

Foodwise

Babergh & Mid Suffolk Newsletter for food businesses

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Foodwise goes wider!

As part of the transformation and integration of services over the two districts, this is the first edition of Foodwise to be distributed to all food businesses in both Babergh and Mid Suffolk. Our aim is to keep you up to date on topical food safety matters which affect your business, and sometimes health and safety too - see p3 for useful advice on gas safety in catering.

Our main story looks at preventing cross-contamination. In 2005 five year old Mason Jones died in South Wales from food poisoning caused by his school dinner. The butcher that supplied his and many other schools in the area had not ensured that raw meats were kept separate from cooked meats on his premises. It is tragic that such a simple error caused his death and life changing illness for many others. Read on to find out how you can ensure that you have the right controls in place.



E coli O157:

An invisible threat to your business

The Food Standards Agency issued guidance in February this year for food businesses to clarify the steps that they need to take to control the risk of food becoming contaminated by E.coli O157. Bacteria such as E coli O157 are invisible to the naked eye so can easily be spread to food without you realising. They could make your customers seriously ill, and can even kill.

The guidance has been developed in response to the serious outbreaks of E.coli O157 in Scotland in 1996 and Wales in 2005, which were attributed to

cross-contamination arising from poor handling of food.

If your business handles raw food (raw meat, fruit and vegetables), which could be contaminated with E coli O157, there will be a greater risk. Although E.coli is the key focus of the guidance, the measures outlined will also help in the control of other bacteria, such as campylobacter and salmonella.

Officers from Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils will be assessing how well you comply with the guidance during routine

inspections. So what does the guidance say? The key control measures involve:

- Separation of equipment used with raw food from equipment used with ready to eat food
- Effective cleaning and disinfection
- Personal hygiene and hand washing

Always separate

Cross contamination is one of the most common causes of food poisoning. It happens when harmful bacteria are spread onto ready-to-eat food from other food, surfaces, hands or equipment.

The best way to prevent cross-contamination is to identify separate work areas, surfaces and equipment for raw and ready to eat foods. This is safer than relying on cleaning and disinfection. Colour coded equipment is useful so staff know which to use for which tasks.

If you use complex equipment such as vacuum packing machines, slicers and mincers, you must have separate ones for raw and ready to eat foods. This is because their design makes it impossible to guarantee that all bacteria are removed by cleaning and disinfection.

Think of other surfaces that staff may touch – cash registers, light switches, taps to wash hand basins. It is important that these are not contaminated with bacteria from raw foods. Staff should always wash their hands after handling raw foods and before touching surfaces which will also be touched by staff handling ready to eat foods.



Clean effectively

Effective cleaning is essential to get rid of harmful bacteria and stop them spreading to food. Work surfaces and equipment should be washed regularly and disinfected between tasks. Single-use disposable cloths should be used wherever possible.

It is important to remember that chemical disinfectants and sanitisers only work if surfaces have been thoroughly cleaned first to remove grease and other dirt. Disinfectants and sanitiser must also be used at the **correct dilution** and for the correct **contact time** to be effective.

Any disinfectant or sanitiser used must comply with one of two British Standards: BS EN 1276:1997 or BS EN 13697:2001.

Your chemical supplier will be able to advise you.

Heat can also be used as a disinfectant: if using a dishwasher the water reservoir should be kept above **80°C for at least 15 seconds**. Re-usable cloths should be washed on a hot cycle, at **82°C or above**.

Handle food hygienically

It is vital for staff to follow good personal hygiene practices to help prevent harmful bacteria spreading to ready-to-eat food by cross-contamination.

Thorough hand washing is essential before touching ready-to-eat food, after going to the toilet, after touching raw meat or surfaces that might have come into contact with staff handling raw food. The use of non-hand-operable taps is recommended,

but an alternative is to turn taps off using a paper towel.

Tongs and other utensils should be used to handle food as far as possible. Clean clothing or disposable aprons should be worn.

