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WELCOME

This issue marks the fourth NZFSA - produced issue of 4degreesC and we're keen to get your views on how it's going. Please take the time to fill in the survey that is included with this issue and send it back to us. Your feedback will be valuable in helping shape the future development of 4degreesC and everyone who returns a survey goes into the draw to win a \$200 book voucher.

Most of us love a hot savoury in winter and in our feature article we look into the food safety issues associated with potato-top savouries and what you can do to protect your customers from savouries gone bad! In the Food Standards Code Corner we cover the rules around mandatory warning and advisory statements on food labels.

Mashed potatoes – winter comfort food

As the weather gets colder, potato-topped comfort foods such as pies and savouries become popular with café customers. Not much can go wrong food safety-wise with potatoes can it? Well actually, yes it can!

Potato flakes like the ones used to make the mashed potato toppings on pies often contain harmful *Bacillus Cereus* spores. Some bacteria produce heat-resistant spores when conditions become unfavourable for them eg, not enough water available (when potatoes are dehydrated). Then, when conditions become more favourable (the potato flakes are reconstituted), they can germinate and begin multiplying again.

Bacillus Cereus also produces a heat-resistant toxin which can withstand a temperature of 126°C for 90 minutes before it's destroyed. This toxin causes food poisoning in humans, so it's important to keep potato products out of the temperature danger zone (5-60°C) as much as possible.

A recent survey by Institute of Environmental Science & Research tested 55 packets of dehydrated potato flakes and the results showed that all of them contained *Bacillus Cereus*, although all were within acceptable limits. These low levels of bacteria are not a food safety hazard unless subsequent abuse occurs. So it was more worrying to find that 86% of the ready-to-eat pies, sausages, potato and gravy, and savouries that were sampled during the survey were found to be below 60°C – meaning any bacteria present would be happily growing, and in the case of *Bacillus Cereus*, producing their food poisoning-causing toxin.

**Remember –
a hot savoury is
a safe savoury.**

Tips to keep savouries safe

- Pre-heat savouries in an oven to an internal temperature of 75°C
- Pre-heat your pie warmer to 70°C
- Check the internal temperature of each type of savoury before putting them into the pie warmer. Different sized savouries and fillings will heat up at different rates
- Make sure the doors on the pie warmer are kept closed to maintain the temperature as much as possible
- Check the temperature of the pie warmer every two hours. A good way to keep track of the pie warmer's air temperature is to measure the temperature of a dish of water placed in the pie warmer. If the pie warmer is not hot enough your savouries may not be safe. Discard savouries if they have sat for two hours at a temperature of less than 60°C.



Influenza: Pandemic Planning

The impact of the potential influenza pandemic has been the subject of considerable media coverage recently, and infection prevention will play a significant part in reducing the spread of illness should it occur. The main issues for the food industry during a pandemic are to protect your staff, your customers, and your business.

Having personal hygiene and sickness policies for your business will assist to address these issues. Clear workplace policies around sickness and attention to good hand hygiene will help combat the spread of influenza and other diseases which can be spread through food, such as Hepatitis A, norovirus and *Campylobacter*.

Personal Hygiene Policy

Personal hygiene policies cover good hand hygiene procedures as well as expectations around personal hygiene. It is important to ensure that all staff know what the policy is and are encouraged to follow it.

Areas that could be included in hygiene policies relating to influenza are:

- covering your nose and mouth when sneezing and coughing, preferably with a disposable tissue
- immediately disposing of used tissues in the waste
- washing and drying hands after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose and using the correct hand washing technique.

Hand washing is the single most important measure to reduce the risk of spreading infection from one person to another. To promote good hand washing:

- ensure that a good supply of single use towels and soap are available at all times
- all staff should be trained and this should be followed up by regular refresher/reminders
- ensure hand washbasins are used for hand washing only
- put hand washing stickers, available from Northland Health and the District Council Environmental Health Officers, up at wash stations to promote hand washing.

Hand washing procedure

1. Wash hands with soap and warm water by rubbing them together for 20 seconds
2. Use a nailbrush with soap to remove dirt or food from under fingernails, in addition to the 20 seconds of hand rubbing
3. Dry hands thoroughly for 20 seconds by using one of the following methods:
 - Rub hands on two sections of disposable paper towels for 10 seconds on each section or two sections of roller towel (the first section removes the bulk of the water and the second achieves a thorough drying)
 - When using an air towel rub hands together while rotating under the air until hands are completely dry.

