

SIMPLY SAFE – SEPTEMBER 2008

MANAGING PEST CONTROL

Pests must be excluded from food businesses because they cause damage to food and equipment, carry harmful bacteria which can cause illness, can damage your reputation if sighted by customers and most importantly of all, because it's against the law! **Regulation (EC) 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs**, states that "**businesses must ensure that the layout, design, construction and size of food premises shall permit good food hygiene practices, including protection against cross contamination between and during operations by external sources of contamination such as pests.**" The Regulations also require that adequate procedures be in place to ensure pests are controlled, and where an EHO determines that premises have not controlled an infestation, the premises will be closed and may face prosecution. Rather than controlling a problem, the best way to deal with pests is to exclude them from your premises completely, and even if you don't have a current pest problem, measures must be taken to ensure that pests cannot enter the premises. Setting up a pest control contract is not a legal requirement, however, it is good practice, but it is important to remember that the ultimate responsibility for any pest problem lies with the food business operator, not the contractor. In most cases, the pest control contractors are often left to their own devices during visits, however, where an infestation exists, this can be your downfall. To ensure that you are managing pest control effectively, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do you know exactly what the contractor does during their visit?
2. Do they take their time to check all areas thoroughly whilst in the premises?
3. If there is an ongoing infestation, has the level of activity decreased in the last three months?
4. Does the contractor always explain their findings, and what they have done at the end of the visit?
5. Do they always give advice and recommendations at the end of their visit?

If you have answered "no" to any of the questions above, then you may need to ask yourself what you are getting for your money! In a court of law, it's not enough to tell the judge that you employed a pest control contractor. You have a certain amount of responsibility to ensure that the contractor has either eliminated the infestation, or brought it under control. If the infestation has existed for several months, with no improvement, a manager should make it their duty to accompany the operative during their next visit, feeling free to ask any questions. You should also request for a supervisor to carry out a visit if there has been a long term problem. On a final note, you can avoid infestations by regularly checking for signs of pests, even if you employ a contractor as it only takes a matter of days for an infestation to get out of hand, and this can often occur between scheduled visits.

THE A-Z OF FOOD SAFETY

C is for.....Campylobacter

Campylobacter is a bacteria that causes food poisoning, and can be found in raw poultry and meat, unpasteurised milk, and untreated water. Pasteurised milk can be contaminated by birds pecking bottle tops on the doorstep, but this does not happen much these days! Pets with diarrhoea can also be a source of infection. Campylobacter is the most common identified cause of food poisoning. Symptoms include fever, headache and a feeling of being unwell, followed by severe abdominal pain and diarrhoea which may be bloody. Symptoms normally take 2-5 days to appear but it can take as long as 10 days and return over a number of weeks. Thorough cooking of meat and pasteurisation of milk will destroy Campylobacter.

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CHEMICAL ACCIDENTS - ARE YOUR STAFF SAFE?



Over the past few months there has been an increase in the amount of chemical related accidents reported to Perry Scott Nash, ranging from chemicals in eyes to chemical burns, and many of these accidents have occurred due to employees not wearing any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Managers have a responsibility for their employee's safety whilst at work, and they must ensure that everyone who has to handle chemicals as part of their job is aware of the risks associated with using the chemicals. Employees must be made aware of the relevant risk assessments associated with their job, and they must receive COSHH training "before" they start working with any chemicals. Refresher training must be carried out every 6 months thereafter, and the training must highlight the hazards associated with the chemicals as well as the control measures such as the type of PPE that must be used. If PPE has to be used, employees must be shown how to use it correctly, and the PPE must be suitable for the individual as it is not simply a case of "one size fits all"! It's no good giving someone goggles or a respirator if a) they have not been trained on how to use them or b) they do not fit! Accidents usually occur when an employee has not been trained on how to use their PPE so it is either not used correctly, or not used at all. When an accident happens, managers must investigate to determine how the accident happened, review the relevant risk assessments and employees must receive refresher training to prevent a recurrence. Any PPE used must be checked as it may have been faulty, or become damaged. Suitable storage facilities must also be provided to ensure that the PPE is maintained. It is important to remember that human error is usually the number one cause of accidents, so staff must be monitored and supervised to ensure they implement the training they receive, including the correct use of PPE. Where employees fail to use their PPE or do not use it correctly, managers must consider disciplinary action to ensure that employees are reminded that safety in the workplace is not a joke.

RECENT PROSECUTIONS

£25,000 fine for Mental Health Trust after patient dies in the bath

A vulnerable elderly man suffered a fatal scalding in a respite care home for people with mental health problems, after locking himself in the staff bathroom, and climbing into a bath of scalding water. The temperature of the bath water was later found to be 5°C and the water from the tap was found to be 99°C causing the gentleman to suffer burns to a quarter of his body and heart failure. When the emergency services eventually broke down the door the gentleman was already dead. The council's investigation revealed a faulty thermostat to an immersion heater. The thermostatic mixer valve on the bath in question was working, but had been set to its highest setting. The judge said he had imposed what he considered to be a significant fine on a public body and said the gentleman had suffered "a horrifying form of death". This case is a reminder to all to ensure that any faulty equipment in their premises is repaired immediately.

Community service for shop owner following mice infestation

When mouse droppings were discovered throughout a corner shop, on food shelves, flooring, on packets of food and in a box of children's dummies, a judge sentenced the shop owner to 200 hours community service. EHO's found dirty conditions including evidence of mice activity and unsafe food on sale during a routine inspection in December 2007, and immediately imposed an emergency prohibition order on the shop as the conditions posed an imminent risk to health. The premises was closed but allowed to re-open five days later after remedial action was taken. When the owner pleaded guilty to food hygiene offences at court last month, he was ordered to pay the council costs of £869 and sentenced to 200 hours community service. It is important to remember that if the judge deems the offences to be serious, he can impose higher punishments than fines.

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