

Stadium food undergoes healthy dose of inspections

By Chris Murray, Reno Gazette-Journal

Wolf Pack football fans consumed almost 13,000 hot dogs and more than 3,200 plates of nachos and sucked down nearly 27,000 sodas and waters last season at Mackay Stadium.

But just how sanitary is that food?

Almost one-third of professional sports arenas had “critical” or “major” health violations in at least half of their concession stands in 2009, according to a recent national report.

Local sports fans can breathe – or eat – easy. The Wolf Pack’s Mackay Stadium and Lawlor Events Center; the Triple-A Reno Aces Ballpark; and the Reno Events Center, where the NBA D-League Reno Bighorns play, all earned good grades from food safety agencies.

Through open record requests, the Reno Gazette-Journal obtained the past two years of health inspections conducted by the Nevada State Health Division and Washoe County Health District, which found only one “critical” violation at the more than 40 individual concession stands at Wolf Pack, Aces and Bighorns facilities. The majority of concessions received scores of 100 and no operation scored lower than 90 (on a 0-100 scale).

The largest violation in that two-year span occurred when an inspector observed an employee handle paper money with a gloved hand, then proceed to prepare a hot dog at Aces Ballpark. That, combined with a non-working hand sink, led to a temporary closing of the concession.

Other minor violations included: hot dogs being cooked at 112 degrees rather than the mandatory 140 degrees (Bighorns); a dirty deflector plate on an ice machine (Bighorns); missing thermometers in holding units (Aces); lack of running water at a hand sink (Aces); observing an employee eating while operating a concession stand (Wolf Pack); and not properly labelling items stored near a concession stand (Wolf Pack).

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