Putting the above control measures in place will help to ensure safe food for your customers and protect your business. For more details visit the Food Standards Agency's website <http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/hygguid/ecoliguide> or contact Babergh's Food Team on 01473 825888 or Mid Suffolk's Food Team on 01449 724713.



Gas Safety in Catering

If you use gas powered equipment in your business (whether mains gas, LPG from a fixed installation or LPG cylinders) over the coming months Mid Suffolk and Babergh officers will be asking whether it has been serviced and maintained by a competent person (Gas Safe engineer) to ensure that it is safe.

Why are you looking at gas safety?

Recent investigations within our districts along with some campaigns in neighbouring authorities have shown that gas equipment is often forgotten when it comes to maintenance and is not serviced or maintained as often as it should be in line with gas safety regulations. In some cases, gas installations have been found to be dangerous.

What do I need to do?

This depends on whether your gas equipment and installation (gas pipework) is used in a commercial or domestic capacity, or a combination of the two. For example, pub kitchens used for preparing both your domestic food and food that you sell as part of your business.

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Gas Safety in Catering - cont

OK. My kitchen is a combined domestic and commercial kitchen.

So what do I need to do?

If you are a tenant, with a lease term of less than 7 years, it is the legal duty of your Landlord to ensure all gas fittings (which include all gas appliances and fittings in the kitchen if supplied by your Landlord) and flues receive an annual gas safety check by a "Gas Safe" registered engineer. Your Landlord must also provide you, within 28 days of the last safety check, with a copy of the Gas Safety Record (certificate) that proves this check has been carried out. If the lease agreement is for more than 7 years, then these duties fall to the tenant.

What about if my kitchen is purely for commercial use only?

This is different and depends on the terms and conditions within your lease contract between you and with your Landlord. In these cases, unless your lease stipulates otherwise, it is down to you as an employer or self-employed person. You have a legal duty to ensure that all your business gas appliances, fittings and flues which service the commercial parts only of the premises and under your control are maintained in a safe condition so as to prevent risk of injury, and in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

How often do I need to get commercial only gas equipment checked?

Inspection frequencies are not set down in law for purely commercial installations, but remember the duty is to maintain your gas equipment and installation in a safe condition at all times, so annually is good practice.

What about if I buy and install some new gas equipment?

If you own and are entitled to remove the gas equipment from the property when you leave because it is not covered by any fixtures and fittings or lease contract, then you must maintain it in accordance with the domestic and/or commercial duties given above.

Who should I get to carry out the checks?

You must use a competent gas engineer who is registered with "Gas Safe" (Gas Safe have taken over national gas safety from Corgi). Your gas engineer must also be competent to work on the type of equipment you use. Because gas equipment and installations comes in all shapes and complexities, Gas Safe engineers can only work on gas equipment they are qualified and authorised to work on. For example, if you operate a commercial premises which uses LPG from cylinders, your Gas Safe engineer must be competent to work on both commercial and LPG powered equipment. You should ask him/her for their Gas Safe registration ID number. You can then verify their gas accreditation by visiting the Gas Safe website at: <http://www.gassafe.co.uk> (click on - "Check a Gas Engineer"). You **MUST** not allow an engineer to work on your type of gas equipment if they are not accredited or authorised to do so.

Do I need to keep records?

If you are a tenant and there is a domestic element as described above, your Landlord must give you a Gas Safety Certificate. For commercial only gas installations, your Gas Safe engineer should always give you a report of his findings and the work carried out. It is good practice to keep this record safe so that you can prove to the local enforcing authorities that you are maintaining the gas installation and equipment to ensure it is safe.

Help! I'm confused! How can I get more advice?

Gas safety is a complex area. The HSE website contains lots of advice on gas safety in general and gas safety in catering –visit <http://www.hse.gov.uk>. Or you can contact the Food and Safety team at Mid Suffolk DC on 01449 724713 or at Babergh DC on 01473 825887

