

Healthy workplaces

This year European Safety Week which ran from October 25th to 29th had its focus on Healthy Workplaces and Safe Maintenance. The aim of the campaign was to raise awareness of the importance of maintenance for safe and healthy workplaces and the need to protect workers who carry out maintenance duties. The HSE reported that 10-15% of all fatal accidents at work in Europe are maintenance related.



Maintenance workers can be exposed to all sorts of hazards many of which have been detailed in previous editions of Safeguard Update, such as the perils of disturbing asbestos, falls from working at heights, isolation procedures for electrical systems and ensuring that

contractors are provided with all relevant information to undertake their work safely. These hazards are some of those that most frequently result in injuries or death.

Other hazards can result from the worker being unfamiliar with the site where he is called to undertake maintenance work, lone working or poor risk assessments for the planned tasks.

In order to maintain a safe working environment for colleagues, clients and visitors regular checks should be carried out to identify permanent hazards in the workplace, such as low headroom or restricted access, and maintenance defects. It is recommended that managers should complete the Workplace Inspection record every six months.



The Workplace Inspection Checklist records

- Structural hazards or problems associated with parts of the buildings that are the responsibility of the manager including the conditions of floors, windows, etc.
- Staff facilities – changing rooms, toilets, rest rooms, restaurants, etc.
- Environmental conditions including ventilation, noise, temperature and lighting
- Fire Safety arrangements including fire exits and escape routes
- First Aid arrangements including first aiders and first aid equipment
- The suitability and maintenance of personal protective equipment
- Housekeeping – arrangements for the disposal of waste, storage facilities, cleanliness, etc.

Staff must be trained to spot hazards and report defects with equipment as soon as they arise. Damaged equipment must be assessed and repaired quickly; if it represents a health and safety issue or a food safety issue then the equipment must be withdrawn from use until it is repaired. Damaged equipment that cannot be repaired must be thrown away and measures taken to ensure that it cannot be put back into use, e.g. electrical cables cut off.

Preventative maintenance or service contracts should be in place for specialist equipment such as gas fuelled equipment, electrical equipment and freezers. Service engineers should be supervised at all times to ensure that they are dressed appropriately if working in a food handling area, do not pose any health and safety or food safety issues and can account for any tools and equipment used at the end of their visit. Areas affected by maintenance work must be cleaned and sanitised before further food use.

ESPRESSO COFFEE MACHINES

An incident was reported in the media in September about the explosion of a coffee machine in a supermarket in Farnborough, Hampshire. Several people were hurt in the incident. The local authority and the Health & Safety Executive are investigating the incident, but initial findings suggest that a build up of pressure within the machine caused the explosion.

The coffee machine was an Elektra Barlume 3-group espresso machine although all coffee machines operate in a similar way. Such occurrences are extremely rare but managers should be aware of the risks that pressure systems present and the legal requirements that must be met where pressure systems are in use.

The Pressure Systems Safety Regulations 2000 (PSSR) apply to all pressure systems including coffee machines. The regulations are complex, particularly where equipment like coffee machines is supplied under lease or hire arrangement. However, where equipment is provided by a supplier under a hire arrangement, it is the owner of that equipment who is responsible for ensuring it is maintained, has a written scheme

of examination and has had an examination in accordance with the written scheme, along with a report detailing the findings.

If you own any equipment that falls within the scope of PSSR such as espresso coffee machines you must ensure that:

- The equipment has been maintained correctly by checking the last maintenance or service record. It should be the subject of a regular service agreement.
- You have access to a written scheme of examination and the latest examination report in accordance with that written scheme (and that this is still valid). Note: The Examination report is not the same as maintenance documentation and must be completed by an independent, competent, person.

In all circumstances, should you at any time identify any fault with your coffee machine, the equipment must be taken out of use by labelling it 'do not use' and arrange with your service provider for its repair and appropriate re-examination before it is put back in service.

