



The Refrigeration Experts



Foster Refrigerator • White Paper

# Inspection

by an Environmental  
Health Officer  
(EHO)

What you should know



## Introduction

Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and Trading Standards Officers (TSOs) have the right to enter and inspect food premises at any reasonable time. They do not have to make appointments and can arrive without advance notice.

This Foster white paper outlines what these inspectors are looking for and provides guidance on good practice in food handling and storage.

This is only an advisory guide. For detailed information contact your Trading Standards Office and/or the Environmental Health Department of your local council.

## Who can inspect your premises?

EHOs and TSOs carry out routine inspections and may visit if there has been a complaint. Some premises may be visited every six months or so, others less frequently. You should always operate as though an inspection could take place at any time.

Inspectors will look at how you operate your business, identify potential hazards and ensure you are complying with the law.

## What powers do inspectors have?

Inspectors can take photographs, inspect records and take food samples. If they find problems, they may write to you and ask you to put them right. If the law has been broken, they will issue you with a formal improvement notice.

In serious cases they can seize suspect foods and may decide to recommend a prosecution, which can result in closure, fines and even imprisonment.

## What are your legal responsibilities?

Your responsibility, whether you run a hot dog stand or a three-star restaurant, is to operate within the Food Hygiene Regulations 2006. These laws are common throughout the European Community.

Anyone who handles or sells food, or who cleans equipment used for food, is governed by the regulations. If you are a manufacturer of animal-based products (eg dairies and fish markets) there are additional specific rules you must follow (see 'further information').

### As a food business you must ensure you do the following:

- Supply and sell food hygienically.
- Identify food safety hazards.
- Know which steps in your activities are critical for food safety.
- Ensure safety controls are in place, are maintained and are regularly reviewed.

## Your premises: the basic requirements

### You must make sure your entire premises are:

- Clean and in a good state of repair.
- Designed and built to enable good hygiene practices.
- Adequately supplied with clean drinking water.
- Properly protected against pests.
- Adequately lit.
- Adequately ventilated.
- Provided with clean lavatories that do not lead directly into food rooms.
- Provided with adequate hand washing facilities.
- Adequately drained.

### The requirements are more detailed in rooms where food is actually prepared:

- Surfaces (including worktops, walls, floors and equipment finishes) should be easy to clean and, where necessary, to disinfect.
- There must be good (separate) facilities for washing food and equipment.
- There must also be adequate facilities for the storage and removal of food waste.

How these general requirements are applied in practice depends on the nature of your business. For example, a restaurant may have a different cleaning regime than a bakery. It is up to you in the first instance to apply the correct standards to your business.

## Personal hygiene for you and your staff

The hygiene (or lack of it) of your staff is ultimately your responsibility. The general rule is that anyone working within a food handling area must maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and must work in a clean, hygienic way.

### Food handlers must wear clean overclothes and in some cases protective overclothes, as needed.

#### Basic requirements are to:

- Routinely wash hands.
- Never smoke in food areas.
- Report any illness, wounds or infections to the manager or supervisor.

Employees reporting illness may need to be excluded from food handling areas. If you think this is appropriate it needs to be done without delay. If in any doubt about excluding staff, seek medical advice or contact Environmental Health Services at your local council.





## How should you deal with the food hazards issue?

The principles detailed here are based on a formal system called HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points), with the principle of 'Safer Food, Better Business' (SFBB).

There are a number of recognised packages which can help you assess and control food hazards in line with the HACCP/SFBB structure. If your business is relatively small and uncomplicated you may not need to use one of these but if you think it might help you can ask your EHO for guidance on obtaining a package.

Control of food hazards is something professional food businesses have always done as part of day-to-day good practice but you must not ignore this part of the legislation. Going through the process of assessing hazards may show up problems you hadn't noticed before – hazards your EHO will be looking out for.

The key is: **IDENTIFY, CONTROL** and **CHECK**.

### Identify

Be as systematic as possible. Look at everything you do and look for three kinds of hidden hazards: microbiological, chemical and physical. You'll find further information on the Foster blog.

#### Microbiological:

- Could bacteria be present (in raw meat for example)?
- Could it contaminate other foods?
- Could it survive the cooking process and remain dangerous?

#### Chemical:

- Could chemicals (such as cleaning fluids) get into the food?

#### Physical:

- Could things like broken glass or insects get into the food?
- Always make sure you look at every stage of your operation, not just preparation.

#### Look for hazards during the Critical Control Points. These are:

- Purchase and delivery of food
- Storage of food
- Preparation of food
- Cooking of food
- Storage after cooking

## Raw materials and water

Water is easily overlooked but you must make sure there is an adequate supply of potable (drinking) water in your premises for cleaning food.

The raw food materials you use are also your responsibility. You must make sure you don't buy foods which might be contaminated in any way, whether with parasites or foreign substances. Once food is on your premises you must take great care to protect it against the danger of contamination from the environment, from handling and from contact with other foods.

For example, uncooked meats should be kept away from any cooked foods. This includes avoiding contact through work surfaces or equipment such as knives.

