

HACCP

An Update for Catering Businesses



Safer Food, Better Business



How to ensure your business meets the latest food safety requirements

The catering industry is experiencing the biggest changes in food safety laws for 15 years, due to new legislation which came into effect on 1st January 2006. The legislation affects all food businesses, large AND small, including caterers, primary producers (such as farmers), manufacturers, distributors and retailers. How the legislation affects you will depend on the size and type of your business.

How has the law changed?

The legislation is being changed to set out more clearly the duty of food businesses to produce food safely with the key aim of reducing the number of cases of food poisoning. The new legislation requires **ALL** food businesses to put in place, implement and maintain food safety management procedures based on HACCP principles.

What is HACCP

HACCP stands for 'Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point'. It is an internationally recognised and recommended system of food safety management. It focuses on identifying the 'critical points' in a process where food safety problems (or 'hazards') could arise and putting steps in place to prevent things going wrong. Keeping records is also an important part of a HACCP system.

How will catering businesses be affected by the new regulations?

Catering businesses will need to have a food safety management system based on the principles of HACCP. They are already required to produce food that is safe to eat, but the new regulations say that catering businesses must be able to show what they do to make food safely – and have this written down. The type of system they need will depend on the size and type of business. Many small catering businesses will only need a simple system. Under the old regulations, the HACCP plan required detailed record keeping; the preventative methods and requirement for record keeping is maintained but is

commensurate with the size of the business. The new legislation instead provides flexibility, requiring procedures BASED ON the principles of HACCP and integration of these procedures with documentation and record keeping.

How should small catering businesses set up a food safety management system?

Information packs are available to small catering businesses throughout the UK via their local authorities. These have been produced by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and by local authorities in Wales.

Catering businesses do not have to use any particular pack or model, but they must make sure they have a food safety management system that is suitable for their business. Some businesses will already have a suitable system, so they will not need to introduce a new one.

England – The 'Safer food, better business' (SFBB) system has been developed by the FSA in partnership with small catering businesses and more than 50 local authorities: download your free copy at www.food.gov.uk/safereating

If you would like to order a hard copy call 0845 606 0667 or email foodstandards@ecgroup.uk.com

Wales - local authority guidance packs on HACCP for caterers: businesses should contact their local authority for more information.

Scotland – FSA Scotland has developed a HACCP-based system called 'CookSafe'. Businesses that would like a copy should contact their local authority.

Northern Ireland – FSA Northern Ireland has produced guidance called 'Safe Catering'. Businesses should contact their local authority for information.

Detailed below is an outline of "Safer food, better business" (SFBB), businesses in other regions will need to contact their local authority for details of the pack specific to their region, but the SFBB model gives a good guide of the systems and procedures required.

Safer food, better business

This pack has been developed to help small catering businesses such as restaurants, cafés and takeaways, comply with new regulations that came into effect from 1 January 2006. **Most food businesses will already have in place HACCP or food safety regulations based on common sense anyway; the new system simply ensures that all businesses have hazard controls over every area of possible risk, and that records are kept to prove that this is the case.**

SFBB consists of a series of Safe Method Fact Sheets based on Cooking, Chilling, Cleaning, Cross- Contamination which detail how these key areas of food preparation and handling should be dealt with effectively. They include a section to help the caterer deal with basic supervision and management issues, and a daily diary form provides the record-keeping requirement. The Caterer should work through these Fact Sheets to select which are applicable to them, and adopt the procedures as necessary. This simple procedure is their hazard analysis, unique to them, and, provided it is maintained and records kept, meets the statutory requirements.

SFBB requires procedures to cover the following areas:

Cross Contamination

- Personal Hygiene
- Cleaning Cloths
- Separating foodstuffs
- Pest control
- Maintenance
- Food allergies
- Physical and chemical contamination



Cleaning

- Effective cleaning
- Clean-as-you-go schedule



Chilling

- Storing & displaying chilled food
- Chilling down hot food
- Thawing
- Freezing



Cooking

- Cooking safely
- Foods that need extra care
- Reheating
- Protecting ready to eat foods
- Checking your menu
- Hot-holding



Management

- Daily checks
- Other regular checks
 - Deep cleaning
 - Maintenance
 - Checking probe equipment
 - Checking pest control
- Using a probe to ensure your methods are safe
- Training and staff supervision
- Using customer feedback
- Handling suppliers
- Stock control



Temperature Monitoring

The SFBB pack can be used without a temperature probe provided you have a digital temperature display or fridge and freezer thermometer. However, you will need to use a probe if you use methods other than those recommended in the pack for chilling, thawing, cooking, reheating or hot-holding. You may also like to use a probe for extra reassurance that your methods are safe. It may be advisable for larger catering businesses to invest in a temperature monitoring system, which can produce information in the form of graphs or figures, making it easier to meet your HACCP requirements in a cost-effective and time saving manner, and can be tailor-made to suit businesses of any size. For further information, visit www.food.gov.uk or www.fosterrefrigerator.co.uk/products

Larger businesses

Larger businesses should already have in place an accepted HACCP system of food safety methods and record keeping. The system should be based on the critical control points previously listed, but the procedures, controls, record-keeping and documentation required will be commensurate to the size of the business. The SFBB model should provide a thorough base for all businesses, although consultants specialising in HACCP systems as well as computer packages are available for larger firms to help in setting up a detailed or tailor-made HACCP system.

What does the new law require?

The new legislation provides much clearer requirements in certain areas such as thawing and cooling of foods (see below for advice on how to comply), with a new requirement to keep chemical storage out of the kitchen. There is an emphasis on "disinfection" of food equipment and the general kitchen environment. Waste now has to be dealt with in an "environmentally friendly way". The key points in the new requirements are those of ensuring segregation and the maintenance of the chill-chain throughout the operation, together with the monitoring of temperatures when necessary.

