

## SIMPLY SAFE – MAY 2009

### THE IMPORTANCE OF WASHING SALAD ITEMS

When we think of food poisoning, rarely do foods such as salad leaves and vegetables immediately spring to mind which is surprising considering these are items which are eaten without cooking. Anything that may be on the surface of these foods (including bacteria and viruses), if untreated, could be eaten and cause food poisoning. The importance of effective washing is to remove bacteria and foreign objects such as stones or insects which may be adhering to the leaves. The importance of the way in which salad items are stored, handled and prepared has been highlighted previously with sampling being undertaken by local authorities and the Health Protection Agency looking at the problems of Salmonella and E.Coli on salad leaves and vegetables. It has long been recognised that food poisoning from *Salmonella* and *E. coli* is commonly associated with eating contaminated beef or chicken products, as these bacteria live in the guts of cows and the guts and egg-ducts of chickens, and contamination of meat can occur during the slaughtering process. However, some outbreaks of food poisoning have been associated with contaminated salad or vegetable products including pre-bagged salads. A few years ago a *Salmonella* outbreak in the UK was traced back to imported basil, and an *E. coli* outbreak in the USA was traced to contaminated pre-packed baby spinach. The Health Protection Agency has also recorded outbreaks resulting from the consumption of salad items, and the most serious case resulted in the hospitalization of several of those who were ill. The Food Standards Agency, said: "Our advice is that the risk of food poisoning can be reduced by good food hygiene practices. These include thorough washing and preparing of lettuce away from other foods to avoid cross-contamination." More recently, salads sampled in Kebab Shops were found to be of poor microbiological quality and a concern to the Environmental Health Officers. Some samples contained Salmonella, high levels of staphylococcus aureus or pathogenic Bacillus spp. which renders food unfit for human consumption. Ready-to-eat foods which contain high levels of bacteria suggest that hygiene practices such as hand washing and salad washing may not have been adequate or indeed ever carried out.

### THE A-Z OF FOOD SAFETY

**I is for..... Ice Machines.** Ice is classified as a food under the Food Hygiene Regulations and therefore must be treated in the same manner as other items of food such as meat, fish or dairy products. Ice may become contaminated with food poisoning organisms which may be passed on to consumers if ice machines are not cleaned and disinfected frequently. Ice machines should be cleaned weekly using food safe chemicals such as sanitiser, and all staff responsible for this must be fully trained to ensure they can carry out the task safely and effectively. The scoop must also be stored hygienically, and should not be left inside of the ice, as the handle may contain bacteria which could contaminate the ice, and the scoop should be cleaned throughout the day.



## **FIRE SAFETY TRAINING**

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires employees to receive appropriate fire safety training/instructions. An employer's obligation to their employees regarding fire training is to ensure that they are made aware of what hazards are present and what level of risk they could be exposed to in their place of work. This training should be carried out on induction, and refreshed every three months for night staff and every six months for others. Basic fire training is important as it will equip employees with the knowledge to enable them to know what to do in the event of a fire. As a minimum, this training should include:

- The theory of fire
- Action to be taken in the event of fire, and action to be taken upon hearing the fire alarm
- Means of escape
- Fire prevention (control of ignition sources)
- How to stop machines (e.g. gas shut down procedures)
- How to alert and evacuate members of the public
- Reasons not to use lifts
- Location of fire exits, assembly points and fire fighting equipment
- Information on the location of any dangerous substances (e.g. flammable chemicals)
- Evacuation procedures
- Procedure for evacuating disabled guests

All staff should receive refresher fire training at the intervals mentioned above, to ensure adequate fire safety knowledge is maintained. All training must be recorded in the fire log-book, and kept in a fire proof safe. Any contractors visiting the premises must also be made aware of fire risks within the premises and the premises evacuation procedures.

## **FIRST CORPORATE MANSLAUGHTER CHARGE**

In the first application of the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) on the 23 April 2009 has authorised a charge of corporate manslaughter against a company in relation to the death of an employee on 5 September 2008. The employee, who was a junior geologist, was taking soil samples from inside a pit which had been excavated as part of a site survey when the sides of the pit collapsed, crushing him. A company director has been charged with gross negligence manslaughter and with an offence contrary to Section 37, Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The company has also been charged with failing to discharge a duty contrary to Section 33, Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The CPS reviewing lawyer, explained: "Under the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007, an organisation is guilty of corporate manslaughter if the way in which its activities are managed or organised causes a death and amounts to a gross breach of a duty of care to the person who died. A substantial part of the breach must have been in the way activities were organised by senior management. I have concluded that there is sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction for this offence." The company director will appear at the Magistrates' Court on 17 June 2009, facing charges both as an individual and on behalf of the company. A conviction for gross negligence manslaughter carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, and convictions under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 can result in imprisonment or fines. Penalties under the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act include unlimited fines, remedial orders and publicity orders. A remedial order will require a company or organisation to take steps to remedy any management failure that led to a death. The court can also impose an order requiring the company or organisation to publicise that it has been convicted of the offence, giving the details, the amount of any fine imposed and the terms of any remedial order made.

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