## Emphasis on food hazards

Regulations put an emphasis on identifying and controlling food hazards at every stage of preparation, storage and selling. Fundamentally this means you must always:

- Identify all steps in your activities which are **CRITICAL TO FOOD SAFETY**.
- Ensure **ADEQUATE SAFETY CONTROLS** are in place, maintained and reviewed.

**This regulation covers all food outlets, regardless of size.**

## Control

Controlling food hazards is not difficult as long as your controls are practical, understood by all your staff and carried out routinely.

### Typical controls of hazards are:

- Buying supplies from reputable sources.
- Routinely checking your raw materials for contamination.
- Rotating stock and using food within date marks.
- Keeping different food types separate to avoid cross-contamination.
- Correct cooking and reheating.
- Storing/displaying at correct temperatures.
- Good cleanliness routines (for premises and staff).
- Regular, recorded, food hygiene training.

## Check

Identifying and controlling hazards will only be effective if you check and check again that your procedures are working properly.

Simple records may be all that is necessary but make sure you DO check - and be sure to record the fact you have checked.

For example, check the temperature of refrigerators regularly and record it on a chart with date and time. Check foods are being stored in the appropriate place - and record that too.

The way you check and record is not defined in law but you must make sure your controls are effective and you must take action to put right any problems your checks reveal.

While written records are not in themselves a legal requirement, they will give you a structure to follow and can provide vital evidence if your practice is ever questioned. Without records you may have no defence.

## A word about temperature control

Temperature control is a crucial part of controlling food hazards and a vital part of the regulations introduced in 2006. Basic guidelines can be found towards the end of this document, but please refer to our 'Food Temperature Laws' white paper for all the information you need as it covers legislation about temperature and refrigeration in more detail.

## For more information

All the information in this white paper is based on current advice from the government. A number of publications are obtainable giving more detail and covering individual products and specific areas of the food industry:

Food Standards Agency [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)

Department of Health [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)  
Tel: 020 7210 4850

Copies of the current legislation are available from the Stationery Office [www.tsoshop.co.uk](http://www.tsoshop.co.uk)

Oldmedow Road, King's Lynn Norfolk, PE30 4JU  
Tel: +44 (0) 1553 691122

## Other essential Foster white papers you might find useful include:

Energy Efficiency

Hydrocarbons in Refrigeration  
- What Caterers Need to Know

The Climate Change Levy

Food Temperature Laws

Food Safety & E. Coli

Food Hygiene & Staff Training

Handling and Serving Ice

Safe Food Storage

The Safe Way to Blast Chill, Freeze & Thaw

Plan for a Catering Crisis

Coldroom Panels, Polyurethane Foam  
& Fire Ratings: An Update

HACCP: What you need to know

○ [www.fosterrefrigerator.com/food-safety](http://www.fosterrefrigerator.com/food-safety)

○ Email: [marketing@foster-gamko.com](mailto:marketing@foster-gamko.com)

○ Tel: +44 (0) 1553 691122

# Checklists

To ensure you are always prepared for a visit from your EHO, we recommend you use the checklist below. Why not print it out and put it somewhere handy for staff to frequently refer to?

## Personal hygiene

- Wash hands before handling any food and after using the toilet, handling refuse etc.
- Wear disposable gloves to handle raw food.
- Use coloured, waterproof plasters on cuts and grazes.

## Kitchen hygiene

- Use colour coded equipment for different food types.
- Keep to separate preparation areas for different food types.
- Use disposable cleaning cloths.
- Take adequate pest-prevention measures.

## Incoming food

- Check correct temperature and reject if wrong.
- Check for quality.
- Place in correct refrigerator/freezer immediately.

## Store food safely

- Raw food in lidded containers.
- Use cling film or foil as appropriate.
- Never place food directly on shelving.
- Label clearly and rotate stock according to date.
- Use within food manufacturer's timescales.
- Don't overload refrigerators.

## Separate raw and cooked food

- Keep separate to avoid cross-contamination.
- If separate storage is impossible ALWAYS keep cooked food and high-risk food ABOVE raw food.

## Beware hot food in storage

- Hot food raises the temperature in refrigerators.
- Fast-chill first through the 'bacteria danger zone' (+3°C to +63°C).
- Use blast chillers or blast freezers for safest results.

## Beware food in warm kitchens

- Keep food in storage until used.
- Keep all foods covered.
- Once prepared, return food to refrigerator or cook immediately.
- Ensure frozen food is totally thawed before cooking.
- Use controlled thaw cabinet for safest results.
- Never refreeze after thawing.

## Store at correct temperature

- Dairy goods +1°C to +4°C.
- Fruit and veg +6°C to +8°C.
- Cooked and prepared foods 0°C to +2°C.
- Fish and seafood +1°C to -1°C.
- Raw Meat 0°C to -2°C.
- Cooked Meat +1°C to +4°C.
- Frozen Foods -18°C to -21°C.

