As the manager of Cather Pound Neihardt dining hall, Joel Fogerty is in charge of making sure the dining hall is compliant with the health department’s regulations. He has to hire supervisors and workers, and make sure they know the rules to keep the place clean and keep people from getting sick.

It isn’t easy.

“We have a series of six CDs that we have people watch, or they can take an online course,” Fogerty said. “Everybody does the food safety training once a year. It doesn’t make a difference if you wash tables, work in the dish room, or you work on the line.”

In Lincoln, anywhere that produces food for the public are regularly inspected by the Lincoln-Lancaster Health Department. The department inspects not only restaurants but the dining halls on campus as well.

And the report on the dining halls is a mixed bag.

In their last inspection, the Abel dining hall had six critical violations – violations that, if left uncorrected, are more likely to contribute to foodborne illness– and no non-critical violations. Non-critical violations are not directly related to the cause of foodborne illness and are normally related to the physical condition on an establishment.

Selleck dining hall had four critical violations and three non-critical violations. Harper dining hall and East Union dining hall both had three critical violations and two non-critical violations. CPN dining hall had two critical violations and six non-critical violations.

When compared to a selection of 11 downtown restaurants near campus, the dining halls are pretty similar. Panera Bread had four critical violations in their last report, and Raising Cane’s had three critical violations.

Sophomore Thomas Kaspar said the employees at CPN Dining run a tight ship.

“It is the assumption that you are getting a safe meal,” Kaspar said. “I would be less likely to assume I would get a disease here.”

In the dining halls, with hours-long meal times, Fogerty said one of the biggest things they worry about is the temperatures of foods. Dishes that are served cold must be below 41 degrees while hot food must be above 135 degrees. Employees check cooked foods during the cooking process and also before the meal once they are put out onto the serving line. Employees also check chilled foods before the beginning of each meal.

There are rules about leftovers, about how cold food must be two or four hours after cooking, about how they get the food to cool off, and it all has to be monitored and logged.

For the past three years, CPN Dining struggles with keeping foods cold enough on the salad bar.

“The salad bars are old pieces of equipment,” Fogerty said. “They only get down to about 48 degrees on their own, so we have to put out ice to get it down to 41 degrees.”

Fogerty said the reason the issue hasn’t been permanently fixed is due to the new dining hall, expected to replace CPN Dining in the fall of 2017.

“If we’re moving to a new place in a year, no one wants to spend $50,000 on salad bars you’re going to get rid of in a year,” Fogerty said.

Other dining halls struggle with keeping food cool. Harper Dining, East Campus Dining and Selleck Dining were cited for cold foods being above 41 degrees in 2015.

Out of 11 analyzed restaurants in downtown Lincoln, only one was cited with food temperature issues. In Buffalo Wild Wing’s latest inspection on December 3, 2015, a refrigerator was malfunctioning, causing the food inside to rise above 48 degrees.

Another factor of sanitation that is inspected is the dishwashing process. Dishes must be cleaned with a proper amount of sanitizer, with water above a specific temperature.

“On the back of the dishwasher, there’s four temperature gauges, one for each section,” Fogerty said. “We also have this nifty little thermometer thing that will go through the dishwasher cycle and take temperatures and save them. Then, you can look and see the highest temperatures it went through.”

Sanitation solution level issues seem to be common in both restaurants and dining halls. Four of the five dining halls and three of the 11 downtown restaurants were cited for sanitation solution issues in their latest inspection.

Unclean utensils and appliances were also prevalent in restaurant inspections. Five of the 11 downtown restaurants had utensils stored with food residue on them.

Fogerty said inspections offer a chance to see the truth of food facilities.

“I always like when the inspector comes around,” Fogerty said. “My view on inspections is, if you do it right, you shouldn’t have to do a dang thing.”