Sickness Policy

A written sickness policy should provide clear guidelines for staff who are sick about what they should do when they are sick and when they can return to work. It is important that all staff are aware of and understand the policy.

A sickness policy template can be found on the New Zealand Food Safety Authority's web site <http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/processed-food-retail-sale/templates/sickness-template.pdf>. While this template is mainly focussed on controlling foodborne pathogens, it can be customised to include staff with flu-like symptoms.

Encourage staff to get an annual influenza vaccination to protect against seasonal influenza viruses. It will not protect against pandemic influenza but will give protection against the seasonal outbreaks.



For more information please contact:

Northland Health, Community, Dental and Public Health Services

Health Protection:

Whangarei

Ph 09 430 4100

KeriKeri

Ph 09 407 8759

Health Promotion - for nutritional information:

Public Health Dietician

Ph 09 430 4101 ext 7898

District Councils:

Far North District Council

Ph 09 407 8314

Kaipara District Council

Ph 09 439 7059

Whangarei District Council

Ph 09 430 4200

Decline in consumer food complaints

The number of consumer food complaints investigated by Auckland Regional Public Health Service for the period June 2004 to July 2005 has declined. A total of 189 complaints were received and investigated compared to 273 in the previous year.

Complaint types

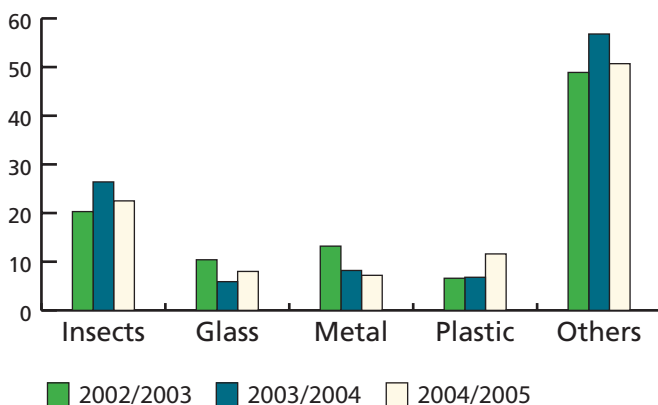
Nearly three quarters (73%) of the food complaints received over that time related to the presence of foreign objects in food. A range of objects including metal, glass, plastic and insects were found in food products. While we realise that even with good manufacturing practices complaints cannot be totally eliminated, the presence of metal and glass fragments in food is of concern. Therefore, effective control measures need to be implemented and incorporated into a food business's Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP)-based food safety programme.

Number of foreign matter complaints received 2002-2005:

	02/03	03/04	04/05
Total complaints	238	273	189
Number of foreign matter complaints	182 (76.5%)	220 (80.5%)	138 (73.0%)

Of the 138 foreign matter complaints received between June 2004 and July 2005, 31(22.5%) related to the presence of insects and rodents, 16 (11.6%) to plastic, 11 (8%) to glass, and 10 (7.2%) to metal. Other complaint categories included spoilage, tainting, and technical non-compliance with the Food Standards Code.

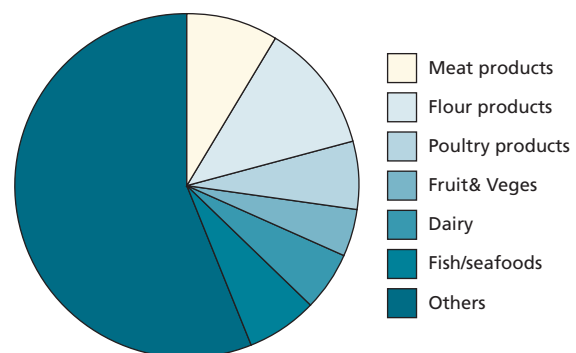
Percentage of foreign matter complaints from 2002 to 2005



Food category

The food category most commonly implicated was flour followed by meat and poultry products. Other categories included fish products, fruits and vegetables, and dairy products.

Complaints by food category



Preventing food complaints

Consumer complaints relating to foreign matter can be prevented by implementing the HACCP system.

Our advice to food businesses:

- Identify physical hazards in the food process and put effective controls in place eg, supplier specifications, visual inspection, sieves, magnets and metal detectors.
- Implement good manufacturing practices eg, personal hygiene standards, pest control, building and equipment maintenance, cleaning and sanitation
- Monitor control measures and take corrective action if critical limits are exceeded.

