



PERRY SCOTT NASH
associates limited

SIMPLY SAFE - JANUARY 2009



NOROVIRUS UPDATE

Over the past few weeks, thousands of people across the UK have been suffering from Norovirus, which causes sudden vomiting and diarrhoea. Noroviruses are a group of viruses that are the most common cause of stomach bugs in the UK, affecting all ages. It is estimated that between 600,000 and a million people in the UK become infected each year. Noroviruses are also sometimes known as "winter vomiting viruses" or "Norwalk-like viruses". Around 12 to 48 hours after becoming infected, the virus causes sudden onset of nausea followed by projectile vomiting and watery diarrhea (similar to food poisoning). Some people may have a fever, headaches and aching limbs - often leading people to call the illness "stomach flu". The illness is not generally dangerous and most people make a full recovery within one to two days. However, the very old and very young risk becoming dehydrated which may require hospital treatment. The virus is extremely contagious and is found in the stool or vomit of infected people. People can become infected in several ways:

- Eating food or drink which has become contaminated
- Touching surfaces or objects which are contaminated, then placing hands in the mouth
- Having direct contact with another person who is infected and showing symptoms (e.g. sharing utensils)



Whilst the virus is on the increase, premises must ensure that hand washing is carried out even more frequently, food contact and hand contact surfaces such as door and fridge handles must also be cleaned and sanitised frequently to prevent contamination. It can be difficult to control the virus because it is so easily spread but the best way is to ensure that you follow the government 'Fitness to Work Guidance', and all employees, visitors to the food premises suffering from symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting must be excluded until they have been symptom free for 48 hours. If symptoms last for more than 48 hours, employees must visit their doctor and inform them that they are a food handler. On return to work, the employee must have a return to work interview, and complete a Food Handlers Health Questionnaire to confirm they are indeed "fit to work". Once completed, it must be kept in their personnel file. This form can be found in your food safety manual.



THE A-Z OF FOOD SAFETY

F is for..... Floors

Slips, trips and falls remain high on the agenda for health and safety, therefore, all premises must ensure that floors are maintained in a safe manner at all times. When cleaning floors, they must be dried following mopping and not left overly wet. During cleaning, wet floor signs must also be erected to increase awareness in the area. When spillages occur, they must be cleaned immediately. Remember to also keep floors free from obstructions such as trailing wires and cables as these often contribute to trips and falls. All damaged flooring must be reported to maintenance, and repaired as soon as possible. If the permanent repairs cannot be carried out immediately, then temporary fixes like covering the area with equipment or furniture to prevent anyone from tripping, or even using heavy duty tape, is better than leaving the area exposed. All staff have a duty to ensure that if they notice any damaged flooring in the premises, they report it immediately to management, who must make arrangements for repairs.

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IS YOUR LIFT AND LIFTING EQUIPMENT SAFE TO USE?

The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER) require that all lifts provided for use in work activities are thoroughly examined by a competent person at regular intervals. This applies to lifts and hoists such as passenger lifts, dumb waiters and cellar hoists. A thorough examination of the lift and all its associated equipment must be carried out by a competent person to detect any defects which are, or might become, dangerous. A competent person is someone who has enough technical and practical knowledge of the lift to be able to find any defects and assess how serious they are. It is also important that the competent person is independent and impartial to allow them to make an objective assessment of the lift. For this reason, it is not advisable for the same person who performs the routine maintenance to carry out the thorough examination, as they are then responsible for assessing their own work!

If any serious defects are found, the competent person must report them to the duty holder. They must also report them to the enforcing authority (the Health and Safety Executive or local authority) so that appropriate remedial action can be taken.

Following the inspection, you will be given an inspection report noting the outcome of the inspection. You are legally required to ensure the reports are kept available for inspection for at least two years or until the next report, whichever is longer. They may be kept electronically as long as you can provide a written report if necessary.

Note: When first installed, new lifts do not require an initial thorough examination as long as they have been manufactured and installed in accordance with the Lifts Regulations 1997 and have a current declaration of conformity.

ASK THE EXPERT.....why do we have to complete documentation?

There are various records and documents premises are required to complete, including food temperature records, fire safety records, fridge/freezer temperature records and cleaning schedules. Sometimes it seems like a lot of paperwork especially if nothing has gone wrong in the premises, however, these records form part of the company's "due diligence defence", and would provide evidence of how health and safety and food safety is managed in the premises, if required in court. Documentation must be completed fully and corrective actions must also be recorded where inconsistencies have been noted. It's no use completing the documentation if it is not done properly and remember, the records are only as good as the person completing them so always make sure they are completed when required (e.g. daily/weekly/monthly) and ensure that the writing is legible!



RECENT PROSECUTIONS



PUB OWNER FINED £32,000 FOR BREACHING 21 FOOD HYGIENE OFFENCES!

A pub owner received a huge fine for admitting breaching 21 food hygiene offences including a mouse and fly infestation and storing out of date food. The premises were closed by EHO's in September after they discovered "a filthy and disorganised kitchen". The walls, floors, doors, ventilation filters, electrical plugs and food equipment were found covered with dirt. Food cooked the day before had been left at room temperature and mice had penetrated a large food storeroom. Broken shards of glass were also found where bread was being stored. A gas cooking range was also found to be unsafe as the control panel had been removed and it was covered by a large amount of congealed food waste. The council's solicitors told the court that there was no other alternative but to take legal action to protect the public. Costs of £1,730 were awarded to the council in addition to the fine. This serves as a reminder to all premises to ensure that cleaning is carried out thoroughly, and food storage areas checked at the end of the day so that out of date food is removed. Premises must also be checked for pests and where activity is identified, a reputable pest contractor must be called in to remedy the problem.

ASBESTOS REMOVAL FIRM FINED AFTER LEAVING WORKERS EXPOSED!

A licensed asbestos-removal contractor who produced an inaccurate survey which resulted in workers being exposed to the carcinogenic substance has been fined £18,000 plus £21,000 costs. The contractor conducted two asbestos surveys in a school but according to the HSE inspector, they did not carry out comprehensive checks and failed to identify asbestos insulation boards in several places. The error was discovered when trades people working at the school disturbed the insulation board, exposing the workers to potentially harmful fibers. It is imperative that competent contractors are hired to carry out this type of work so that lives are not put at risk.

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