

Inspection

by an Environmental Health
Practitioner

What you should know



Good practice in food handling and storage

Environmental Health Practitioners (EHPs) and Trading Standards Officers 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 Blue Paper outlines what these inspectors are looking for, and offers a guide to good practice in food handling and storage within the latest legislation - The Food Hygiene Regulations 2006.

This can only be 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?

EHPs and Trading Standards Officers 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 (e.g. dairies and fish markets) there are additional, specific, rules which you must follow (see Further Information).

As a food business you must carry out at least 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 that your whole premises are:

- Clean and in a good state of repair
- Designed and built to permit 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

In rooms where food is prepared the requirements are more detailed:

- 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- and it is up to you in the first instance to apply the standards to your business. A restaurant for example may well have a different cleaning regime from a bakery.

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 and hygienic way.

Food handlers must wear clean, and where appropriate, protective overclothes. 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.

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 that you don't buy foods which might be contaminated in anyway, 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, whether from the environment, from handling, or from contact with other foods.

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

The new emphasis on food hazards

Unlike previous legislation, the 2006 Regulations put more emphasis on identifying and controlling food hazards at every stage of preparation, storage and selling. Fundamentally this means that 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.

How should you deal with the food hazards issue?

The principles above 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 to 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 this would help you can ask your EHP for guidance on obtaining a package.

In many ways control of food hazards is very much what 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 that you hadn't noticed before – hazards that your EHP will be looking out for.

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

Identify them

Be as systematic as possible. Look at everything you do and look for three kinds of hidden hazards: microbiological, chemical and physical.

Microbiological:

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

Control them

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 them

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 record that you have checked.

For example, check the temperature of refrigerators regularly and record it on a chart with date and time. Check that 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 that your checks reveal.

Written records are not in themselves a legal requirement, but they are definitely advisable. A written record 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 2006 Regulations.

There is not enough space in this Blue Paper to consider temperature control separately, but please refer to Foster's Blue Paper called 'Food Temperature Laws', which covers legislation about temperature and refrigeration in more detail. Please ask your dealer for a copy, or contact Foster direct. (See overleaf for basic guidelines).

For more information

All the information in this Blue Paper is based on current (2006) advice from the Government. A number of publications are obtainable giving more detail and covering individual products and specific areas of the food industry.

Contact:-
Food Standards Agency, www.food.gov.uk
Department of Health, Tel: 020 7210 4850, www.dh.gov.uk
Copies of the current legislation are available from the Stationery Office, www.tsoshop.co.uk

Check Lists

Foster Refrigerator recommend you use the checklist below for your refrigeration to be sure you are always prepared for a visit from your EHP.

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 time-scales
- 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 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

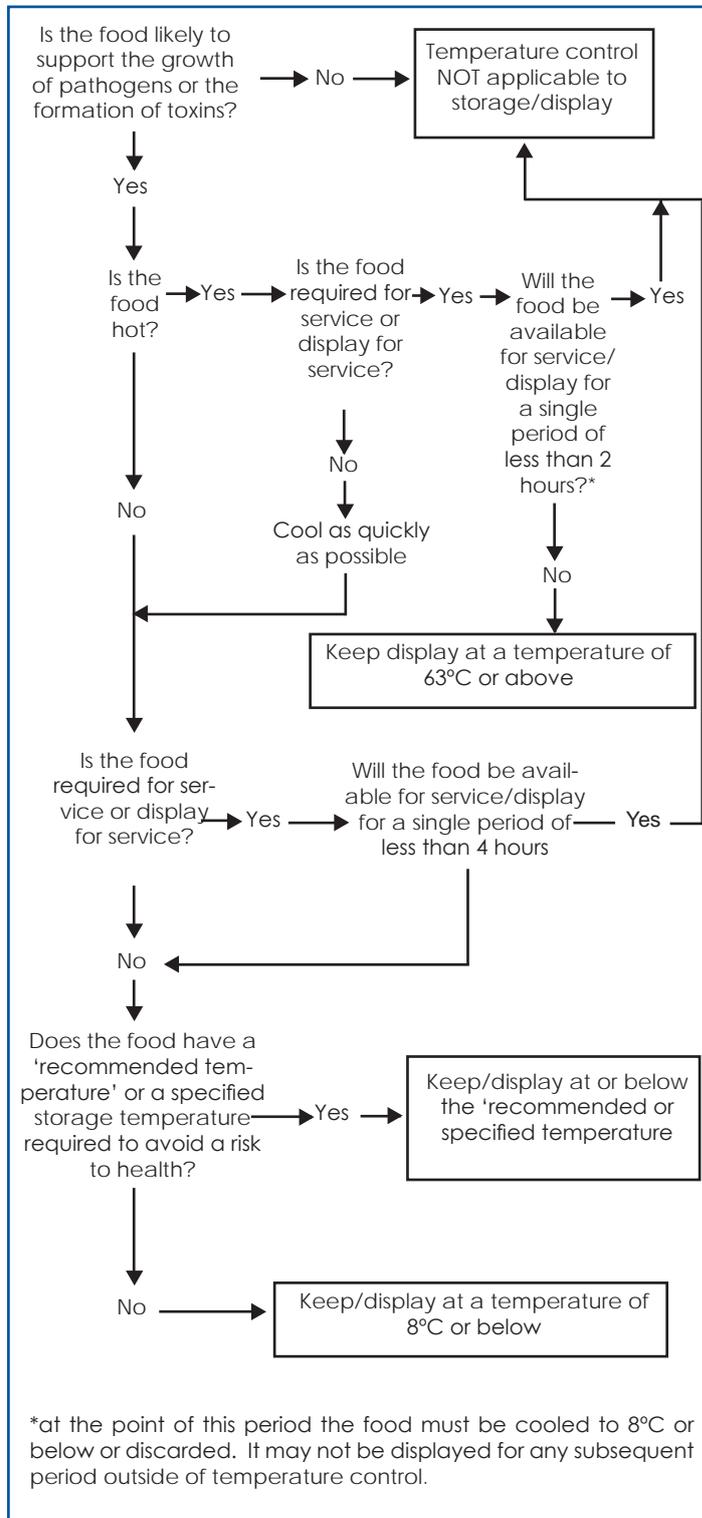
Clean to a routine

- Display 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 – Always

- Check daily that 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

Figure 1: Temperature control for catering operations



For copies of our other Blue Papers, visit www.fosterrefrigerator.co.uk/food_safety or call 0843 216 8800



Oldmedow Road, King's Lynn Norfolk PE30 4JU
 Tel: 0843 216 8800 Fax: 0843 216 4700
 Visit us on our website:
<http://www.fosterrefrigerator.co.uk>