

Food Safety Newsletter

Autumn Edition – May 2019

Welcome to the autumn edition of the Limestone Coast Food Safety Newsletter.

This edition welcomes the collaboration between the Limestone Coast councils and will now be distributed throughout the region.

In focus this edition:

- Food premises – cleaning and maintenance
- Authorised Officer – right to inspect a food business
- Upcoming regional food safety training – TAFE SA short course

Food premises – cleaning and maintenance

Food safety is best achieved when a food business keeps its premises clean and ensures equipment is in good working order in compliance with the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code.

The importance of cleaning and maintenance

Building on from the importance of cleaning and sanitising food contact surfaces the cleaning and maintenance of all other areas in the food premises can be just as important. Cleaning and maintenance is an ongoing requirement and is often made up of tasks that need to be carried out at different times. For example, some tasks will need to be carried out daily, others weekly, monthly or even annually. This may depend on the level and type of activities undertaken at the food premises.

Cleaning is the process of removing residual food matter, dust, grease, dirt, stains and smelly odours from all surfaces, fixtures and equipment using a detergent and water. This includes but not limited to, walls, floors, ceilings, the inside and outside of equipment (eg. microwaves, fridges), extraction systems and storage areas (cool rooms/freezers and store rooms).

Maintenance is the process of carrying out upkeep on equipment and structures within a food premises and may include such things as repainting, repairing holes in walls and fly screens, replacing seals around sinks and back splashes, replacing fridge/freezer seals and cracked tiles and keeping floors in good repair.

Well maintained fixtures, fittings and equipment will assist with efficient and effective cleaning in a food business and remove harbourage sites and entrance points for pests and vermin (eg. mice, flies, ants, cockroaches) by ensuring surfaces remain smooth and impervious and in good repair. Efficient and effective cleaning by removing or avoiding a build-up of food, grease and grime will then reduce the chance of cross-contamination and deter pests and vermin from entering the kitchen by removing their food source.

Having written cleaning and maintenance schedules that require signing off by staff and also breaks down cleaning and maintenance tasks into timeframes (daily, weekly, monthly etc) is a great way to keep track of these jobs and can be useful evidence during a routine food safety inspection or suspected food poisoning investigation.

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Common areas in the kitchen that get forgotten

Often the areas that can't be easily seen are the ones that get forgotten and are the reason why cleaning schedules are so important. These are often the weekly, monthly and even annual cleaning tasks, not the daily tasks and range from areas above head height, such as on top of equipment (eg. fridges) and shelving, too hard to reach areas under and behind equipment, such as behind and under fridges, stoves and deep fryers, as well as trays in insect zappers.

Touch points are often overlooked but are commonly touched multiple times throughout a shift, often without noticing. If not kept clean, these items pose a high risk for causing cross contamination in a food business. Touch points are items such as; light switches, power points and door handles (including entrance, fridge and freezer doors).

Other areas of food businesses which are commonly forgotten during cleaning routines are fridge and freezer door seals, fly screens (on doors and windows), plastic pest strips in doorways, fan covers (eg. cool room fans, air conditioners, extraction fans) exposed pipes (eg. plumbing and gas) and outside areas such as refuse storage areas.

Environmental Health Officer – right to inspect a food business

Environmental Health Officers (EHO) are employed by local government to undertake duties in the realm of public health, including routine food safety inspections of food businesses and are often referred to as 'health inspectors'.

An EHO is authorised to carry out duties under the Food Act 2001 (authorised officers), which includes the power to enter a food business at any reasonable time (eg. open for business). This means that the owner/manager does not have to be present at that time and an officer will make contact with the most senior staff member present upon arrival, introduce themselves and show their identification so that staff know who they are. Penalties can be imposed for anyone found to be obstructing an EHO during the course of their duty.

Please make all staff aware of the above and remember that an EHO will most likely carry out routine food safety inspections at an unannounced time.

A detailed list of the 'Inspection and seizure powers' of authorised EHO's can be found in Part 4 of the Food Act 2001 - www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/A/FOOD%20ACT%202001.aspx

Food Safety Training

- An accredited TAFE SA Short Course is proposed for Tuesday 4 June 2019 at District Council of Grant Training Room, 324 Commercial Street West, Mount Gambier. The course runs for 3.5 hours and the cost is from \$30. Bookings are essential. For further information or to enrol contact TAFE SA on (08) 8348 4662.
Note: this training is to be confirmed pending enough interest.
- Free online 'I'm Alert' refresher training suitable for volunteers - visit City of Mount Gambier Food Safety page www.mountgambier.sa.gov.au/foodsafety