Pitter patter and squeak – the sound of unwelcome visitors

The colder temperatures of winter often bring mice and rats inside looking for shelter and food. Food proprietors in particular need to be on the constant look out for signs of infestations.

Rats and mice commonly live and feed in refuse, sewers, drains and other unsavory places. The diseases they pick up on their feet and bodies can be carried into food premises and onto food or food surfaces. Rodent droppings can also find their way into food products and your customers will be less than impressed if they find a dropping in their food. Health Protection Officers and Environmental Health Officers treat rodent-dropping complaints seriously.

Signs to look out for:

- damage caused by gnawing – chewed electrical cables, damage to wooden framing, nibbled food packaging
- droppings in food storage areas or in grain or cereal products
- nesting sites in paper or other fibrous materials, in undisturbed corners especially in storerooms, dry goods stores or in insulation materials
- smears on walls where they run
- the distinctive musky mouse smell.

Prevention measures:

- check the perimeter of the building and seal all possible entrances. A hole about the thickness of a pencil is big enough for a mouse to squeeze through!
- plumbing, pipe and cabling exit and entry points in walls should be sealed to ensure no entry points are left around them
- all doors must fit flush to the floor
- keep ground cover away from the building or from entrances to the building as this provides cover for rodents (overhanging branches provide access through guttering into roof areas)
- keep refuse storage areas clean, and don't let non-organic materials build up eg, waste paper and cartons
- lay baits near entrances, in dry goods stores and behind large electrical appliances (eg, refrigerators) and check them regularly for signs of rodents
- store food products off the floor and away from walls. Keep store areas clean and tidy and stock well rotated as undisturbed product provides nesting sites.

ACT IMMEDIATELY if you find evidence of rodent infestation

- destroy all damaged food products and thoroughly sanitise all work surfaces and equipment before use
- find all nesting sites, destroy them and seal off entrances into your premises
- lay poison baits until they are no longer taken. Nail or wire down the bait if you have rats
- mice can be easily caught in traps, but rats can become trap and bait shy. To eliminate rats you may need to call in a professional pest control expert.
- Environmental Health Officers at your local Council or a Health Protection Officer at Health Waikato may also be able to provide further advice.



For more information please contact:

Public Health Unit

Level 4
Hugh Monkton Building
Cnr Rostrevor & Harwood Streets
Hamilton
Ph 07 838 2569

Environmental Health Officers

Hamilton City Council	Ph 07 838 6699	Hauraki District Council	Ph 07 862 8609
Matamata - Piako District Council	Ph 07 884 8179	Otorohanga District Council	Ph 07 873 8199
Ruaapehu District Council	Ph 07 895 8188	South Waikato District Council	Ph 07 886 1710
Thames Coromandel District Council	Ph 07 868 6025	Waikato District Council	Ph 07 824 8633
Waipa District Council	Ph 07 872 0030	Waitomo District Council	Ph 07 878 8801

Scombroid Fish Poisoning

In 2002 Toi Te Ora – Public Health investigated a suspected outbreak of food poisoning among a group of people who had got sick after eating smoked kahawai. They were part of a group of people throughout the North Island who had consumed the same product and had suffered with symptoms consistent with scombroid fish poisoning.

The remaining fish was tested and found to have high levels of histamine. The investigation identified no unsafe food handling practises at the local retailer, or by the consumers after they had purchased the product. This meant that the damage to the fish was most likely to have occurred before it had reached the retailer. The remaining smoked kahawai was recalled from sale but New Zealand continues to have outbreaks of scombroid fish poisoning.

Scombroid fish poisoning (also known as histamine poisoning) is caused by eating foods (usually fish) that contain high levels of histamine.

It is associated with fish in the scombroid family, including kahawai, mackerel, tuna, bonito and kingfish. Other fish species that are associated with scombroid fish poisoning include sardines, pilchards, salmon, anchovies, herring and marlin.

Scombroid fish contain high levels of an amino acid called histidine in their flesh. After being caught, the histidine begins to convert into histamine if conditions are right. This chemical causes the poisoning symptoms if the levels get too high. To prevent scombroid poisoning, the fish must be rapidly chilled as soon as possible after it is caught and then it must be kept cold at all stages of the production chain, including transport, storage, processing and display. Each time the fish get too warm (above 2°C) more histamine is formed. The more time it spends above 2°C, the higher the levels of histamine are formed and the greater the risk of food poisoning.

Freezing or cooking the fish once it has become contaminated will not destroy the poison and prevent illness. The only way to prevent scombroid poisoning is to stop the histamine from forming in the first place.

Symptoms

Anyone can be affected by scombroid poisoning. The symptoms start quickly after eating the affected fish - the time can range from a few minutes to several hours but usually occurs within one hour. Symptoms can vary but usually include:

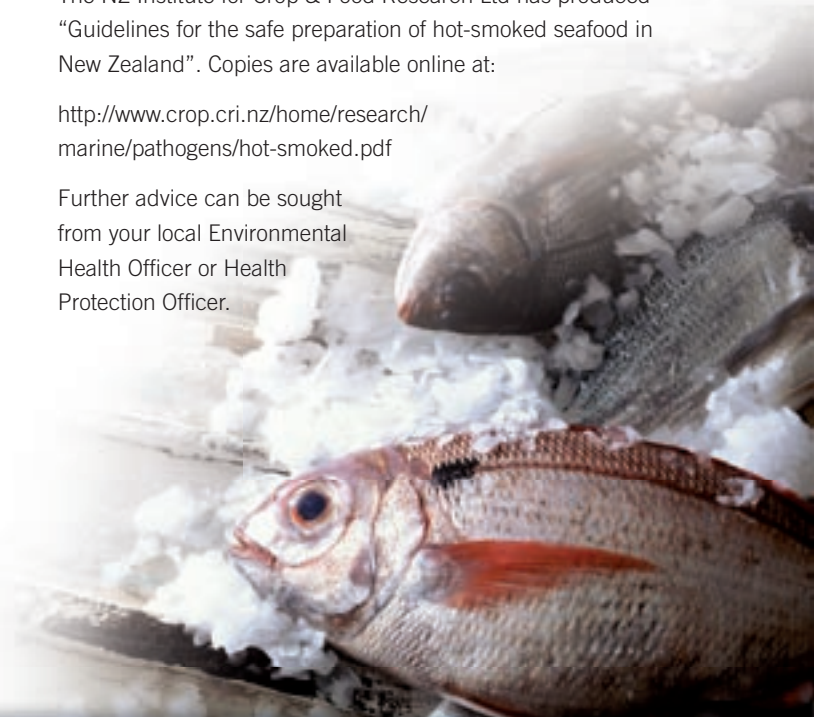
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Red rash (particularly over the face and neck)
- Itchiness
- Hot flushes
- Sweating
- Abdominal cramps
- Diarrhoea
- Burning sensation in the mouth

Symptoms can last up to 12 hours and usually have no long term effects. In serious cases it can be treated with antihistamines.

The NZ Institute for Crop & Food Research Ltd has produced "Guidelines for the safe preparation of hot-smoked seafood in New Zealand". Copies are available online at:

<http://www.crop.cri.nz/home/research/marine/pathogens/hot-smoked.pdf>

Further advice can be sought from your local Environmental Health Officer or Health Protection Officer.



For more information please contact:

Toi Te Ora - Public Health

1143 Haupapa Street
PO Box 1858
ROTORUA
Ph 07 349 3520
Fax 07 346 0105

510 Cameron Road
PO Box 2121
TAURANGA
Ph 07 571 8975
Fax 07 578 5485

Garaway Street
PO Box 241
WHAKATANE
Ph 07 306 0847
Fax 07 306 0987

Date Marking

When the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (FSC) came into force in December 2002, there were a number of changes made around requirements for date marking. Products with a shelf life of **less than 2 years** are now required to be date marked. There is also a difference between when a 'Use By' and a 'Best Before' date can be used.



'Use By' dates

A 'Use By' date relates to health or safety. For example, a 'Use By' date is required on foods that become microbiologically unsafe if not consumed before that date, such as chilled/cooked foods where preservatives are not used or some ready-to-eat uncooked foods like packs of salad vegetables, dips or sandwiches. The microbial spoilage occurs before the food is visibly spoiled. This is in contrast to foods with 'Best Before' dates that are likely to visibly spoil before they become unsafe to eat. **The FSC prohibits food being sold after its 'Use By' date.**

'Best Before' dates

A 'Best Before' date relates to quality. This indicates the date by which food should be eaten to ensure it remains at premium quality. **Food can be sold after its 'Best Before' date provided it's still fit for consumption.** Consumers cannot be misled about the product and the original date mark information cannot be removed or hidden.

