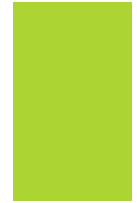
Licensed Home bakeries were notified via mailer and email notification about the change in regulations.

HFPEs – Brief History, ctd

September 16, 2022 - 647 Home bakeries across the state were automatically converted to the home food processing license.

Currently - 519 licensed home food processing establishments in Iowa

HFPEs - Overview



Licensed and Inspected

- ❖ Residential Kitchen
- ❖ \$50 License Fee (annual)
- ❖ \$50,000 gross annual sales limitation

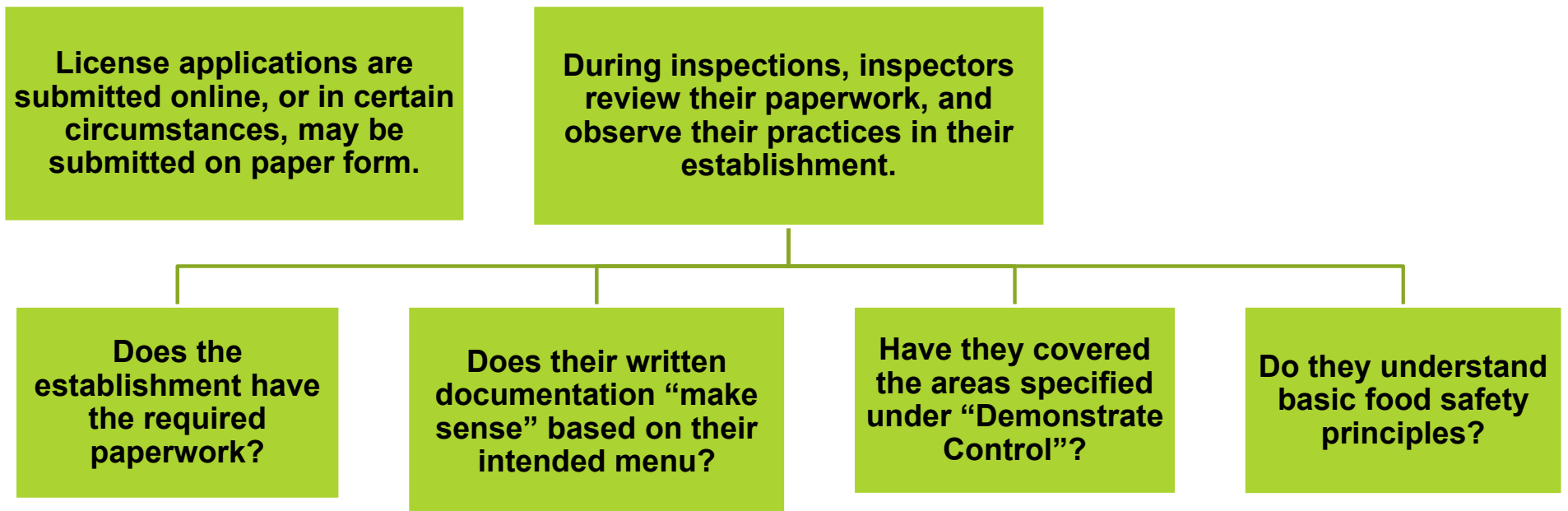
Foods & Processes

- ❖ Temperature controlled for safety foods (TCS)
- ❖ Non-temperature controlled for safety foods (Non-TCS)
- ❖ Some prohibited foods
- ❖ Some prohibited preparation processes

Food Sales

- ❖ Direct to consumer
- ❖ Wholesale/resale
- ❖ Specific limitations based on the type of food

HFPEs – Inspection Process



Available Resources

Resources



**RETAIL FOOD:
RESTAURANTS &
GROCERY STORES**



**FOOD PROCESSING &
STORAGE**



**HOME BASED FOOD
OPERATIONS**



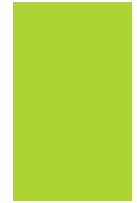
**TEMPORARY EVENT
FOOD STANDS including
2025 RAGBRAI**

HFPE Operator Survey



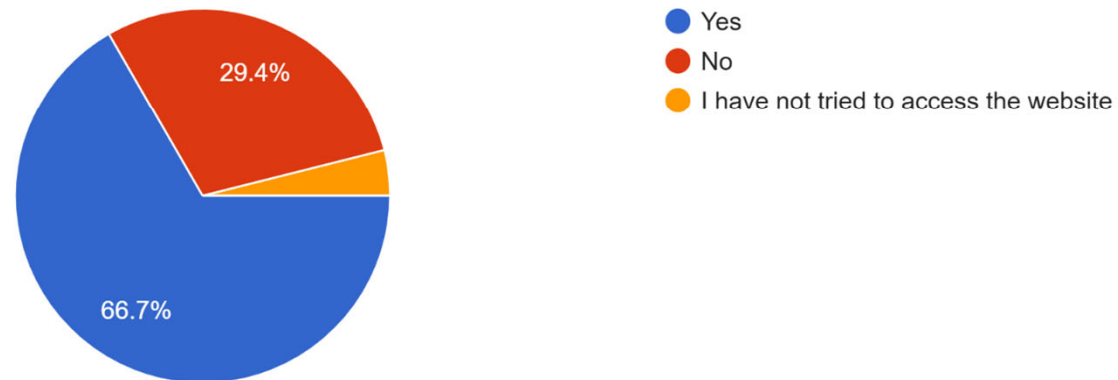
- ▶ Survey was sent out twice, first on January 7th, 2025 with a submission deadline of January 29
- ▶ 25 responses were received.
- ▶ Survey was sent out a second time, to solicit additional responses. Deadline was extended to February 28th.
- ▶ An additional 26 responses were received, for a total of 51 responses out of 479 HFPEs with an email address on file.

