

# SA food handler

## UPDATE

Issue 1 | 2008

## Welcome to the first edition of SA Food Handler Update (SAFHU) for 2008,

brought to you by the Environmental Health Section of your local Council. SAFHU aims to keep you up to date on topical food safety information, but don't forget that your local Council Environmental Health Officer is also a great source of information.

## Avoid the Temperature Danger Zone

Standard 3.2.2 Food Safety Practices and General Requirements sets out specific requirements for keeping potentially hazardous foods at specified temperatures. Temperatures of 5°C or below prevent most food poisoning bacteria from multiplying to dangerous levels, whilst temperatures of 60°C or above will kill most bacteria and viruses. At temperatures between 5°C and 60°C bacteria can grow to unsafe levels, therefore this temperature range is known as the 'Temperature Danger Zone'. Food businesses must ensure that potentially hazardous foods are kept outside of the 'Temperature Danger Zone' when received, displayed, transported and stored.

### What are potentially hazardous foods?

Potentially hazardous foods are foods that may contain food poisoning bacteria and are capable of supporting growth of these bacteria or formation of toxins (poisonous chemicals produced by some bacteria) to levels that are unsafe for consumers, if the foods are not kept at the correct temperatures.

Examples of potentially hazardous foods include:

- cooked meats and food containing meat, such as deli meats, poultry, pate, casseroles and meat pies;
- dairy products and foods containing dairy products, such as cream, custard, baked goods containing cream or custard, soft cheeses and dairy-based desserts;
- seafood (excluding live seafood) and food containing seafood, such as seafood salad, fish cakes and cooked shellfish;
- processed fruits and vegetables, such as prepared salads and sprouted seeds;
- cooked rice and pasta;
- foods containing eggs, beans, or other

protein-rich food, such as quiche, hard boiled eggs, bean curd and fresh bean noodles;

- gravies and sauces; and
- foods that contain any of the above foods, such as sandwiches and salads.

### Which foods are not potentially hazardous foods?

Bacteria will not grow in some types of food including most canned and bottled food, dried fruit, salted or fermented dried meats, some spreads and sauces and breads. Some of these foods can become potentially hazardous if they are altered in some way. For example, dry custard powder is not potentially hazardous but when milk or water is mixed with the powder to make custard, the custard becomes potentially hazardous.

### Keep cold food at 5°C or below

All coolrooms and fridges containing potentially hazardous foods must be kept at 5°C or below. A thermometer should be used regularly to check the temperature in different areas of the coolroom or fridge as 'hot spots' may occur. Coolrooms and fridges won't work properly when they are overloaded because the cold air cannot circulate.

### Keep hot food at 60°C or above

Potentially hazardous hot food needs to be kept at 60°C or above. This includes pies, pasties etc in pie warmers and casseroles, soups, rice and pasta dishes etc in bain-marie displays. The equipment (eg. pie warmers, bain-maires) often need to be set at a higher temperature to ensure that the food itself is at 60°C. A probe thermometer should be used to check the internal temperatures of food.

### The 2 hour/4 hour rule

The 2 hour/4 hour rule below explains how long potentially hazardous food can be kept safely at temperatures within the 'Temperature Danger Zone'.

Total time that potentially hazardous food can be left between 5°C and 60°C:

- Less than 2 hours refrigerate or use immediately
- Between 2 hours and 4 hours use immediately
- More than 4 hours throw out

This rule may be used for displaying sandwiches, cream filled cakes etc during a busy lunch period, but you must take into consideration how long the food was out of temperature control during preparation and/or transport. Records should be maintained of what time the food was first out of temperature control and therefore when the food can be re-refrigerated, used immediately or must be discarded. Keeping records is also necessary to demonstrate to the Environmental Health Officer that the foods are being kept within the allowed time limits.

If for some reason you are unable to, or do not wish to, store, display or transport food at 5°C or below, or at 60°C or above (outside of the 2hr/4hr rule), you must be able to show that you have a safe alternative system in place, such as sound scientific evidence.

Source – Food Safety Standards – Temperature Control Requirements Fact Sheet, July 2001, FSANZ.



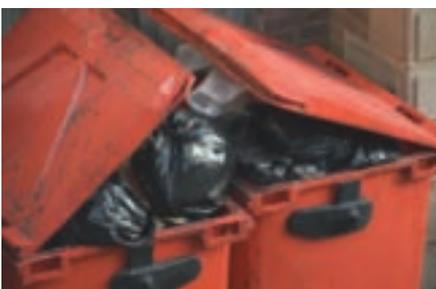
## Common Non Compliance Corner

Welcome to our regular non compliance corner. This article looks at common breaches, otherwise known as non-compliances, which are often observed by Environmental Health Officers during inspections. In this issue of SA Food Handler Update, we discuss the importance of the **correct storage and disposal of waste**.

All food businesses generate waste of varying types and quantities including recyclables, packaging materials, food scraps and cooking oil. The manner in which these waste products are stored as refuse can potentially cause problems for the food business with regard to vermin, animal attraction, and odour. Standard 3.2.3 Clause 6 of the *Food Safety Standards* (FSS) states that there must be storage facilities (e.g. bins) capable of containing the volume of waste produced. The Standard also states that the waste receptacle must be able to be easily and effectively cleaned and that waste should be enclosed to keep pests and animals away.

Some issues frequently observed by Environmental Health Officers during inspections of waste storage areas include:

- Bins overflowing with rubbish;
- Waste not being deposited in bins, instead placed on the ground around the bins or at the rear entrance to the business;
- Accumulation of recyclables stored inside the premise rather than in the appropriate storage area;
- Odours from the bins due to irregular or inadequate cleaning procedures; and
- Evidence of vermin or pest activity in and around the bins.



Issues such as overflow of rubbish and offensive odours may be prevented by ensuring that the bins are emptied on a more frequent basis. Cleaning the bins regularly to remove all food waste, dirt, grease and other visible matter will minimise odours as well as reduce the attraction of pests (such as cockroaches, ants and flies) and vermin. You must however ensure that any waste water from cleaning the bin does not enter the stormwater system.

It is important to remember that all waste must be enclosed. Food scraps and any putrescible waste must be contained (e.g. garbage bags) prior to placement into the bins to minimise liquids leaking out and causing odour, vermin and cleanliness issues. Larger skip bins ideally should have lockable lids to prevent any illegal dumping that may cause overflowing bins and additional costs to food business operators.

If waste is stored directly on the ground outside of a food business as opposed to in an appropriate storage facility it is more likely to become a source of attraction for pests and vermin. Recyclables stored inside of a food business are also likely to attract pests, in particular ants and cockroaches. For these reasons it is imperative that all waste must be stored in an appropriate waste storage facility.

Used cooking oil is considered a waste product and must also be stored in accordance with Standard 3.2.3 Clause 6 of the FSS. Many food businesses use large oil drums for storage of their waste cooking oil.

During inspections Environmental Health Officers often encounter issues such as:

- Unclean oil drums (spillages on and around bins);
- Odours; and
- Vermin attraction.

Used cooking oil can produce quite strong odours which can be offensive to neighbouring properties and can attract pests (in particular cockroaches). Ensure that your oil drum is frequently emptied or replaced appropriately with a new drum by a waste oil contractor and is maintained to a high standard of cleanliness.

All spillages on the ground should be cleaned using an absorbent material such as sand to prevent stormwater pollution. It is highly recommended that the oil drum be stored under cover with a tight fitted lid to prevent any oil from the drum being washed down the stormwater drain in the event of rain.

Following these guidelines will assist all food handlers in meeting their legislative requirements in regards to the correct disposal of waste and minimise vermin and pest attraction, odours and maintain cleanliness.

### NOTICE

#### Food Business Notifications

Have you recently taken over a food business? If so, don't forget that you must inform your local Council's Environmental Health Section that there has been a transfer of ownership of the food business and also if there has been a change in the food business name. Notification of these changes must be made to Council within 14 days of the changes occurring. If it has been more than 14 days, let Council know now - better late than never!

# Food Scraps...

## Big fines for food retailers behaving badly

Source: [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/pdf/Food-chain-Feb-08.pdf](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/pdf/Food-chain-Feb-08.pdf)

Two food retailers were successfully prosecuted recently for assaulting and intimidating authorised Food Inspectors in the course of a routine food inspection.

In October, a Central Coast takeaway owner was convicted and ordered to pay \$15,000 in fines and costs for assaulting the officer. The following month, a Merrylands butcher was convicted for obstructing an Authorised officer and was made to pay \$11,500 in fines and costs. Both incidents were prosecuted under the Food Act for refusing to comply with the requirements of an authorised officer and for intimidating, obstructing or assaulting an authorised officer in the exercise of the officer's duties.

The two prosecutions prompted a warning from the Primary Industries Minister who said that the government takes this improper behaviour seriously and is prepared to act swiftly to stamp it out. "Food Authority officers have an important responsibility to protect the health of the public and they have a right to perform on-the-spot inspections of food premises," he said.



## Restaurant owner jailed for stabbing patron

Source: <http://news.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=74246>

A restaurant owner who fatally stabbed an "aggressive" patron who complained about slow service has been sentenced to seven years in prison. Khanh Vo, 35, grabbed a paring knife from the kitchen of his restaurant in the Melbourne suburb of Abbotsford and stabbed Anh Dung Nguyen, 54, during a fight on April 16, 2006.

The Victorian Supreme Court was told that Mr Nguyen, who had been drinking earlier in the night at Crown Casino, arrived at the restaurant with a group of nine men about 11pm. Mr Nguyen complained to Vo's wife at about 11.30pm about the slow service, the court heard. When she told her husband about this exchange, he became upset and a fight erupted between Mr Nguyen's group and Vo's friends, who were also in the restaurant. During the scuffle, Vo went to the kitchen where he picked up a paring knife before returning to the dining area.

"In the commotion you went to the kitchen and got a short-bladed paring knife," Justice Bell told the court. "You swung at him (Mr Nguyen) stabbing him three times in the left side of the torso."

Mr Nguyen was transported to The Alfred Hospital where he died the next day from his injuries.



## Probation for food contamination

Source: [www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/02/19/2166137.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/02/19/2166137.htm)

A North West Tasmanian man has been placed on three years probation for contaminating several thousand dollars worth of supermarket food. 44 year old Stephen John Walsh admitted spraying a cleaning agent on the food. A year ago, Walsh went into a Devonport supermarket and took a spray can of bleach from the shelves. He sprayed more than \$4,600 worth of meat, fruit and vegetables before walking out. A shopper saw Walsh in the act, and alerted a staff member to the contaminated food. Walsh was later identified on surveillance tapes.

In the Burnie Supreme Court yesterday, he pleaded guilty to damaging property, and said he hoped no-one had been poisoned. Since the incident, Walsh has been diagnosed with schizophrenia, and he had had alcohol and cannabis at a party on the day of the crime. Justice Peter Evans sentenced Walsh to three years probation, including psychological assessments. He was ordered to pay damages to the supermarket.



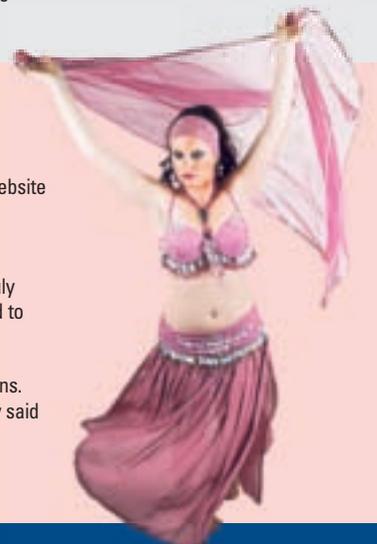
## Paddington eatery 'shamed'

Source: [www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,22447047-5007200,00.html](http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,22447047-5007200,00.html)

A Brisbane restaurant noted for its belly dancers became the first in the state to be "named and shamed" on a Health Department website after 19 of its diners had food poisoning.

Harem Turkish Restaurant in Paddington was convicted and fined \$20,000 in the Magistrate's Court for breaches of the Food Act. Prosecutor Damien Grealy told the court that Queensland Health received a complaint about possible food poisoning at Harem in July 2006. Investigations found 19 other people from the same party reported food poisoning symptoms. Only three people were prepared to provide faecal samples and these also revealed high levels of the bacteria still present three days after the food was consumed.

He said health officers took samples from the remaining batch of food, which also showed hazardous levels of clostridium perfringens. The court was told that the food - a type of casserole - had been left to cool for eight hours in buckets and then reheated. Mr Grealy said the cooling time and temperature had provided the right environment for the bacteria to grow.



### Find-A-Word

Bacteria	Recyclable
Belly Dancer	Restaurant
Bleach	Seafood
Cardboard	Storage
Casserole	Temperature
Cockroach	Thermometer
Coolroom	Toxins
Notification	Vermin
Oil drum	Waste
Polystyrene	Wood

### Raw Wood in Food Premises

In accordance with Food Safety Standard 3.2.3 Clause 12, surfaces within a kitchen must be unable to absorb grease, food particles or water and are able to be easily and effectively cleaned. Many fixtures and fittings within a kitchen are made from wood, including shelving, cupboards, drawers, bench tops, chopping blocks and handles. The concern regarding wood is whether or not it is correctly sealed and maintained in a good state of repair. Raw wood is permeable and can be very rough, e.g. cracked or chipped with ridges or grooves, which can harbour bacteria and prevent it from being easily and effectively cleaned. This makes raw wood unsuitable for contact with raw and ready-to-eat food because of the difficulty in maintaining it to a sufficiently high standard of cleanliness and therefore increasing the risk of cross contamination.

Where wooden food contact surfaces cannot be replaced with a more appropriate surface, such as stainless steel or laminate, the wood must be sealed correctly with a protective coating such as paint or lacquer (depending on the type of fixture or fitting). This coating creates a barrier between the wood and the food to prevent absorption and also strengthens the wood surface, preventing it from splitting and chipping.

### Cardboard and Polystyrene Boxes

Cardboard and polystyrene (foam) boxes are used frequently throughout the food industry to deliver goods. They are often

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T O X I N S T H C A E L B A N  
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O U S E R I C A E H C N R V E  
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then re-used by businesses for storage of food, food utensils, crockery and other miscellaneous items.

The Food Safety Standards state that food contact surfaces should be easily and effectively cleaned and if necessary sanitised if there is a likelihood they will cause food contamination. Cardboard and polystyrene boxes are not smooth and easily absorb grease, food particles and water, causing a potential risk of contamination. As they are made of material that is not capable of being cleaned and sanitised they should not be re-used to store food items, unless the food item is protected by packaging. Cardboard and polystyrene boxes are not durable and thus have a very short shelf life. They can also attract pests such as cockroaches and moths, which love the dark and dry environment that these boxes provide.

An alternative to cardboard and polystyrene boxes, which not only complies with the standards but is also very cost effective in the long term, are plastic containers with tight fitted lids. Always ensure you are only storing the amount of stock intended to be used within your business in order to prevent accumulating an excess.

*The SA Food Handler Update is endorsed by the Australian Institute of Environmental Health (SA Branch).*



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