

THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NEWS



FLINDERS UNIVERSITY GRADUATION - 1995

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Front Row: John Edwards (Lecturer), Daniella Rippin, Sally Bainbridge, Larissa Woolfield, Corinna Pereira, Debra Richards, Dianne Vivian.

Mr Terry Geyer presenting to Naomi Goodwin, Student Achieving Best Professional Practice Report.

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FOOD HANDLERS UPDATE

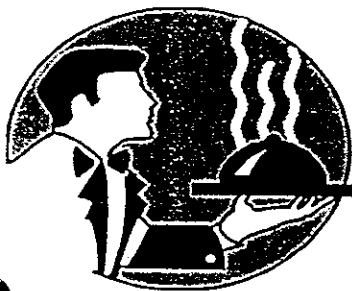
INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this the first edition of the West Torrens Food Handlers' Update. The aim of this newsletter is to keep you the Food Handler up to date with changes in the legislation relating to food handling and sale of food, new inventions or practices, training courses, and much more. There will also be a section where businesses can write in and ask questions or tell us what you are doing to ensure the food that you sell is safe.

The newsletter is not designed to replace the Inspections of food premises, but to complement them, and allow for a wider distribution of information. It is hoped that the information provided will be helpful and enable you to take any action necessary to reduce the likelihood of complaints, contamination of food and problems associated with your premises.

If you have any comments or recommendations regarding this newsletter or would like further information regarding any items covered, please do not hesitate to contact one of the Environmental Health Officers at the Council on 43 6555.

Jodi M Smith Environmental Health Officer Editor



GLOVES: GOOD OR BAD?

Wearing gloves prevents the bacteria from your hands contaminating food, but as soon as you touch your body, change from one food product to another or handle coins the gloves are contaminated.

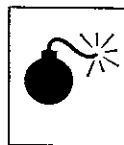
Gloves should be washed or changed at the same times that you would normally wash your hands. Some food handlers say they do not like using gloves, this is fine as long as they use tongs or some other method so that they do not touch the food with their hands. The choice is up to you, but remember it is an offence to handle food with your bare hands unless the food is going to be cooked afterwards or there is no other way to do it.

TEMPERATURE CONTROL AND TIME ARE THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT WEAPONS AGAINST FOOD POISONING

There are bacteria in the environment and in our bodies. Food is already contaminated with low levels of bacteria before it is ever handled by a food handler.

Why then do we not get food poisoning all the time? The reason is that the bacteria need the right conditions for growth: including moisture, heat, oxygen, pH and food.

Food poisoning results when the food is contaminated with food poisoning bacteria and the bacteria are allowed to grow to the infectious dose. The infectious dose is the level of bacteria required to cause food poisoning, and it is generally a million bacteria per gram of food.



Therefore the key to preventing food poisoning is to **minimise the growth of bacteria to the infectious dose.**

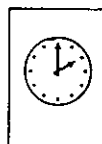
It is impossible to prevent growth, but we can minimise it by the use of temperature control.

Bacteria rapidly multiply between the temperatures of 40C and 60°C- this is called the temperature danger zone. At these temperatures bacteria double in number every 20 minutes.

Bacteria unlike us, multiply rapidly. They do so by splitting in two, this means that one bacterium becomes two, two become four, four become eight. In this way a single bacterium can increase to 2, 097, 152 bacteria within seven hours.

The result is enough bacteria to cause food poisoning. Most of us can honestly say that our food is not left at room temperature for seven hours. But the example of growth is for one bacterium in the food. In reality there may be hundreds, even thousands of bacteria already in the food. Therefore it does not take long at room temperature for bacteria to reach the infectious dose.

By minimising the time that food is left in the temperature danger zone you reduce the likelihood of food poisoning resulting. Cold food should be stored at 40C while hot food should be kept above 60°C.



Minimise the time that food is kept at room temperature. Keep hot food above 60°C and cold food below 40C.

While it is true that time and temperature control are very important in preventing food poisoning, hygiene and correct food handling have a large role to play.

By handling food correctly you minimise any contamination of the food. What this really means is that you do not add any more bacteria to the food than it already has.

The more bacteria in the food the less time needed for the bacteria to reach the infectious dose and cause food poisoning. Hence by practicing good personal hygiene and food handling you reduce the risk to your customers health.

WHAT IS A SANITISER?

A sanitiser, also called a disinfectant, is a chemical capable of destroying microorganisms including food poisoning and other disease causing bacteria.

A sanitiser will actually kill the germs or bacteria, where as a detergent will only remove the food particles and dirt.

This is why it is recommended that when cleaning benches, chopping boards, door handles, meat slicers and other equipment you use a sanitiser as well as a detergent.

There are many different types of sanitisers such as quaternary ammonium compounds, hypochlorites, and iodophers. With these sanitisers you are required to wash them off after using them. This is often inconvenient and time con-

suming. If the rinsing or washing them off does not occur there can be a risk to health.

It is for this reason that the Council Environmental Health Department recommend that you use methylated spirits diluted 70 % metho to 30% water. Metho unlike other sanitisers evaporates from surfaces, therefore there is no need to rinse after using it.

We recommend that you have the metho solution in a spray bottle and use it on all food preparation surfaces and equipment. It is quick and easy and it does not taint or affect the food in any way, but best of all it kills off the bacteria therefore reducing the risk of food poisoning resulting from the food that you sell.

Use a sanitiser to kill off bacteria on all your food preparation surfaces. An effective sanitiser is 70% metho and 30% water in a spray bottle.

BAND-AIDS: WHAT COLOUR DO YOU USE?

The possibility of food being contaminated by blood or pus results when ever a food handler has a cut on his/her hands. Conversely the food handler is also at risk as bacteria from the food can enter the cut.

This is why when someone has a cut on their hands they should cover it with a band-aid and then ideally a glove before continuing work. Often this is not done and as we all know band-aids tend to fall off once they have been in water or have been worn for a while.

Unfortunately if you are handling food and the band-aid

falls off into the food, it is not always noticed. We recommend that food handlers use brightly coloured band-aids, such as the snoopy or garfield band-aids available in supermarkets and chemists. If these fall off you are more likely to see them.

A little thing like a band-aid in food that you sell can not only put the customer off your product, but it is an offence. The penalty for selling food that is unfit for human consumption is \$2500 or an expiation fee of \$200.

Wear brightly coloured band-aids, and do a count at the end of the shift to make sure that any one who had a band-aid still has it.

THE LAW:WHAT IS IT?

The Food Act 1985 and the Food Hygiene Regulations 1990

The Environmental Health Officer (EHO), previously called the Health Inspector acts under the Food Act 1985 and the Food Hygiene Regulations 1990.

The Food Act 1985 places a duty on all Councils to take adequate measures to ensure:

a) the observance within its area or proper standards of hygiene in relation to the sale of food, and the manufacture, transportation, storage and handling of food that is intended for sale

and

b) that food sold within its area is fit for human consumption.

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This is why EHO's inspect food premises. All food premises are inspected be they school canteens, kindergartens, service stations, delicatessens, supermarkets, grocers butchers, restaurants and others.

Food Premises are inspected to ensure that they comply with the Food Act and the Food Hygiene Regulations. It is these two documents that outline what food handlers can and can not do.

Copies of the Act can be bought from the State Information Centre, 77 Grenfell Street, Adelaide, phone: 2041900. Or you can come to the Council or the library and have a look at a copy.

The Food Act and Food Hygiene Regulations give authorised officers, such as the EHO's very broad powers of entry and inspection.

For instance an EHO can enter premises, stop, detain and inspect vehicles, can ask questions of any person in the premises or vehicle, can inspect any food, take any food or samples, inspect equipment, remove any object, take photographs and films, take copies of documents, or records.

Why do EHO's need such wide powers? The theory is that a small number of Managers of food premises will not cooperate with the EHO's. In reality these powers are very rarely used as most premises are of a satisfactory condition or only have a few minor items to be attended to.

Nobody wants to poison their customers, as it will affect their business. Therefore in the majority of cases the EHO

can work with the Manager of a food premises to ensure that the food that is sold is safe for the public to eat.

An important section in the Food Act that all Managers should be aware of is section 30. This outlines the defence to an offence against the Food Act.

There are several parts to section 30, but it basically states that it is a defence to an offence under the Food Act if you have taken all possible precautions to prevent the offence's occurrence.

What this means to management is that if you take all possible precautions you are likely to receive a lesser or no penalty if something goes wrong than you would receive if you had not taken all possible precautions.

All possible precautions in relation to preventing contamination of food by insects could be as simple as having fly screens on all windows, strip doors over entrances, and a fly zapper on the wall.


But if the strip door was missing a strip or did not reach the floor, or the zapper was not turned on, then you would be classed as not having taken all possible precautions.

All food handlers should be aware of the law and what it means to their business. For more information contact the Environmental Health Department of the Council.

The Council has several videos on food handling and hygiene if you would like to borrow these please do not hesitate to contact the Environmental Health Department on 43 6555.



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WHAT AN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER CONSIDERS BEFORE COMMENCING PROSECUTION AGAINST A FOOD PREMISES.

There are many issues that an EHO and the Council consider before commencing legal action against a food premises.

Prosecution is generally a last resort, the EHO will talk to the Manager or staff during an inspection and inform them of any problems. The EHO should then send a letter informing the Manager of any items that need attention. Usually with the first set of correspondence to a premises the EHO will send some information on food handling, hygiene and the law. Therefore a Manager has been informed of any problems and had many chances to rectify them, in order to prevent the need for legal action. It is only after the above process has been undertaken and an EHO finds that the same offence is being committed or the problems highlighted have not been fixed that legal action will be considered.

Expiation notices can also be issued as a final warning before taking a food premises to court. If the expiation is not paid the matter will end up in the courts. The Council tries to work in co-operation with food premises, but unfortunately there are some people who even after being given chances will not do the right thing. Therefore expiations or legal action are needed.

The below is a list of issues that the EHO and Council will use to decide whether to proceed with legal action.

CHECKING IF FOOD IS HOT OR COLD:

Staff should use food grade thermometers to ensure that food is kept at the correct temperature eg: hot food above 60°C and cold food below 4°.

These thermometers have a probe, similar in size to a skewer that can be placed into stews, gravies, roasts, all foods to ensure they are at the correct temperature.

But remember to sanitise the probe after each use, so that you don't take germs from one food into another food (cross contamination).

Thermometers should be used instead of fingers or hands eg: putting your hand on the top and bottom of a pie or pasty to see if it is hot is illegal. You are not allowed to handle food with bare hands unless it is absolutely impossible to do it any other way, this is why you must use tongs or gloves. This philosophy also applies to checking the temperature of food, you should use a thermometer not your hands.

YOUR SAY.

In future editions of this newsletter I hope to have comments, questions, and articles that are sent in by you the food handlers of West Torrens.

I would also appreciate receiving suggestions regarding the newsletter and requests for topics to be covered in future editions.

If you have any comments, requests or articles you would like to submit, either phone myself on 416 6218 or send them to:

The City of West Torrens, Environmental Health Department, Attention: Jodi M Smith. 165 Burbridge Road, Hilton, SA, 5033

Thankyou
Jodi M Smith, Environmental Health Officer

PROSECUTION GUIDE

TO PROSECUTION	AGAINST PROSECUTION
<p>1. Nature of fault Serious Death, serious injury or ill health resulted</p> <p>2. General Negligence Deliberate/ fraudulent act Inadequate Systems Multiple/ frequent occurrence Previous advice given to management Manager aware of risk No adequate policy</p> <p>3. General Performance and attitude General standards very poor Below comparable firms Bad record Prosecuted for the same offence previously Past Progress No attempt to rectify/ avoid Immediate action not taken Prospective action not in hand Attitude- covering up Dishonest Unco-operative</p> <p>4. Attitudes Complainant genuine / good witness</p> <p>5. Benefits to be derived Will secure results / protection Resolve important legal issue Will resolve responsibility Set example - punish guilty</p>	<p>Minor No injury sustained</p> <p>Error of judgment Unforeseeable All reasonable steps taken/ single event No precise information given Exceptional occurrence Specific and adequate company policy</p> <p>Excellent standards Above comparable firms No previous record First offence Rectifications complete Some progress made Was taken Implemented Open Honest Helpful</p> <p>Complainant unreliable / won't give evidence</p> <p>Action already taken, best practicable means implemented Routine / Minor matter Person- at fault already known No negligence</p>