First Section – Iowa Task Force Website Operator Responses

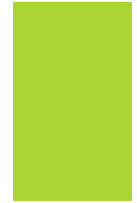


Is the format of the Iowa Food Protection website easy to understand, so that you can find what you need?

51 responses

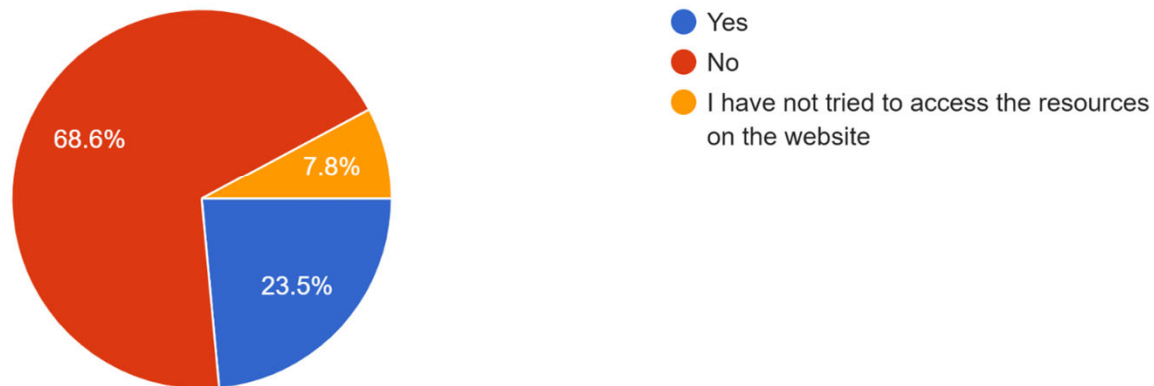


First Section – Iowa Task Force Website Operator Responses

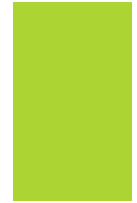


Have you had any issues accessing the Iowa Food Protection Task Force website to locate the home-based food operations resources?

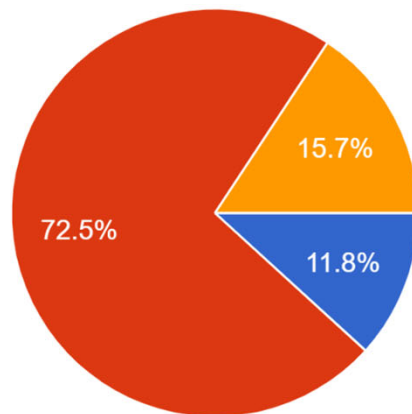
51 responses



First Section – Iowa Task Force Website Operator Responses

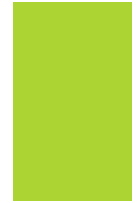


Have you had any difficulties clicking on the links to the laws and regulations on the website?
51 responses



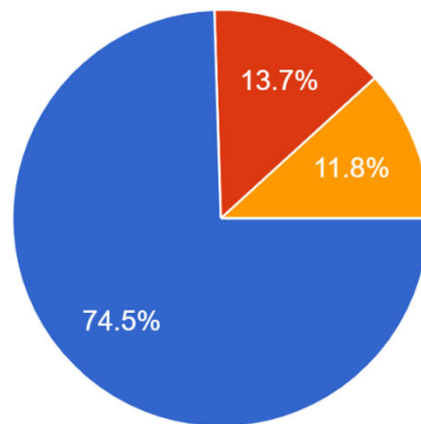
- Yes
- No
- I have not tried to access the laws and regulations on the website

First Section – Iowa Task Force Website Operator Responses



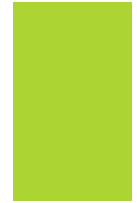
Are you able to find where to submit the license application from the Task Force website?

51 responses



- Yes
- No
- I have not tried to find where to submit the license application from the Task Force website

First Section – Iowa Task Force Website Operator Responses



Please provide any feedback from the questions in this section, including any suggestions for improvement.

...struggle to navigate the site.

...website where I submitted recipes and documents is horrible & frustrating. (licensing portal)

...The website is fine...difficult to find the website through the Iowa DIAL Website

...Thank you for this survey - it actually educated me on the location of these links and documents!

...resource the inspector sent me was spot on, but I had difficulty finding the same thing on the website.

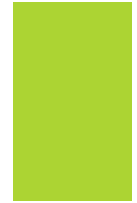
...website is difficult to navigate and not user friendly. Information is there, but I feel like one has to work hard to find it.

...since the changes to digital, I can not even find the information I need about my own license. I make phone calls and send emails but can never find my info.

...confusing website and not user friendly at all. Needs a lot of tweaking

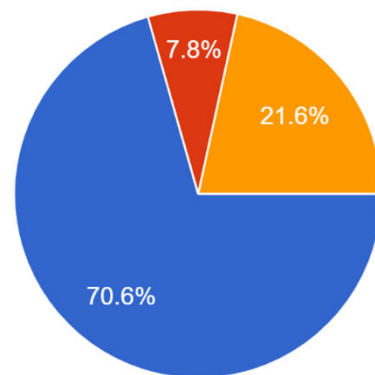
Next Section – Documents and Resources

Operator Responses



Are the training options provided helpful?

