



Evaluating Refrigerated Trucks

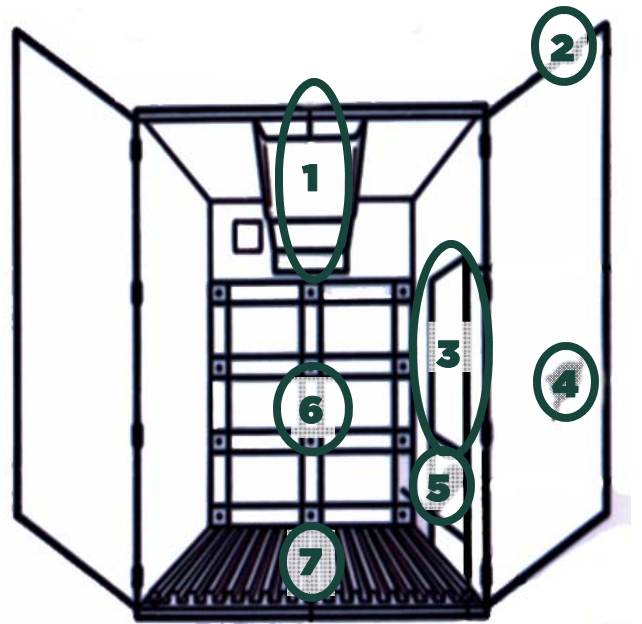
Implementing good food safety in the production of fruits and vegetables is an important and difficult thing to do. The work that you put into delivering a safe, wholesome product can quickly be undone if the vehicle transporting your produce is not in working order or poorly cared for.

This guidance document and episode will offer a number of food safety considerations regarding evaluating refrigerated trucks. A copy of a preflight checklist will also be included in the show notes to include as part of your GAP manual.

It is important to consider general cleanliness of the cargo area. The area should be free of the odor of rot or manure. It should be clean and free of debris on the floor. If you are contracting a hauler, consider asking the driver to see the hauling history of the vehicle. This could help alert you to any potential red flags. The floor drains should be unobstructed to allow for adequate drainage of liquid. Look for any residual standing liquid on the floor that might be an indication of a problem.

The walls and doors should be undamaged. The weather stripping on the door seals should be undamaged for both the rear and side doors and both should close tightly. The air delivery chute baffles should be in good repair and allow for uniform air circulation throughout the unit.

The front bulkhead should also be installed and in good repair. This helps ensure airflow between the produce and the front of the truck in the event the boxes shift in transit. You may want to ask the hauler how frequently, or if, they check the



1. Check the condition of the air delivery chute.
2. Check for door seal damage.
3. Check for a tight fitting side door
4. Check for damage to the door.
5. Check for damage to the wall.
6. Check that the front bulkhead is installed.
7. Check that the floor is clean and that it drains properly.



temperature of the cargo area. You can verify their responses by checking their temp logs.

If you are contracting a trucking company to haul your produce to a retailer, it is within your right to demand a truck that meets the specifications for these food safety standards. If you haul your own produce, you can use the preflight checklist as a cleaning protocol to ensure you are on target for your in-house food safety standards.

In either case, specify in your food safety manual that you will follow a set of guidelines to determine the readiness for transport of all produce trucks, then refer to the checklist. Include a copy of the checklist in the food safety manual for the auditor to see

As with every other aspect of food safety, it is important to document that you inspected the truck after having done it. A truck inspection record is included in this episode's show notes.

Always remember, the auditor is looking for evidence of a system written in the Food Safety Manual to minimize incidence of foodborne illness, visual evidence that it is taking place and documentation that it has been taking place in the past. Writing an inspection policy is the first step. Inspecting every truck is the next step. Documenting that you have inspected refrigerated trucks prior to loading is the final step.