

Hygiene Standards for all Food Businesses

Food hygiene laws are not simply a list of rules. They are intended to let food business operators assess the risks to food safety in their business and apply controls that are relevant to those risks. This means the standards of hygiene for one type of business will differ to the standards required in another business.

The wording used in the food hygiene regulations includes the terms 'suitable' 'sufficient' 'appropriate' and 'where necessary.' These enable food business operators, in the first instance, to decide what standards apply. The role of Food Safety Officers is then to consider how the business operates, what the risks to food safety in that businesses are likely to be and assess if the food business operator is effectively controlling those risks, and is operating their business hygienically.

This advice sheet gives a summary of the basic hygiene rules that apply to most food businesses. For detailed guidance on the hygiene rules please refer to the sector specific (catering, retail, baking etc.) Industry Guide to Good Hygiene Practice produced by the Food Standards Agency (www.food.gov.uk).

Section 1: General requirements for food premises

- Food premises must be kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition.
- The layout, design, construction, siting and size of a premises should permit adequate maintenance and cleaning, avoid air-borne contamination and permit good food hygiene practices, which includes protecting food against risks of contamination and, in particular, pest control.
- Where necessary, suitable temperature-controlled handling and storage conditions must be provided and designed to allow temperatures to be monitored.
- There must be an adequate number of flush lavatories, which do not to open directly into rooms in which food is handled.
- There must be an adequate number of washbasins that are suitably located, provided with hot and cold running water, materials for cleaning hands and drying hands hygienically. Where necessary, the facilities for washing food must be separate from the hand-washing facilities.
- Sufficient natural or mechanical ventilation is required. Airflow from a contaminated area to a clean area must be avoided and filters and other parts that require cleaning or replacement must be readily accessible. Sanitary conveniences must also have good ventilation.
- There must be adequate natural and/or artificial lighting, and adequate waste water drainage.
- Where necessary, adequate changing facilities for food handlers are required.

- Cleaning agents and disinfectants are not to be stored in areas where food is handled. This is to prevent chemical contamination of food. The safe use of chemicals will be part of the food safety management system.

Section 2: Specific requirements in rooms where food is prepared, treated or processed.

- Floors must be maintained in a sound condition and be easy to clean and, where necessary, disinfected. They must allow adequate surface drainage where this is appropriate.
- Walls are to be maintained in a sound condition and be easy to clean and, where necessary, disinfected. Wall surfaces should have a smooth finish.
- Ceilings (or, where there are no ceilings, the interior surface of the roof) and overhead fixtures must be constructed and finished so the accumulation of dirt is prevented and the likelihood of condensation forming is reduced. The finish should also prevent the shedding of particles.
- Windows and other openings must be constructed to prevent the accumulation of dirt. Insect-proof screens should be fitted if this is necessary – for example where there is a likelihood of insects getting into food rooms. If open windows would result in contamination they should remain closed and mechanical extraction provided.
- Doors must be easy to clean and, where necessary, disinfected. For example if they are close to food preparation areas. Door surfaces should be smooth and non-absorbent.

*all surfaces in a food room should be constructed of washable, non-absorbent, impervious and non-toxic materials. Ideally they should also be reasonably durable. If food business operators can demonstrate that other materials are suitable then their use may be acceptable.

- Where necessary, adequate facilities are required for cleaning, disinfecting and storing utensils and equipment. They must be easy to clean and have an adequate supply of hot and cold water.
- Adequate provision must also be made for washing food – if food is to be washed as part of the food preparation process.
- Every sink or other such facility provided for washing food must have an adequate supply of hot and/or cold water and be kept clean and, where necessary, disinfected.

Section 3: Requirements for movable or temporary premises (such as marquees, market stalls and mobile food vehicles), private houses used for the purposes of a food business, and vending machines.

- Such premises and vending machines must be sited, designed, constructed and be kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition so as to avoid the risk of contamination, in particular contamination from animals and pests.

- Appropriate facilities are required for food handlers to maintain good personal hygiene. This includes facilities for washing and drying hands, hygienic sanitary arrangements and changing facilities.
- Any surface in contact with food must be maintained in a sound condition and be easy to clean and, where necessary, disinfected. Such surfaces must be constructed of smooth, washable, corrosion-resistant and non-toxic materials, unless the food business operator can demonstrate that other materials used are appropriate.
- Adequate provision for cleaning and, where necessary, disinfecting working utensils and equipment is required.
- If foodstuffs are to be cleaned then adequate provision must be made for this to be carried out hygienically.
- There must be an adequate supply of hot and/or cold potable (drinking) water.
- Adequate arrangements must be provided for the disposal of waste – using domestic bins may not be permitted for the disposal of commercial waste.
- Adequate facilities and/or arrangements for maintaining and monitoring food temperature conditions must be available

Section 4: Transport

- Any containers used for transporting foodstuffs must be kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition. They should be designed and constructed to permit adequate cleaning and disinfection. Containers used for foodstuffs must not be used for other purposes if this would result in a risk of contamination. Similarly, there must be strict separation of raw and ready to eat foods – therefore separate containers should be used for this purpose.
- If conveyances and/or containers have been used for transporting anything other than foodstuffs or for transporting different foodstuffs, there must be effective cleaning and, where necessary, disinfection between loads to avoid the risk of contamination.
- Where necessary, conveyances and/or containers used for transporting foodstuffs must be capable of keeping foodstuffs at appropriate temperatures and allow those temperatures to be monitored.