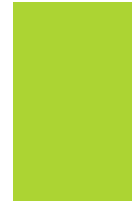
51 responses



- Yes
- No
- I have never seen the training options

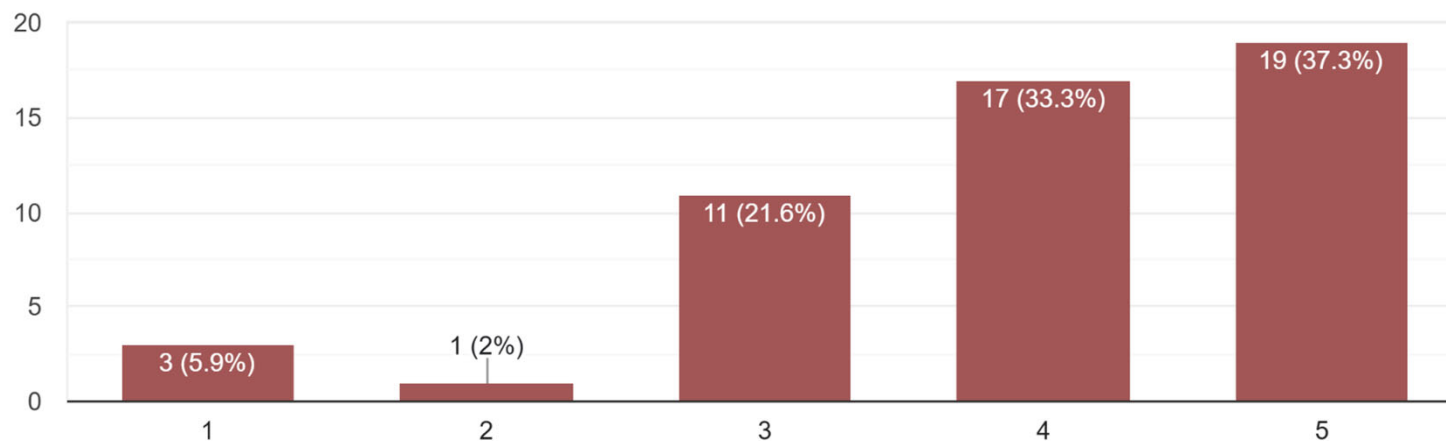
Next Section – Documents and Resources

Operator Responses



How helpful or easy to understand is the common food chart?

51 responses



1 - Not very helpful or easy to understand

5 - Very helpful and easy to understand

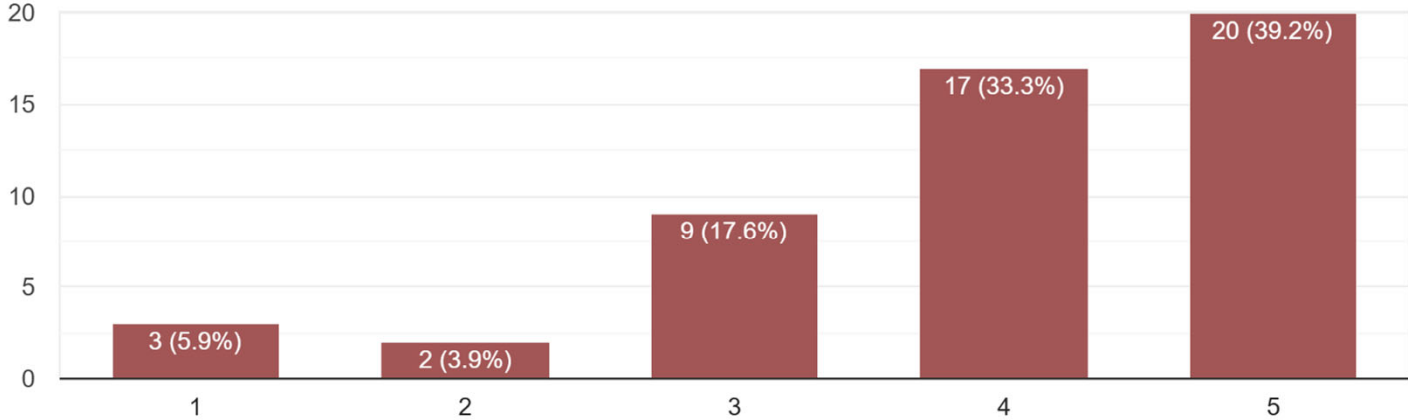
Next Section – Documents and Resources

Operator Responses



How helpful or easy to understand is the basic requirements guide?

51 responses



1 - Not very helpful or easy to understand

5 - Very helpful and easy to understand

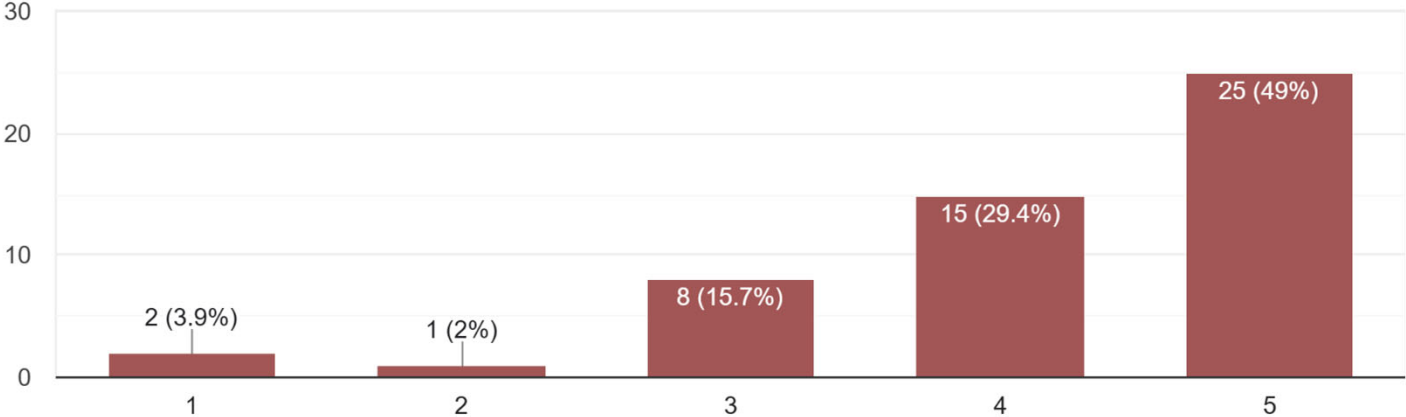
Next Section – Documents and Resources

Operator Responses



Are the provided templates helpful or easy to understand?

