

Stories of the week
NATIONAL: California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a bill Monday limiting medical exemptions for vaccines.
INTERNATIONAL: 70,000 people, or 17% of all Bahamians, are homeless after Hurricane Dorian hit the area with 185-mph winds.

SHAFER



Shafer Dining Court was last inspected by the health department June 28, according to documents obtained by The Commonwealth Times. Photo by Jon Mirador

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The Shafer Court Dining Center location Market 810, known to students as Shafer, was last inspected by the Virginia Department of Health in June, but records have not been made available to the public after a change in the health department’s online database.

The Virginia Department of Health began a migration to a new database, Environmental Health Database, on June 20. Many Environmental Health services — such as the printing of approval letters and permits, onsite sewage system operation, maintenance reports and restaurant inspections — have not been made available online since then.

“This process is taking longer than expected and during this migration period, some Environmental Health services that rely on the use of the database continue to be interrupted,” the website states.

The most recent inspection obtained by The Commonwealth Times via a Freedom of Information Act request shows the dining hall was last inspected on June 25 with a follow-up on June 28.

The June 25 inspection found two violations for food contamination risks and temperature control for food storage. During this inspection, Bento Sushi, which was the source of most violations from a previous inspection in October, Stir Crazy and the grill station were not in operation due to summer break.

“Observed raw chicken over raw potatoes and raw broccoli ... in the fan fare area,” the report stated, citing that the violation was corrected during the inspection.

The second violation was found in the deli area, which was holding improperly cheese, cut cantaloupe and cut lettuce. During the inspection, the food was relocated. The follow-up inspection confirmed the temperature had been corrected.

In 2018, Shafer had significantly more

health code violations than the MCV dining hall, Jonah’s at Larrick Student Center. In the three health inspections at Jonah’s in 2018, two violations were found, and both were priority violations. Shafer had four health inspections last year, one being a follow-up. Nineteen violations were found, 10 of which were priority violations.

In past years, health inspections at Shafer occurred between two and four times a year, generally during spring and fall semesters. Legally, there must be at least one inspection annually.

The buffet-style dining hall has multiple food stations, including a salad and sandwich bar, pizza, burgers, sushi and other daily entrees.

The most recent inspection posted on the online database for ShakeSmart, a restaurant on the first floor of Shafer Dining Court, took place in June, when the database was last updated. According to the site, Einstein Bros Bagels in Shafer Court had its most recent inspection last September, although no violations were found during that inspection.

The Virginia Health Department database’s most recently posted health inspection of Shafer occurred Oct. 26, and followed up on eight violations found on Oct. 16.

Shafer’s eight violations found Oct. 16 included four for the Bento Sushi station and two for improper food temperatures. Another was for hand-drying station requirements, and one was for uncovered or unwrapped food.

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Four of the violations from mid-October were considered “priority” violations and were corrected during the inspection. Two of those violations regarded food being held at an improper temperature. The soup wasn’t hot enough, and cold-served tofu and quinoa weren’t served cold enough to stop the growth of harmful bacteria.

Another violation from the same inspection assessed employee health at Bento Sushi. Prior to the inspection, employees at Bento Sushi had not been made aware of the procedures for reporting information about their health. This counted as another violation corrected during the inspection.

The report states permit holders “must inform employees and conditional employees to report to the person in charge” if they are suspected of being exposed to diseases including typhoid, salmonella and norovirus.

There was a separate violation for the person in charge of Bento Sushi, who must inform employees and conditional employees of their responsibility to report illnesses, “as they relate to diseases transmissible through food.”

Bento Sushi received a violation for using acidified rice, which requires a variance — or special permission — from the health department.

“Food processes that require a variance have historically resulted in more foodborne illness than standard process,” the website states. “The variance requirement is designed to ensure that the proposed method of operation is carried out safely.”

Prior to correction, the made-to-order sushi did not provide a consumer advisory for tuna and salmon served raw or undercooked.

Some students said they already had a negative opinion of Shafer because they say it lacks vegetarian and vegan options.

“I’m worried,” freshman Syd Lewin said. “I’m not a huge fan of Shafer already because it lacks a lot of dietary options, but in terms of fruits and vegetables I’m worried to know what we’re getting.”

VCU spokesperson Mike Porter did not respond to a request for comment.

Health code violations in 2018

Health inspections
Follow-up inspections
Priority Violations
Total Violations

Jonah’s	Shafer
xxx	xxxxx
	x
xx	xxxxxxxxxxxx
xx	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx