

Food Safety



Whilst instances of food poisoning and allergic reactions are rare, these can occur where poor practices have been adopted.

There are many types of food preparation activities completed in organisations every day. These can range from running a restaurant, café or other catering business through to providing charitable support. Some employers may have a restaurant, use outside caterers or provide vending services for their staff.

Clearly, all of these examples involve the preparation and handling of food to some extent, although this will vary widely. For example, it could involve preparing food on the premises or simply baking cakes at home for consumption elsewhere.

Legal requirements

As you would expect, there is a series of detailed laws that relate to the preparation and sale of food. These include Regulation (EC) No.852/2004 (on the hygiene of foodstuffs), the Food Safety Act 1990, and the Food Hygiene (England) Regulations (with similar requirements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

These cover a wide range of food safety aspects. Examples range from establishing management procedures and the standards required in premises, to the training and personal hygiene of those involved in preparation. Further information is available at www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/regulation/foodlaw.

Risk advice line

Should you have any additional questions on this topic or other risk-related matters, as a valued Ecclesiastical customer you can contact us through our Risk Advice Line on

0345 600 7531

(Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm, excluding bank holidays)

and one of our in-house risk professionals will be able to assist.

Alternatively, you can email us at

risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com

and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

Essentially, food supplied, sold or provided outside of the family or domestic setting must be safe to eat. It must not be 'injurious to health' or 'unfit for human consumption'. This is regardless of whether those supplying or selling the food are doing so to make a profit. Certain organisations must be registered as food business operators (FBOs) with the local authorities. This is again regardless of whether this is for profit or not.

If you serve or supply food direct to the public, you may also be covered by the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (or Food Hygiene Information Scheme in Scotland). This means that when your business is inspected, you will be given a hygiene rating, based on the standards found at the time. You will be given a sticker/certificate with your rating or result to display publicly. Further information about the schemes is available at <https://www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/food-hygiene-rating-scheme>.

Some businesses are also required to provide certain allergy information, to help customers avoid certain ingredients if they need to. Further information is available at www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/allergy-guide.

The extent to which all of these requirements will apply to you depends upon your particular circumstances. You will certainly have to consider them if you are a registered food business. However, where somebody handles, prepares, stores or serves food occasionally and on a small scale (e.g. a church, school or village fair and other situations such as organised charities comprising individual volunteers where the food is prepared occasionally), they may not. For example, where you are a charity or community food operation which is not required to be registered as a food business, you don't have to provide information for consumers about allergens present in the food as ingredients. However, it is recommended that you or anyone else managing food operations do consider the risks. This would be good practice.

This can be a confusing area of the law and further information is available at <https://www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/providing-food-at-community-and-charity-events>.

Hazards to look out for

Typical hazards include:

- dirty or damaged work surfaces and stores in food preparation areas
- storage and preparation of raw and cooked foods together
- signs of pests in areas where food may be prepared or stored
- food that is out of date, of poor quality or contaminated
- inadequate cooking, re-heating or thawing
- cleaning chemicals stored with foodstuffs
- food being prepared too far in advance
- foods containing known allergens
- storing foods at the wrong temperature
- people who are ill handling food
- contamination from foreign bodies (e.g. hair, jewellery etc.)
- poor personal hygiene*.

*Note: this list is not exhaustive

Precautions you can take

Typical precautions include:

- keeping premises clean, well maintained and in good condition – including walls, equipment, ceilings and floors
- ensuring food preparation surfaces are in good condition, being easy to clean and disinfect
- purchasing food from reputable suppliers
- checking deliveries to ensure food is supplied packaged safely, at the correct temperature, in date and is clean and undamaged
- having appropriate stock control procedures
- checking the temperature of any chilling equipment at least once a day
- storing raw and ready-to-eat food properly
- making sure that food is cooked or prepared properly
- keeping food covered to help protect it and to prevent contamination
- adopting good hygiene practices when preparing food, particularly if those involved are sick
- training food handlers in food hygiene
- disposing of packaging materials and food waste properly
- pest-proofing your premises
- providing suitable washing facilities (i.e. wash hand basins, hot water, soap, disposable hand towels etc.)
- having a dedicated area for storing cleaning chemicals, away from foodstuffs*.

*Note: this list is not exhaustive



Action

1 Decide what steps you need to take to comply with the law.

This will depend on the nature of the food preparation activity you are involved in.

Guidance

In many instances, you may not be required to do much more than follow good hygiene practices. However, where you prepare food regularly for others and this requires a degree of organisation, you may have to do more.

Useful information, guidance and resources are available at www.food.gov.uk/. It is not always clear whether community and charity food supply, which is often occasional or small-scale in nature, requires registration.

Guidance on this can be found at www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/providing-food-at-community-and-charity-events.

If you intend to run a restaurant, café or other catering businesses or a shop selling food, you may have to register your premises with the local authority (for new business premises, this must be at least 28 days before opening) and make sure that the information they have remains up-to-date by notifying them of any significant changes.

If you cannot decide what steps to take or whether you should be registered, contact your local authority environmental health department food safety team who will be able to advise you.

2 Implement suitable precautions to ensure that any food prepared is safe.

Where you prepare food regularly for others and this requires a degree of organisation, you may need to consider a range of precautions. Obviously, the extent you will need to implement these will depend upon your own particular circumstances.

These precautions include making sure that:

- premises are suitable, properly maintained, clean and disinfected
- there is no risk of contamination
- food is properly handled and stored at appropriate temperatures
- adequate staff welfare facilities are provided (e.g. hand washing, toilet facilities, changing facilities etc.)
- specific precautions are based on the principles of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), with these being implemented where necessary
- procedures are developed to deal with any outbreak of food poisoning, foreign body contamination incident or complaint
- required information is provided in relation to food allergies. Further guidance and advice is available at www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-guidance-for-food-businesses
- adequate training and information for food handlers, supervisors etc. is provided
- suitable records are completed and retained. These could include those relating to temperature control, maintenance, inspections, as well as those relating to any food safety management procedures and information or training provided to employees and others.

A useful booklet on food hygiene precautions for all types of organisations has been prepared by the Food Standards Agency. This is available at www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/food-hygiene.

Making a start

Action

3 Document your arrangements and responsibilities for ensuring that any food prepared is safe.

Guidance

Record the arrangements and responsibilities for managing food safety, reviewing these where necessary.

If you have prepared a health and safety policy, you could record these as part of it.

Want to know more?

Other useful health and safety information is available on our [website](#).

Further guidance and resources are also available from the Food Standards Agency at www.food.gov.uk/.

Note: if you are in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man, then regional variations might apply. In this instance, you should check the guidance provided by the Enforcing Agency for your region. This will be freely available on their website.

Need to contact us?

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