51 responses



1 - Not very helpful or easy to understand

5 - Very helpful and easy to understand

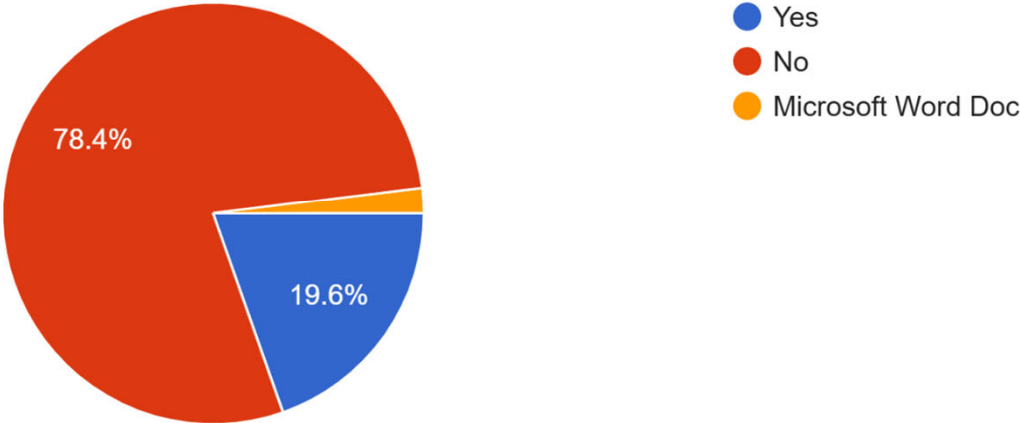
Next Section – Documents and Resources

Operator Responses



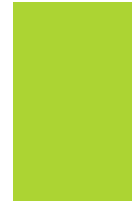
Would you like to see templates in any other format than Excel?

51 responses



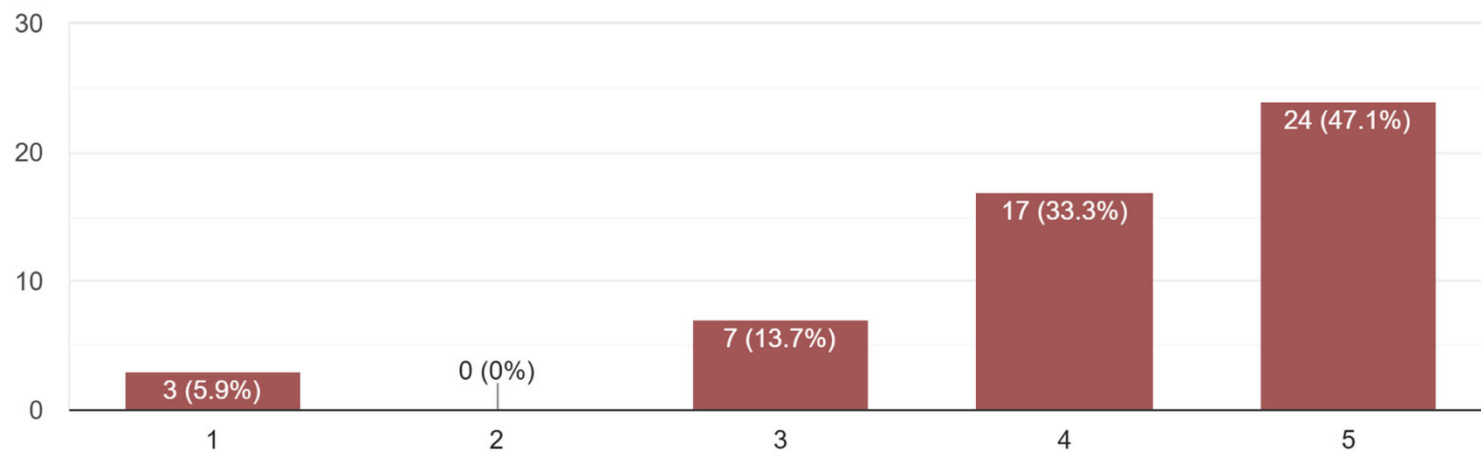
Next Section – Documents and Resources

Operator Responses



Are the examples of completed records helpful and easy to understand?

51 responses



1 - Not very helpful or easy to understand

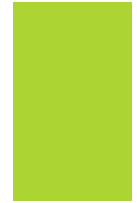
5 - Very helpful and easy to understand

Final Section – Licensing and Feedback

Is there anything DIAL or your local contracting agency can do to make the licensing and inspection process easier or more successful?