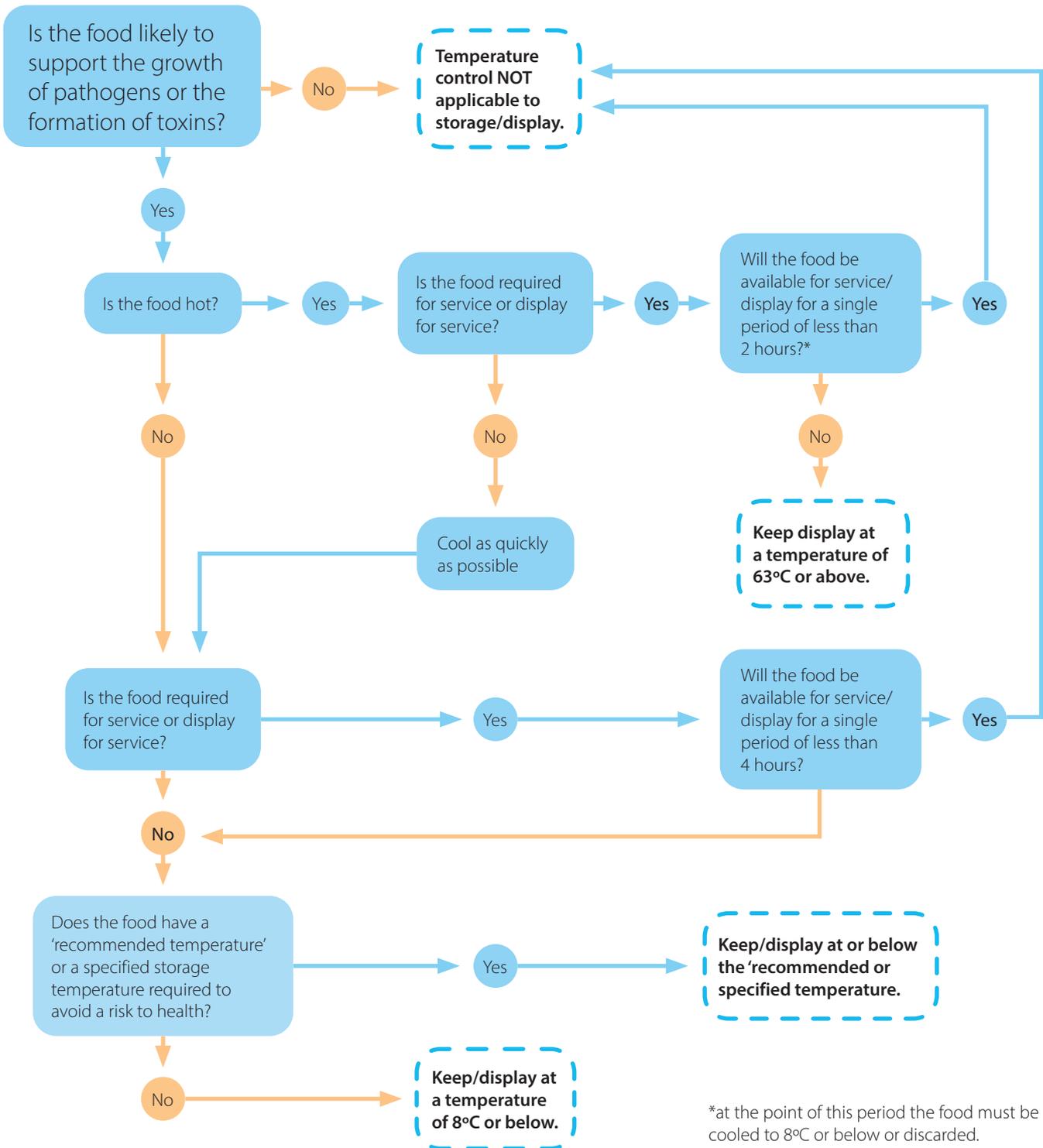
## Clean to a routine

- Display cleaning routine clearly and ensure staff comply.
- Never use abrasive materials.
- Use spray/liquid cleaner with disposable cloths.
- Wipe spills immediately.
- Clean all surfaces regularly.
- Empty and clean refrigerators thoroughly once weekly.
- Store food safely in other cabinets.
- Remember to clean door gaskets regularly.
- After cleaning allow cabinet to reach correct temperature before replacing food.

## Check regularly

- Undertake daily checks to ensure thermometer readings agree with correct storage temperatures for the food type.
- Check door gasket for damage – ensure good seals.
- Check ice build-up in freezers.
- Check all food storage and preparation procedures are complied with.
- Check that your staff understand all your procedures.

# Temperature control for catering operations



\*at the point of this period the food must be cooled to 8°C or below or discarded. It may not be displayed for any subsequent period outside of temperature control.

**Please note:** The above are basic guidelines, be sure to download our 'Food Temperature Laws' white paper at [www.fosterrefrigerator.com/food-safety](http://www.fosterrefrigerator.com/food-safety) and check out our blog for further important information and essential details.



The Refrigeration Experts



By Appointment to  
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II  
Suppliers of Commercial Refrigeration  
Foster Refrigerator, King's Lynn



Oldmedow Road, King's Lynn,  
Norfolk, PE30 4JU  
Tel: +44 (0)1553 691122

Visit us on our website:

[www.fosterrefrigerator.com](http://www.fosterrefrigerator.com)



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