

SIMPLY SAFE – JANUARY 2010

YOUR DUTY TO MANAGE ASBESTOS

The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations will apply if you have maintenance and repair responsibilities for non-domestic premises either through a contract or tenancy agreement, or because you own the premises. You are required to manage the risk from asbestos by:

- finding out if there is asbestos in the premises, its amount and what condition it is in;
- presuming materials contain asbestos, unless you have strong evidence that they do not;
- making and keeping up to date a record of the location and condition of the asbestos containing materials (ACMs) or presumed ACMs in your premises;
- assessing the risk from the material;
- preparing a plan that sets out in detail how you are going to manage the risk from this material; taking the steps needed to put your plan into action;
- reviewing and monitoring your plan and the arrangements made to put it in place; and
- providing information on the location and condition of the material to anyone who is liable to work on or disturb it.



Anyone who has information on the whereabouts of asbestos in your premises is required to make this available to you as the duty holder. Those who are not duty holders, but control access to the premises, would have to co-operate with you in managing the asbestos. For more advice, contact Perry Scott Nash.

Development Company fined £5,500 following asbestos contraventions

December 2009: A development company that exposed both employees and others to the risks of asbestos during renovation work has been prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as a result of health and safety breaches under the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002. The company pleaded guilty and was fined £5,500 and ordered to pay costs of £8,267.

The company bought the former hotel site in order to convert the building into apartments. During the course of the renovation work, asbestos was disturbed and the HSE was notified in confidence that the hazardous material was not being removed under appropriate controlled conditions. This included the illegal disposal of asbestos materials alongside general waste, designated for general landfill waste. Work at the site was halted by HSE inspectors in July 2009 and the asbestos was removed under licensed conditions then the site decontaminated by a specialist team. (Source: Health & Safety Executive)

A TO Z OF FOOD SAFETY

P is for People

People are sources of one of the main pathogenic, food poisoning bacteria, staphylococcus aureus, which are found in cuts, open wounds, sore throats and elsewhere on the body. This bacterium releases a toxin as part of its normal life cycle. Anyone ingesting this toxin will suffer severe (projectile) vomiting and stomach pains very shortly after eating. As well as being a legal requirement, maintaining high standards of personal hygiene is necessary to remove the risk of infecting food in this way.

Poor personal hygiene can also lead to cross contamination, i.e. transferring bacteria from one food to another. For example, forgetting to wash your hands after handling raw meat will mean you transfer the bacteria from the raw meat to everything you touch thereafter. Why not carry out a spot check on your staff during the next busy service period to ensure they have not got into any bad personal hygiene habits?

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FRYER SAFETY

The deep fat fryers are the main workhorses in many kitchens, and their heavy usage means that they often get taken for granted, which can lead to complacency when it comes to safety. Most fryers operate at between 175°C and 190°C, which is hot enough to cause serious and painful burns very quickly; so complacency when working with this equipment is not an option and must be avoided.

The oils used in fryers have a **smoke point**, which can vary from 190°C to 265°C, depending upon the type of oil. The smoke point is the temperature at which the oil begins to break down and emit smoke. Every time the oil is used, its smoke point temperature reduces, which is why old oil will produce smoke more readily than new. The amount by which it decreases depends on many factors, such as the type of food cooked, the operating temperature and how long the oil is held at that temperature, exposure to light, the presence of foreign bodies, etc. It follows also that oils with a high initial smoke point temperature have a longer life, because it takes longer for the smoke temperature to reduce to the fryer operating temperature. However, the smoke point is also a useful indication of its **flash point**, which is about 320°C. This is when the surface of the oil begins to combust and small flames can be seen. If no action is taken and the oil is allowed to heat up further, it will reach its **auto ignition** temperature (400°C), at which point the surface of the oil will be completely alight, i.e. on fire!



Thus, oil which is emitting smoke at normal frying temperatures should be replaced, ideally before it gets to this condition: it will have broken down to the extent that its molecular structure has changed. The oil will darken and become more viscous. Food particles will have accumulated as sediment at the bottom of the fryer, and may also form a suspension with the oil itself. It may have a rancid smell, or even smell of the food being fried. It is overdue replacement; otherwise it will adversely affect the quality of the food itself.

To prolong its life, reduce the amount of time the oil is heated for. Do not preheat it any earlier than you need to and switch off as soon as the last batch of food has been cooked. Use a proprietary thermometer to check the operating temperature is correct. Shake off excess batter and crumbs before frying the food, and remove any particles from the oil by means of a straining spoon or similar. Oil filtration systems also prolong the life of the oil, by removing these food particles. Do not mix new and used oil. The cooled oil should be covered to exclude the light. New oil should be stored in a cool place, in an airtight container.

Replacing the oil and cleaning the fryer are tasks that must be carried out by trained personnel only. There are numerous documented cases of severe injuries caused to untrained staff, most of which are as a result of not allowing enough time for the oil to cool adequately beforehand. The time taken to cool will be dependent upon the volume of oil, the operating temperature and the ambient temperature. It will also depend upon the type of heating system: An electrical heating element immersed in the oil will retain its heat and cool more slowly than would oil in a gas burner, which is beneath the tank. Irrespective of this, it is strongly recommended that it be **left overnight** to cool down. Thereafter, the manufacturer's instructions should **always** be followed.

Thorough cleaning of the fryers and also the canopy is necessary to reduce the risk of fires starting. Oil and grease are combustible and any build up is a fire waiting only for an ignition source. Thus, a greasy canopy and the ducting above it are a ready conduit for fire to spread rapidly to other parts of the building. Another way fires may start is by grease dripping back down overnight into the combustion chamber of a (gas-fired) fryer from the ducting. Thus, the grease will ignite when the fryer is switched on, after which the fire could spread through the ducting (via the trail of grease). Moreover, the accumulated grease burning beneath the burner will not be controlled by the thermostat, so it is possible for it to continue to heat the oil to its flash point or even its auto ignition temperature, even if the thermostat is operating correctly. Therefore, even if the grease in the ventilation system does not ignite, it is possible that the oil in the fryer will. Thus, an adequate and thorough programme of cleaning must be in place to reduce the risk of fire.

Another way to reduce the risk of fire is to check the operation of the thermostat by means of the proprietary thermometer. Turning the thermostat down to its lowest setting between service periods and when left unattended is also recommended.

Finally, oil spillages will render any floor surface very slippery and should therefore be dealt with promptly, using a degreaser to clean the affected area. Slippery floors can also be caused by inadequate ventilation. The canopy is designed to remove excess heat, smoke, steam and oil from the kitchen. If this is not working properly, the steam and droplets of oil condense very quickly throughout the kitchen, thereby creating a slip problem, sometimes within a few minutes of a ventilation system failure. Thus, fryers, grills, or any other cooking equipment must never be used unless the ventilation system is operating correctly.

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