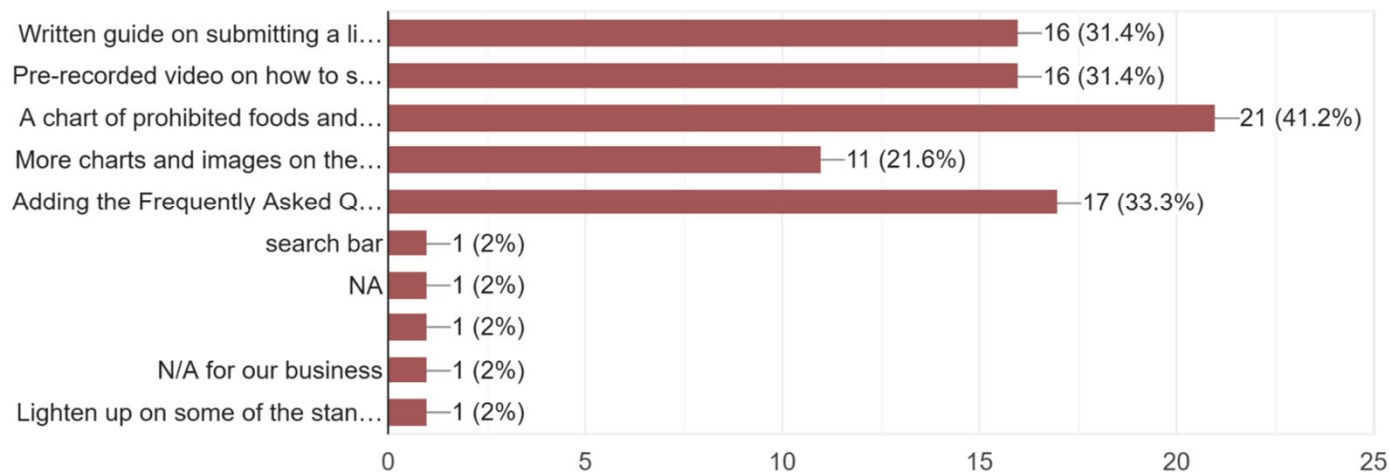
- info could be shared with farmers market directors for food vendor education
- Guides are very wordy - more of checklist would be helpful.
- Make it easier/more direct to find different information and forms, search option
- I have had a good experience and the process was easy for me.
- DIAL website is kind of clunky to input each menu item, uploads; needs to be more user friendly
- Definitions, like “acidified”, and how it differs from a “high acid” food.
- Application and guidelines for the wholesale of allowed foods.
- better and faster communication, long wait for email response
- Email reminders for reporting deadlines
- More information available on what license is needed for what, dedicated team
- Go back to physical mail for everything

Final Section – Licensing and Feedback



What other resources can we provide on the Task Force website to help you with your home food processing establishment? You may select more than one option.

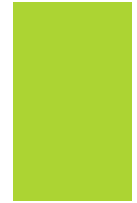
51 responses



HFPE Virtual Inspections Survey

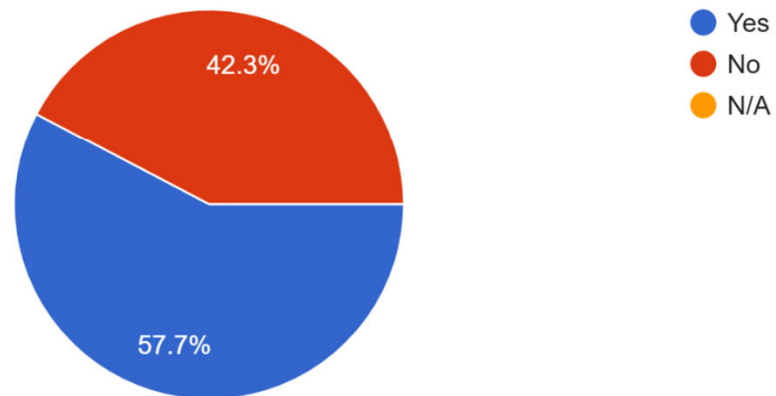
- ▶ Survey was sent out to all DIAL inspectors and contracting agencies on September 23rd, 2024.
- ▶ Responses were due by October 7th, 2024.
- ▶ 26 responses were received.

Inspector Responses

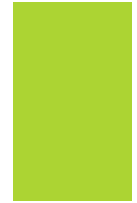


Have you ever completed a Virtual HFPE inspection?

26 responses

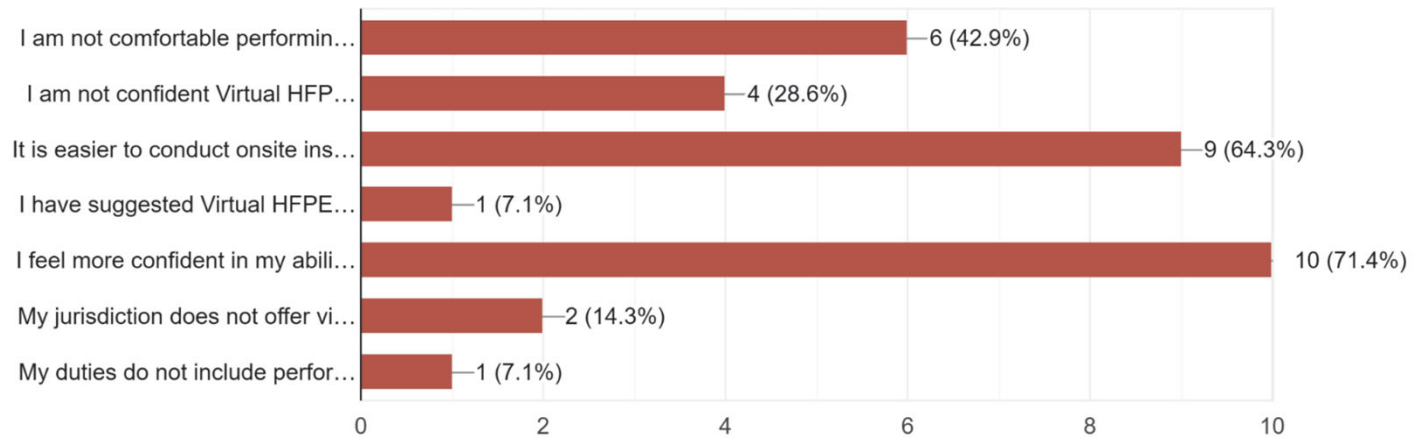


Inspector Responses



If you have never completed a Virtual HFPE inspection, please check all that apply:

14 responses



Inspector Responses

Please comment on the answers from the previous question.

...think HFPE should be conducted in person/easier to go in person

...feel I see more with onsite inspections and most of the people getting an HFPE do not have the ability to conduct a virtual inspection.

...trained on the process during COVID but found it to be a barrier to the work.

... onsite provides a great opportunity to dialogue with the operator to access knowledge.

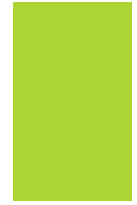
...feel that virtual inspections do not get the accurately of on site inspections.

... better to do things in person so that the person isn't hiding anything. And it's good for customer service.

