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# Fellowship in Food Protection

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# **IFPTI Fellowship Cohort VII: Research Presentation**

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Amanda McDonnell

# Food Truck Risk Factors and Public Health Intervention Violations in Suffolk County, New York

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# Background



- Mobile food began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as covered wagons
- Mobile food vending industry grew after WWII
- In 2008 the food truck industry took off with Kogi Korean BBQ

# Background

- CDC estimates 1-in-6 Americans get sick from contaminated foods and beverages each year, and 3,000 die
- FDA has identified 5 risk factors that may lead to foodborne illness
  - Poor personal hygiene
  - Improper food holding/ time and temperature
  - Contaminated equipment/protection from contamination
  - Inadequate cooking
  - Food obtained from unsafe sources

# Background

- FDA Food Code addresses controls for these risk factors and established 5 public health interventions
  - Demonstration of knowledge of food safety
  - Employee health controls
  - Controlling hands as a vehicle of contamination
  - Time and temperature parameters for controlling pathogens
  - Consumer advisory

# Background

- From 2008 to 2018, the number of Suffolk County food trucks serving complex foods increased from **16** to **115**
  - Study the incidence of risk factors and public health interventions



# Problem Statement

Suffolk County does not currently track the frequency, types, and trends of the most common risk factors and public health intervention violations associated with food trucks.

# Research Questions

1. What is the frequency, types, and trends of the most common risk factors and public health intervention violations cited over the last 36 months on food trucks?
2. What are operator perceptions about the frequency, types, and trends of the most common risk factors and public health intervention violations identified in Suffolk County over the last 36 months?
3. What are the perceptions of the Nassau County Department of Health and NYC Dept. of Health & Mental Hygiene, two neighboring jurisdictions, about the frequency, types, and trends of the most common risk factors and public health intervention violations identified in Suffolk County over the last 36 months?

# Methodology

Collected risk factor and public health intervention violations data for past 36 months on mobile food trucks in Suffolk County

Tallied data from hand written reports

Entered data into an Excel spreadsheet and generated descriptive statistics

# Methodology

- Conducted phone interviews with food truck operators
- Discussed study with food truck operators and sought their input

# Methodology

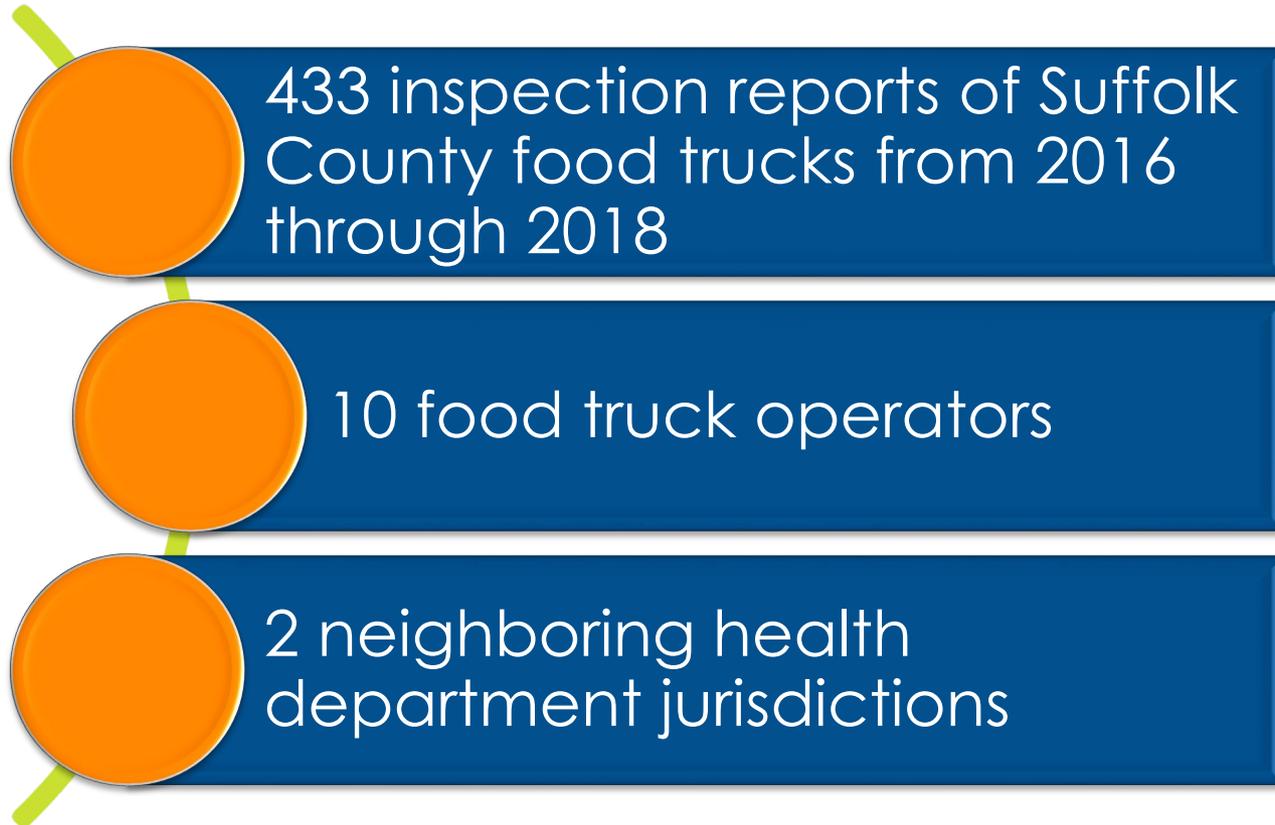
Truck operators were asked:

- How the Department can help food truck operators to improve food safety?
- What food truck operators could do to improve food safety on their vehicles?

# Methodology

- Conducted phone interviews with Nassau County Department of Health and New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene
  - The study was discussed to elicit their perceptions of the most common risk factors and public health intervention violations

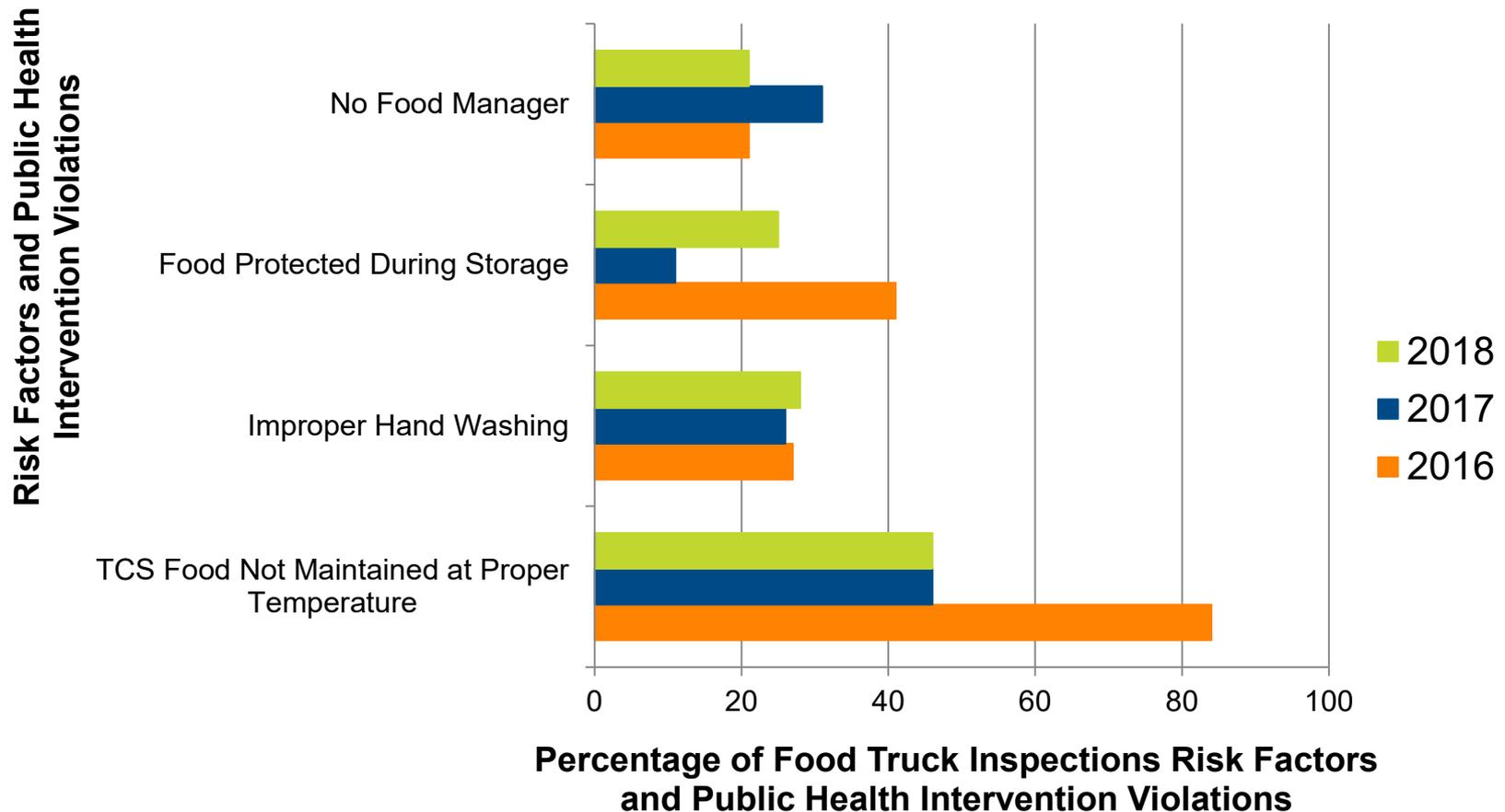
# Study Population



# Results

- Most common risk factors and public health intervention violations
  - The same four most common violations were found in 2016 – 2018 inspections
    - TCS foods not held at adequate temperature
    - Inadequate hand washing
    - Food not protected during storage
    - No food manager on site

## Suffolk County NY Most Common Risk Factors and Public Health Intervention Violations



# Results

**All 10 food truck operators agreed that these were the 4 risk factor and public health intervention violations they would expect to see:**

**30%** requested a food safety class specific to food trucks

**10%** felt that all food workers should take a food safety class

**20%** requested a self-inspection checklist or informational sheet of the most common violations

**20%** felt Suffolk County should increase enforcement action

**10%** felt Suffolk County should conduct only pre-operational inspections

**10%** think Suffolk County should conduct more unannounced operational field inspections

# Results

## What do food truck operators think that they can do to decrease violations and improve food safety?

**40%** felt that many truck operators know the rules but are not following them

**20%** felt that they should allow more time for set up

**30%** felt that operators only care about making money

**10%** felt that menus should be limited

# Results

- Neighboring health departments perceived that the top 4 risk factors and public health intervention violations discussed would be the same within their jurisdictions
  - Both agencies conduct inspections by appointment and unannounced inspections during operation
  - Both agreed that conducting more unannounced operational inspections would result in greater compliance

# Conclusions

- Knowing the most commonly cited risk factors and public health intervention violations may provide information for Suffolk County to improve its food truck inspection program
  - Both food truck operators and neighboring regulatory agencies provided valuable suggestions

# Conclusions (continued)

- Common food truck risk factor and public health intervention violations coincide with what truck operators and neighboring health department jurisdictions perceive as most common
- Majority of inspections conducted are scheduled in advance in jurisdictions contacted
  - May not provide full picture of operation
  - Fewer opportunities to educate operators

# Recommendations

1. Provide food safety class specific to food trucks
2. Create self-inspection checklist for operators
3. Create an informational poster
4. Conduct annual unannounced operational inspections in the field

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# Questions?

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