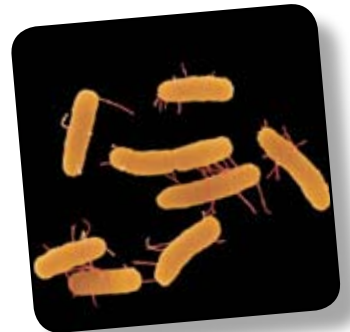
Salmonella poisoning linked to bean sprouts

The Health Protection Agency has identified almost 200 cases of Salmonella illness since the beginning of August with suspected links to raw bean sprouts. The majority of the cases have been in England although there have been five in Wales and two in Northern Ireland. In Scotland, Health Protection Scotland has identified 21 cases of the illness. The strain of Salmonella is S. Bareilly.

The Food Standards Agency has issued guidance on the storage and cooking of bean sprouts which is summarised below.

- Keep bean sprouts refrigerated and use within their 'use by' date.
- Keep bean sprouts separate from other salad vegetables to avoid cross contamination.
- Do not use bean sprouts that have turned brown or have a strange odour.
- When cooking bean sprouts, firstly rinse them thoroughly in clean tap water and then cook thoroughly until piping hot.
- Always maintain good hygiene practices. Wash your hands after handling raw bean sprouts and sanitise food surfaces.
- Unless bean sprouts are labelled 'ready to eat', they should be thoroughly cooked before use.
- Bean sprouts labelled 'ready to eat' may be eaten raw but should be washed in a solution of salad sanitiser before use.

- Raw bean sprouts should not be served to vulnerable people, such as the elderly, young children and pregnant women.



Salmonella infections can result in watery diarrhoea, abdominal pain, headache, nausea, vomiting and fever. The majority of those affected recover without special treatments although it is essential to drink plenty of fluids to replace those lost. For those with impaired immune systems, the elderly and infants the illness may be more severe and require medical treatment. In some severe cases the infection may pass from the intestines into the blood system and to other areas of the body.

Salmonella bacteria are destroyed by cooking but it is essential to maintain good hygiene practices to prevent cross contamination from raw foods to cooked foods. As Salmonella is commonly found in the gastrointestinal tracts of people and animals, effective hand washing is essential to prevent its spread and particularly so after visiting the toilet, if looking after the sick, changing nappies or touching pets or domestic animals.

HAND WASHING - essential for preventing cross contamination

Hand washing is an essential part of personal hygiene and one of the simplest and most effective ways of preventing cross contamination in the kitchen.

A bactericidal liquid soap and designated hand wash basin with plentiful warm water must be used. There is a risk of food being contaminated if food preparation sinks are used for the purpose. Taps that have to be turned manually should be turned off using a paper towel to prevent the risk of cross contamination. Photosensitive taps are preferable.

Food handlers must wash their hands:

- Before starting work and frequently thereafter
- Before handling cooked or ready to eat food, such as salads
- Between handling different foods
- Before and after handling raw meat, poultry, fish or eggs

Food handlers must also wash their hands after:

- Eating, drinking or other breaks
- Smoking
- Visiting the toilet
- Coughing, sneezing or touching their hair or face
- Cleaning tasks or handling chemicals
- Handling rubbish and waste
- Wearing rubber or disposable gloves

The use of disposable gloves when handling food does not dispense with the need to wash hands regularly. Disposable gloves are only effective in preventing cross contamination if they are changed frequently between different tasks and between handling different foods.

When washing hands follow the steps below:

- Wash hands palm to palm with fingers closed



- Rub the back of both hands



- Wash hands palm to palm with fingers interlaced



- Wash hands fist to palm



- Rub round both thumbs and the sides of both hands



- Rub both palms with the fingertips of the opposite hand



- Wash the wrists



- Rinse under running water and dry hands thoroughly with a disposable paper towel.



Focus on Campylobacter

In the summer this year the Food Standards Agency's Food Safety Week promoted the importance of good food hygiene in the home. It focused on preventing campylobacter food poisoning by highlighting the importance of proper cooking and avoiding cross contamination.