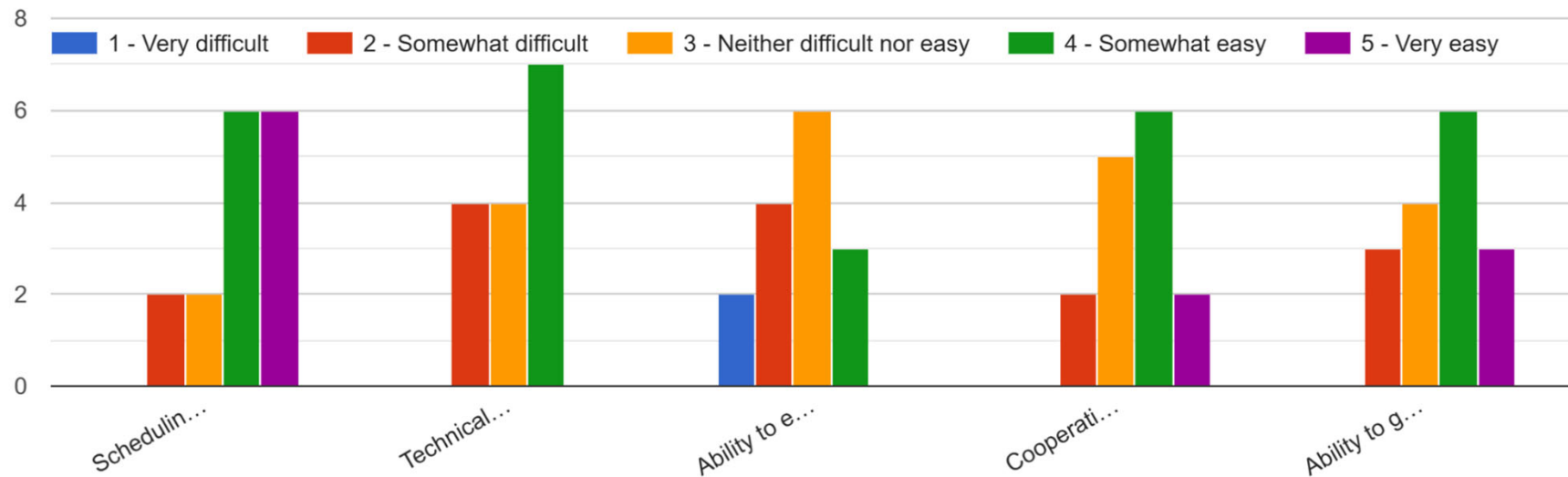
...more efficient to be physically present to complete the inspection and discuss any questions.

...onsite is a better way for me to get a full understanding of what an establishments processes and full environment entail. With HFPE i feel it is also an opportunity to understand what I would be walking into if it I did have to follow up on a complaint in the future.

Inspector Responses



If you have completed a Virtual HFPE inspection, please rate the following based on your overall impressions of your inspections:



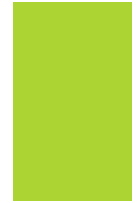
Inspector Responses

Please provide comments to any answers you may have provided in the previous section, including any challenges you have faced, or any drawbacks to continuing to perform virtual HFPE inspections



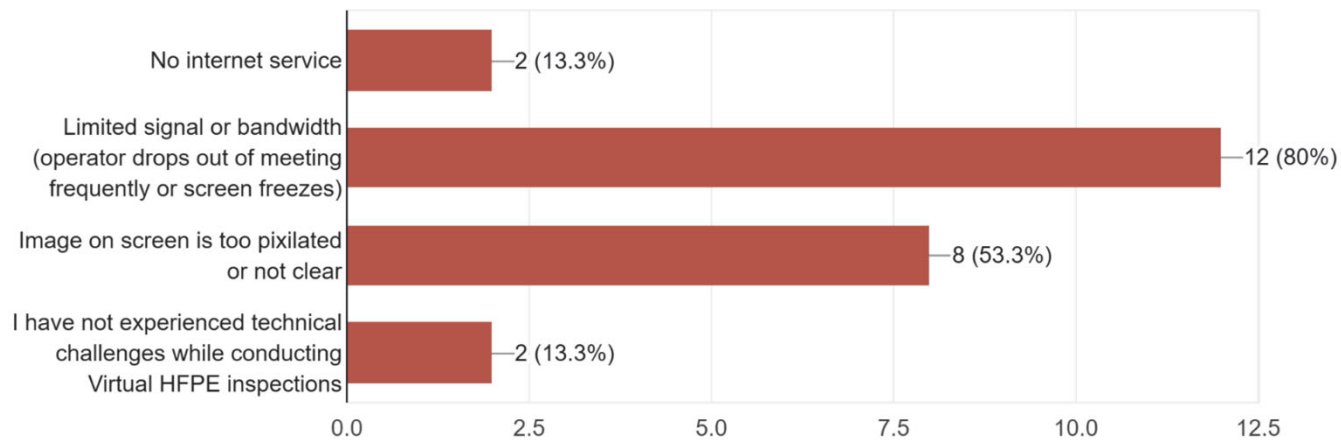
- ...average operator applying for a HFPE typically is older and does not have the skillset to do an inspection virtually...difficult time with SOP's, adding things to their account
- Virtual inspections are a useful tool for highly skilled and cooperative operators good with technology and can expedite the inspection process. Not so much for difficult operators.
- Operators feel that the requirements are "too much" for "what little" they are doing
- ...some technical difficulties with operators when we have done virtual inspections but usually if I take control of the movement and tell them what to show me and how to hold the camera they do ok. Most people appreciate you not coming to their house, I believe.
- Customer do not supply required materials and have no cameras always
- ...virtual inspections are still an effective tool but I have a more hands on personality.