Section 5: Food equipment

- All articles, fittings and equipment with which food comes into contact must be effectively cleaned and, where necessary, disinfected. Cleaning and disinfection must take place at a frequency sufficient to avoid any risk of contamination. Such articles, fittings and equipment must be so

constructed, be of such materials and be kept in such good order, repair and condition as to minimise any risk of contamination.

- With the exception of non-returnable containers and packaging, such items must be so constructed, be of such materials and be kept in such good order, repair and condition as to enable them to be kept clean and, where necessary, to be disinfected.
- Cleaning of the areas surrounding articles, fittings and equipment should be possible.

Section 6: Food waste

- Food waste and other refuse must be removed from rooms where food is present as quickly as possible to avoid their accumulation. They must be stored in closable containers, unless food business operators can demonstrate that other types of containers are appropriate. Containers must be of an appropriate construction, kept in sound condition, be easy to clean and, where necessary, disinfected.
- Adequate provision must be made for storing and disposing of waste. Refuse stores must be designed and managed in such a way as to enable them to be kept clean and, where necessary, free of animals and pests.

Section 7: Water supply

- There must be an adequate supply of potable (drinking) water, which is to be used whenever necessary to ensure that foodstuffs are not contaminated.
- Ice which comes into contact with food or which may contaminate food must be made from potable water

Section 8: Personal hygiene

- Every person working in a food-handling area must maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and wear suitable, clean and, where necessary, protective clothing.
- No person suffering from, or being a carrier of a disease likely to be transmitted through food or afflicted, for example, with infected wounds, skin infections, sores or diarrhoea is to be permitted to handle food or enter any food-handling area in any capacity if there is any likelihood of direct or indirect contamination.
- Any person so affected and employed in a food business and who is likely to come into contact with food is to report immediately the illness or symptoms, and if possible their causes, to the food business operator.

Chapter 9: Provisions applicable to foodstuffs

- Raw materials or ingredients, other than live animals, or any other material used in processing products, must not be accepted by the business if they are known to be, or might reasonably be expected to be, contaminated with parasites, pathogenic microorganisms or toxic, decomposed or foreign substances to such an extent that, even after normal hygienic sorting and/or processing the final product would be unfit for human consumption.
- Raw materials and all ingredients stored in a food business must be kept in appropriate conditions designed to prevent harmful deterioration and protect them from contamination.
- At all stages of production, processing and distribution, food must be protected against any contamination likely to render the food unfit for human consumption, injurious to health or contaminated in such a way that it would be unreasonable to expect it to be consumed in that state.
- Adequate procedures must be in place to control pests. Adequate procedures are also to be in place to prevent domestic animals from having access to places where food is prepared, handled or stored.
- Raw materials, ingredients, intermediate products and finished products likely to support the reproduction of pathogenic micro-organisms or the formation of toxins must not be kept at temperatures that might result in a risk to health.
- The cold chain is not to be interrupted. However, limited periods outside temperature control are permitted, to accommodate the practicalities of handling during preparation, transport, storage, display and service of food, provided that it does not result in a risk to health.
- Food businesses manufacturing, handling and wrapping processed foodstuffs must have suitable rooms, large enough for the separate storage of raw materials from processed material and sufficient separate refrigerated storage.
- Where foodstuffs are to be held or served at chilled temperatures they are to be cooled as quickly as possible following the heat-processing stage, or final preparation stage if no heat process is applied, to a temperature which does not result in a risk to health.
- The thawing of foodstuffs is to be undertaken in such a way as to minimise the risk of growth of pathogenic microorganisms or the formation of toxins in the foods. During thawing, foods are to be subjected to temperatures that would not result in a risk to health. Where run-off liquid from the thawing process may present a risk to health it is to be adequately drained. Following thawing,

food is to be handled in such a manner as to minimise the risk of growth of pathogenic microorganisms or the formation of toxins.

- Hazardous and/or inedible substances, including animal feed, are to be adequately labelled and stored in separate and secure containers.

Section 10: Wrapping and packaging of foodstuffs

- Material used for wrapping and packaging must not be a source of contamination. They must be stored in such a manner that they are not exposed to a risk of contamination and wrapping and packaging operations must be carried out so as to avoid contamination of the products.
- Where appropriate, and in particular in the case of cans and glass jars, the integrity of the container's construction and their cleanliness is to be assured. Wrapping and packaging material re-used for foodstuffs is to be easy to clean and, where necessary, to disinfect.

Section 11: Training

- Food handlers must receive adequate supervision, instruction and/or training in food hygiene. Each food business must decide what training or supervision their food handlers need by identifying the areas of their work most likely to affect food hygiene.
- Any person that is responsible for the development and maintenance of food safety management procedures must have received adequate training in the application of 'HACCP' principles.

The standards are enforced through the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013, which implement the hygiene requirements of Regulation (EC) 852/2004. Further details are available at www.food.gov.uk.

Other regulations cover the safety and traceability of food, the description, labelling and composition of food and the import of food and sale of imported foods. Details of these are available from the Environmental Health Team: email ehs@middlesbrough.gov.uk Tel. 01642 726001.
Web: www.middlesbrough.gov.uk.