Campylobacter causes the greatest number of cases of foodborne illness in the UK each year. There were approximately 55,000 reported cases of campylobacteriosis in the UK in 2008, but many cases go unreported with the realistic number of cases more likely to be closer to 375,000 each year.

Anyone can get campylobacter, but young children under 5 years of age, those over 60 and people who work with farm animals or in the meat industry, and travellers to developing countries are at greater risk.

The infection is normally caused by eating contaminated food. Campylobacter is found in most raw poultry and is common in raw meat. It is impossible to tell from looking at food whether or not it contains Campylobacter. It will look, smell and taste normal so correct handling and cooking practices are vitally important. Symptoms include diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach pains and cramps, fever, and generally feeling unwell. They usually develop within two to five days, but can take as long as 10 days. Most cases start to clear up after two to three days of diarrhoea and from 80 to 90 per cent settle within one week.

Safeguard advice to reduce Campylobacter poisoning

It is essential that everyone working in the catering environment and food handlers in particular have high standards of personal hygiene to avoid cross contamination. In particular it is essential that:

- Anyone suffering from vomiting or diarrhoea is excluded from the food premises
- Food handlers thoroughly wash their hands at appropriate intervals.
- Food handlers abstain from unhygienic habits
- Food handlers wear appropriate protective clothing
- Wherever possible, separate refrigerated storage should be provided for cooked meats and fish, and raw meats, fish and dairy produce to reduce the risk of contamination. Where only one fridge is available raw food, including fresh eggs must be stored below cooked and ready to eat food.
- Surfaces, equipment, containers, etc. with which food is likely to come into contact must be sanitised after cleaning and before use. Special attention should be paid to chopping boards, knives, slicing machines, work surfaces and containers used for high-risk foods. Food handlers should practice 'clean and clear as you go' and they must ensure that all sanitised articles are not re-contaminated before they are used. The use of colour-coded chopping boards and knives will help reduce cross-contamination.
- Raw food should be prepared in specific areas away from cooked and ready to serve products. Where this is not practical, different foods should be prepared at different times and utensils and surfaces must be cleaned and sanitised between each task.
- Food must be cooked thoroughly in order to kill any Campylobacter food poisoning bacteria.

Safeguard

You can contact Safeguard directly for more information about any of the articles appearing in this edition of our Newsletter or for any other health and safety or food safety information you may require. Contact Safeguard, Data Centre, 310 Broadway, Salford M50 2UE, Telephone: 0161 872 4781, www.safeguard-online.co.uk

Recent prosecutions

OXFORDSHIRE BAKERY FINED AFTER MOUSE FOUND IN BREAD

Premier Foods was fined £5500 and ordered to pay £11,109.47 in costs at Oxford Crown Court in September after a customer found a dead mouse in a loaf of bread. The customer had purchased the bread through the Tesco store in Bicester and had used some of the slices to make sandwiches for his family before finding the dead mouse. Initially the customer did not realise that the dark coloured object he had found embedded in the corner of some of the slices was a mouse until he discovered that it had fur.

A local environmental health officer investigated the complaint and identified the item as a mouse that was missing its tail. However, there was no indication where the tail had gone. Premier Foods apologised profusely for the incident and stopped all bakery production until an independent specialist contractor had completed a thorough investigation and had confirmed that it was an isolated incident.

RECYCLING FIRM PROSECUTED

A recycling firm, Smurfit Kappa of Liverpool was fined £5000 with £4204 costs for an accident in which an employee suffered rib injuries. The worker was putting waste cardboard onto a metal conveyor belt to feed a baling machine when a reversing vehicle forced him onto the conveyor belt. The company should have ensured that pedestrians were separated from moving vehicles by providing barriers or marked areas.

The company was charged with breaching regulation 17 of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 having failed to allow pedestrians and vehicles to work or move safely. The HSE investigator said that the injuries the worker suffered could have been much worse if he had been hit harder by the van or had been forced into the baling machine.