Inspector Responses

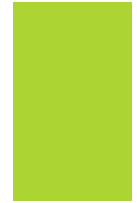


Select all technical challenges you have experienced while conducting Virtual HFPE inspections.

15 responses

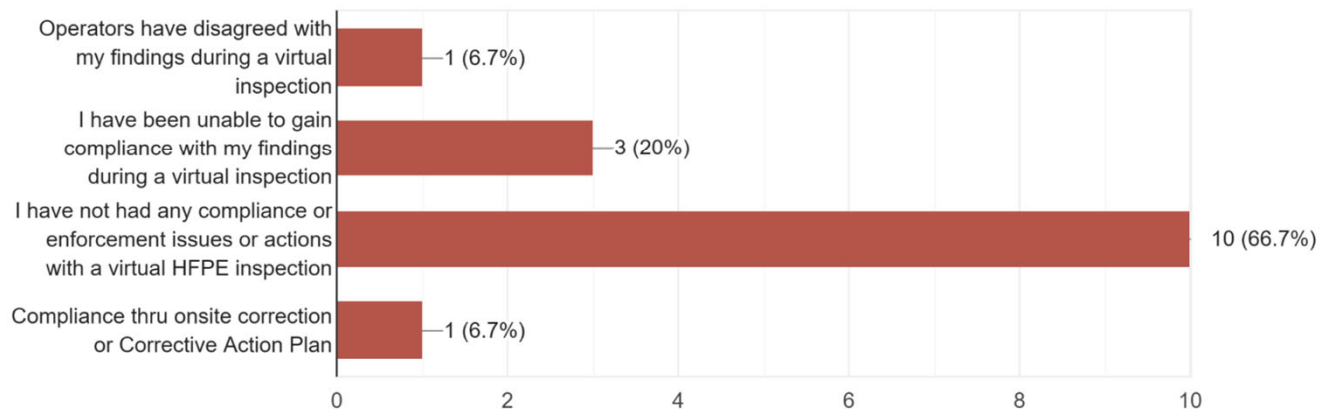


Inspector Responses



If you have completed a virtual HFPE inspection, select the most appropriate responses below related to any compliance or enforcement actions you might have completed during virtual inspections:

15 responses

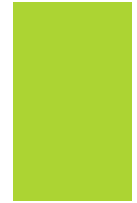


Inspector Responses

Please comment on the answers from the previous question.

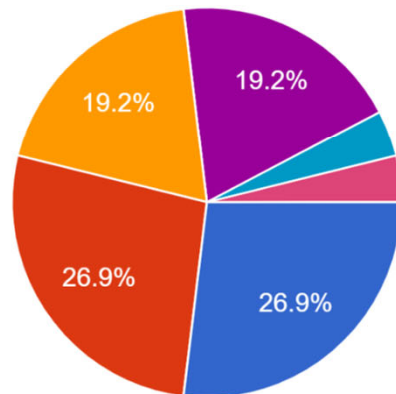
- The typical person applying for a HFPE does not have an extra person to help with the inspection which makes the virtual inspection longer than an in person most often.
- Operators have disagreed whether an item is TCS or not based on if they see the item on a shelf at the grocery store without understanding that sometimes that item may have additives to allow it to be on the shelf.
- I have never had an applicant prefer an in-person inspection over the virtual option .
- Most operators want to do things correctly and a happy to do what is required, when pointed out.
- Operators are aware of criteria prior to inspections and corrections are usually minimal with little resistance.

Inspector Responses



Select the most appropriate response related to HFPE SOPs, Work Instructions, and Guides:

26 responses



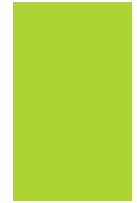
- They are clear, easy to follow, and accurately depict the process
- They are clear and easy to follow, but do not 100% accurately depict the process
- They are somewhat confusing and hard to follow
- They are outdated and not particularly...
- I am not familiar with the HFPE SOPs,...
- There are so many documents. It woul...
- there are many and it is still sometime...

Inspector Responses

Please comment on the answers from the previous question.

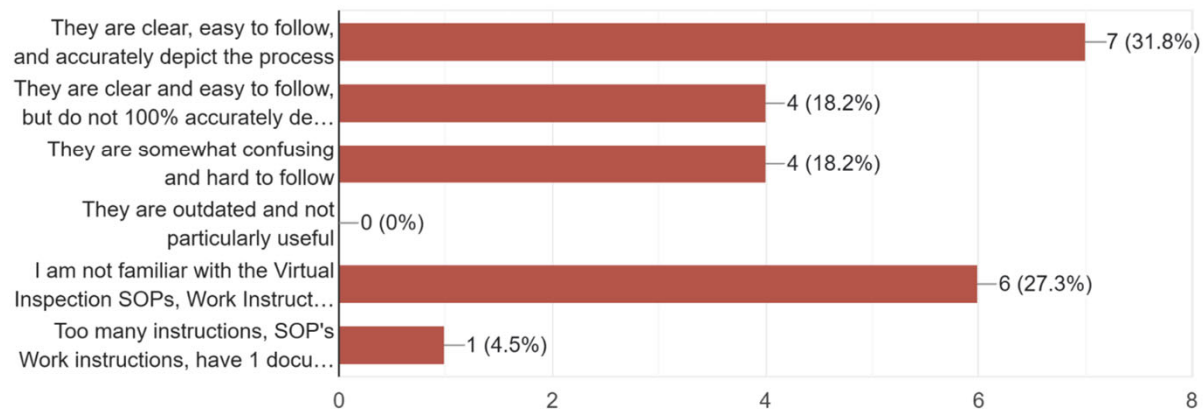
- i use the SOPs infrequently due to few HFPE facilities
- Have 1 guide with all the documents needed in 1 place.
- I believe they depict the process as close as the process can be depicted -- operators are all over the board in their understanding of the rules and their food safety knowledge, and an SOP cannot be written for every single level of operator.
- Instructions are good, some operators struggle to get info back to me or their account
- I have read procedure but our jurisdiction does physical inspections.
- Too many documents
- Some are copied and pasted documents pieced together. I really try and talk through what an appropriate process would be and how it should be writeen.

