

Essential Food Safety Information

If you provide or supply food regularly, you must register the business as food premises with your Local Environmental Health Department. Registration is free and failure to register is an offence.

Registration must be renewed after each change of ownership. Environmental Health Practitioners carry out routine food hygiene inspections of food businesses to ensure compliance with Food Safety Legislation.

Food Safety

The main safety risks are food poisoning and food allergies.

Food poisoning is a much higher risk in premises offering prepared food. You can minimise the risk by implementing good hygiene practices and by properly maintaining your premises.

An approach known as Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points (HACCP) is a useful way of maintaining control over all food safety concerns in your kitchen. A free pack called 'Safer Food, Better Business' is also available.

Food allergies are a complex issue with the potential to be life threatening. Therefore you should have a good knowledge of food allergies. Comprehensive and accurate menu information should be available to your customers. For more information on food allergies see the food labelling leaflet.

Licences for sale or supply of alcohol are now dealt with by your local Environmental Health Department, not the Licensing Justices at the Magistrates Court. If you wish to sell alcohol and do not already have a licence, you need to contact your local Environmental Health Department.

Food Hygiene

Kitchens and food handling areas must comply with the requirements of the Food Hygiene Regulations.

In essence this means that your premises must:

- be in a sound condition
- be easy to clean
- be kept clean
- have adequate provision (including drainage) for washing food, equipment and hands
- have adequate storage and preparation facilities
- be well lit and ventilated
- be proof against pests.

In January 2006, new requirements were introduced. These include changes to the types of written records you need to keep to show you are controlling food safety risks in your business. Your local Environmental Health Department will be able to advise you on the requirements for your business and the free pack 'Safer Food, Better Business' is available to help you.

The main things to remember for good food hygiene are the four 'Cs'

- Cleaning
- Cross Contamination
- Cooking
- Chilling

In practical terms this means that:

- Personal hygiene standards must be high,
- Hands must be washed frequently before and after
 - food preparation
 - handling raw meat and eggs
 - contact with animals
 - using the toilet.

- Food preparation must be avoided during and for at least 48 hours after bouts of sickness and diarrhoea.
- Smoking should be avoided and pets kept away from food handling areas.
- Passing of bacteria from raw unprepared food to cooked and ready to eat foods must be avoided by keeping hands, surfaces and equipment clean.
- Food should be prepared in accordance with its cooking and storage instructions
- Fridges must be correctly stocked with raw meat stored at the bottom and kept separate from cooked foods.
- All foods should be kept covered or in lidded containers. Date marking is useful for effective stock rotation.
- Temperature control is crucially important. Fridges which store 'high risk' and perishable foods, such as meat and dairy produce, must keep the food at a temperature of 8°C or less. To achieve this the air temperature of the fridge needs to be between 1°C and 5°C. A thermometer should be available and the temperature checked regularly. Written temperature records are recommended. The recommended operating temperature for a freezer is -18°C to -21°C.
- Food handlers must be supervised, instructed or trained in food hygiene to a level appropriate to their work.
- In the majority of establishments it is recommended that the main food handler be formally trained. Training should be to the level of the Foundation Certificate in Food Hygiene with refresher training undertaken every 3-5 years.

Further sources of information:

The Environmental Health Department of your local Council for information and advice.

The following leaflets are available from the Food Standards Agency (Tel: 0845 606 0667 or email: foodstandards@ecologistics.co.uk)

You can also visit the Food Standards Agency website at www.food.gov.uk

Food Safety. A practical guide for managers	FSA / 0705 / 1002
A Guide to Food Hazards and your business	FSA / 0411 / 0202
Food Law – inspections and your business	FSA / 0431 / 0202
Food Safety Regulation	FSA / 0421 / 0202