There is a new requirement to train supervisors of such systems and also a new procedure enabling officials to close kitchens; the Remedial Action Notice. Environmental health practitioners (EHPs), formerly called environmental health officers, will have the power to do this where they find unsatisfactory standards of hygiene which might cause a health risk. EHPs will check that all businesses have a satisfactory system in place, that all staff are adequately trained, and check who trained the staff and how this training took place.

As before, all businesses must continue to register with the local authority and tell it of any material change in their business activity. All staff must continue to be trained "commensurate with their work activity". EHPs can still serve improvement, prohibition and emergency prohibition notices where they find issues. They still have the power of entry at "any reasonable time", and it is an offence to obstruct them.

The temperature-control limits of 8°C for chilling and 63°C for hot food, with Scottish difference, remain the same, and cheeseboards and sweet trolleys are still considered safe, as the four-hour rule for placing food out on display is maintained.



General tips on complying with the new rules

- Reduce the clutter and remove any old equipment in your kitchen in order to improve basic cleanliness. Inspectors hate cluttered kitchens and tend to look deeper.
- Check all "Use By" and "Best Before" dates of food in your refrigerator daily.
- Identify areas where you can segregate raw and cooked processes, and make a "Raw prep only" sign to demonstrate you have got the message.
- Improve "disinfection" with easy availability of sanitizer and disposable paper cloths.
- Ensure hand-washing availability with bactericidal soap and paper towels.
- Improve personal hygiene appearance with clean, ironed whites and crisp hats - first impressions count.
- Make a simple records system which identifies key critical areas such as delivery, storage, preparation, chilling, thawing, cooking and service. Monitor these in terms of temperature, date codes, times, weights, etc - that's HACCP - and you have to find simple ways of showing that you know what you are doing.
- Keep bulk chemicals out of food rooms.
- Review your training status so you are up-to-date and can talk the environmental health practitioner's language.
- Sort out your waste arrangements to reduce risk of pests, and set up recycling where possible.

Tips on chilling to comply with the new rules



- Follow the manufacturer's guidelines on using all equipment, particularly in the case of refrigeration to ensure safe temperatures are maintained.
- Chilled food must be kept at 8°C or below. To achieve this, fridge settings should be at a maximum of 5°C, which will require a commercial refrigerator; domestic equipment just can't cope with regular door openings or the ambient temperature in a catering environment.
- Purchase a decent probe thermometer and probe wipes. Larger businesses may be advised to invest in a temperature monitoring system.
- If you chill food down regularly, it may be advisable to purchase a Blast Chiller to ensure you do this safely. Some manufacturers, including Foster, offer Blast Chillers specially designed to meet the needs of smaller catering outlets, providing you with the means of chilling food down safely, without compromising on quality, taste and appearance.
- If you defrost lots of food in your business, you may wish to consider purchasing a special Thaw Cabinet, particularly if the food being thawed is high risk e.g. poultry. Some refrigeration equipment companies supply a cabinet specially designed for this purpose, which work by alternating between circulating gentle heat and refrigeration (via special air conducting and fans) ensuring a safe, even and speedy thaw.

For further advice, please see our Blue Papers on Safe Food Storage and Blast Chilling. To receive your free copies, visit www.fosterrefrigerator.co.uk/food_safety or email marketing@foster-uk.com

Benefits of the new HACCP requirements

- Increased management awareness of food safety hazards
- Reduced risk to customers
- Fewer product complaints
- Greater customer confidence in the business
- Lower risk category for EHP inspections
- Enhanced ability to motivate and supervise staff

Summary

The main changes:

- Requirement for all catering businesses to have in place an acceptable HACCP-based system
- Emphasis on HACCP throughout
- HACCP methods now have to be fully documented
- Person responsible for records to be fully trained
- Emphasis on cleaning and disinfection in all areas
- More emphasis on temperature controls:
 - ✓ **The chill chain** not to be interrupted and temperatures to be monitored.
 - ✓ **New rules** on thawing.
 - ✓ **Clear rules on cooking** with sufficient time and temperature.
- Requirement for improved segregation of raw and cooked foodstuffs
- **Premises to be of sufficient size** and design to allow for cleaning.
- **Clear rules on keeping chemical** cleaning product storage away from food production.
- **Waste management** must be "environmentally friendly"
- It is still illegal to sell or process food which is unfit or injurious to health or is not of the "nature, substance or quality the customer demanded".
- Emphasis is placed on corrective action, both daily and with a 4-weekly review.

The flexibility of the 2006 legislation has met with a positive reception in the industry and has already created notable food safety improvements at knowledge, attitude and behavioural levels. In the long term, the new legislation will clearly improve food safety, making all businesses responsible and accountable without bureaucracy or time wasting, and should enable businesses to compete more effectively.

For further information:

www.food.gov.uk/safereating
www.instituteofhospitality.org
www.fosterrefrigerator.co.uk/food_safety

If you would like to order a hard copy of "Safer food, better business", "CookSafe" (Scotland) or "Safe Catering" (N Ireland) call 0845 606 0667 or email foodstandards@ecgroup.uk.com

Other Foster Blue papers include:

Energy Efficiency
The ECA Scheme
Hydrocarbons in Refrigeration - What caterers need to know
The Climate Change Levy
Food Temperature Laws
Food Safety and E. Coli
Food Hygiene & Staff Training
Handling and Serving Ice
Safe Food Storage
The safe way to Blast Chill, Freeze and Thaw
Inspection by Environmental Health Practitioners
Plan for a Catering Crisis
Coldroom Panels, Polyurethane Foam & Fire Ratings: An Update

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



ISO 9001



ISO 14001



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