Inspector Responses



Select the most appropriate response related to Virtual Inspection SOPs, Work Instructions, and Attachments:

22 responses

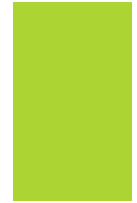


Inspector Responses

Please provide comments based on your previous answer, in regards to the *Virtual Inspections SOP, Attachment A.3 -Virtual Routine, Recheck, and Complaint Inspection Letter, Attachment A.4 – Virtual HFPE Inspections Email Template, and the Attachment B- Iowa Retail and Manufactured Foods Tech Tips sheet.*

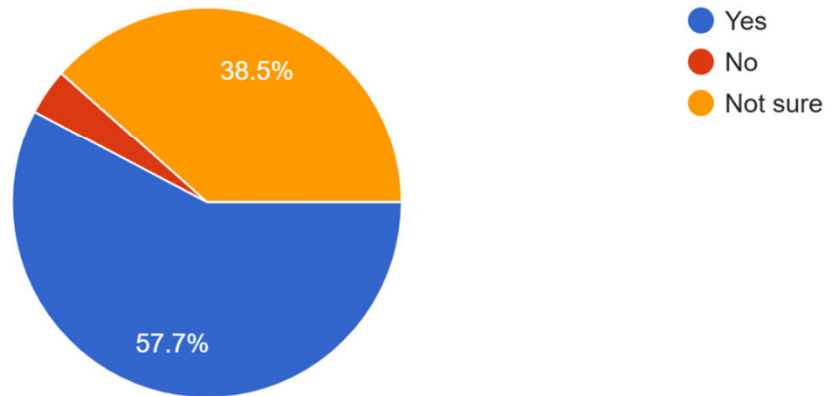
- There are too many work instructions, guides and SOP's to follow with what we do it becomes overwhelming. Have 1 document.
- The email templates and tech tips sheet are extremely helpful when needed.
- I have not used the Virtual Routine, Recheck, and Complaint Inspection Letter as I have not yet needed it.
- Likely due to our program not executing the virtual inspections.
- We know they are available on FoodShield, but since we do not conduct virtual inspections we have not reviewed the current versions.
- There is a lot of documents in general and operators seem to operate on the outskirts of the law.

Inspector Responses



Should Iowa continue to offer the option for field staff to conduct virtual HFPE inspections?

26 responses



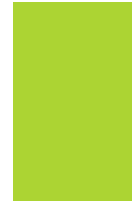
Inspector Responses

Please provide feedback regarding your previous answer, on the advantages and/or disadvantages of continuing to offer virtual HFPE inspections

- Shouldn't be mandated because it doesn't work for each operator. Onsite inspections are better
- should encourage the use of on site inspections when it is clear that operators are struggling.
- If virtual inspections will no longer be offered, would request that more than one inspector go into the home for the inspection
- In rural areas it is a time saving and employee safety resource that I appreciate having access to.
- Low and Medium risk is ok for virtual, high risk should be in person
- it allows the option to not have to go into a random person's home (liability and safety issues) also cuts down drive time
- I think we should continue virtual HFPE inspections. I would not feel comfortable going into an operator's home by myself.
- good tool for certain situations and can be effective, I have had very minimal issues when I have done virtual inspections.
- The fees should be higher...The costs for doing the inspections far outweigh what we collect.

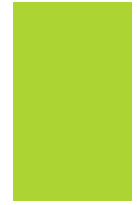
Inspector Responses

Please provide any final comments on your experiences or interest in performing virtual HFPE inspections.



- having the ability to do it virtually along with having the option during bad weather days, is thinking outside the box and helpful.
- A way to flag in the system or a reminder added when the operator has not fully submitted their application
- There should be one person who is an expert who does all the HFPEs in the state since they are all virtual.
- Don't have interest in doing virtual HFPE inspections
- If an operator has demonstrated knowledge thru SOP's and other submitted documents for Low and Medium Risk foods, is a virtual inspection needed? Maybe only inspect High Risk?
- Businesses should be required to pass a test or quiz
- My jurisdiction has limited access to certain applications, which makes it challenging to conduct inspections online
- As an inspector, it's challenging to verify processes and handle practical operations...documentation is a crucial part of the job to ensure that businesses know and follow the required procedures.
- I appreciate the inspection list and other work instructions, but there's room for improvement.
- High hopes that virtual inspections continue
- I feel you do get a good understanding through conversations and video and I have had very small issues with compliance or technical issues.

HFPE Operator Survey



Food & Hotel License Types



Retail Food Establishments

These include grocery stores or convenience stores. If they serve hot food, a Food Service license may be needed also.



Food Service Establishments

Food service establishments include restaurants, bars, concession stands, tap rooms, catering, and commissaries.



Farmers Markets

A farmers market operates seasonally, offering Iowa-produced farm products and goods for off-premises consumption.

- DIAL website is currently undergoing updates for easier accessibility
- New contact form for inquiries straight to appropriate individual
- Videos for Industry providing an overview of the HFPE process
- SOPS template available
- Online guides for submitting license applications and renewals
- New database in the future (licensing portal)

HFPE Virtual Inspections Survey

HFPE Flow Chart – Pre-Opening Inspections



- Virtual inspections will remain an option
- Virtual inspections can be a different virtual platform from Google, depending on agency policies and procedures
- Reviewing all documents for potential streamlining
- For example, HFPE flow charts are available as a “one stop” shop mapping out the entire process
- HFPE inspector webinar series available on FoodShield for training purposes
- FoodShield also has videos for industry that may be shared

Questions?

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<https://ia.foodprotectiontaskforce.com/resources1/home-based-food-operations/>