Extending the life of perishable food beyond its original date mark

Tairāwhiti District Health and Hawke's Bay District Health Board are aware that some operators freeze or vacuum pack chilled products to extend the shelf life past the original date mark. This is a practice that can lead to problems and complaints if not properly managed. Products with a 'Use By' date mark are not permitted to be sold **at all** after that date mark has expired. Products with a 'Best Before' date mark may continue to be offered for sale but must be carefully handled to ensure they will still be fit to be consumed. Additional information must be provided to the consumer to enable them to handle the product safely.

- The product must be labelled with a new, additional 'Best Before' date. **The old 'Best Before' date must not be removed and should remain visible.**
- The operator must also provide the customer information appropriate to help control any hazards, for example, a food frozen close to its 'Best Before' date will have a shorter shelf life once thawed than normally expected by the customer. The label must include a statement about subsequent use and specific storage conditions required to ensure that the food will keep for the period indicated by the 'Best Before' date. This may include thawing methods, the shelf life of the food once it's thawed or its vacuum pack seal is broken, cooking instructions or other directions as necessary.
- If any original product labelling uses the word 'fresh', an operator will need to consider how to ensure the labelling is not misleading.
- Food for sale must be fit to be consumed so procedures must be established on how close to the end of the 'Best Before' date a product can be further processed and what new shelf life will be appropriate. NZSFA has produced a "A Guide to Calculating the Shelf Life of Foods", which can be found online at: www.nzfsa.govt.nz/processed-food-retail-sale/shelf-life/index.htm.
- Appropriate controls must be in place to ensure that the product is being stored correctly (prior to any further processing) and then handled correctly during further processing to ensure the product is still fit for consumption.

Standard 1.2.5 of the FSC (www.foodstandards.govt.nz) sets out the full date marking requirements. Facts sheets on food labelling can be obtained from your local Public Health office or are available at www.nzfsa.govt.nz



For more information please contact:
Public Health Unit

Hawke's Bay District Health Board
PO Box 447
Napier
Ph 06 834 1815

Public Health Unit
PO Box 119
Gisborne
Ph 06 867 9119

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Prevention measures:

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- mice can be easily caught in traps, but rats can become trap and bait shy. To eliminate rats you may need to call in a professional pest control expert.
- Environmental Health Officers at your local Council or a Health Protection Officer at Taranaki District Health Board may also be able to provide further advice.



For more information please contact:

Health Protection Unit

Taranaki District Health Board
Private Bag 2016
New Plymouth
Ph 06 753 7798

Infected Food Handlers – a risk to food premises

Foodborne illness costs New Zealand more than \$55 million a year. The costs to the food industry include lost productivity, product recalls, lost income and the potentially devastating effect an outbreak might have on the reputation of a food business.

Food handlers suffering from gastroenteritis are a particular risk to others, as the food they handle can act as a vehicle for transmitting the infection to others.

The most common foodborne pathogens that can be passed on through infected food handlers are:

Foodborne illness causing pathogen	Symptoms	Prevention & exclusion advice
<i>Salmonella</i>	Headache, vomiting, stomach cramps, diarrhoea, fever.	Food handlers must be excluded until they have provided two consecutive negative specimens at least 24 hours apart*
<i>Campylobacter</i>	Diarrhoea, stomach cramps, headache, muscle aches and pains, fever, vomiting.	Food handlers must be excluded until they have no symptoms, and a formed faecal motion for at least 24 hours.
<i>Shigella</i>	Diarrhoea, stomach cramps, fever, nausea and vomiting.	Food handlers must be excluded until they have provided two consecutive negative specimens at least 24 hours apart*
Hepatitis A	Jaundice (yellowing of the eyes and skin), dark coloured urine, pale faeces, tiredness, vomiting, diarrhoea and fever.	Infected food handlers must be excluded until at least 1 week after jaundice has ended, as advised by their local public health unit
<i>Staphylococcus</i>	Nausea, stomach cramps, vomiting and diarrhoea	In order to prevent the spread through infected food handlers any cuts, abrasions and sores on exposed areas such as the arms, hands and face should be covered with waterproof dressings and gloved. Effective hand hygiene practices are also imperative in order to reduce the spread of infection.
<i>Norovirus</i>	Vomiting and nausea are often the predominant symptom associated with norovirus; however diarrhoea, stomach cramps and fever are also common.	Norovirus is relatively environmentally hardy and as such can survive on surfaces including toilets, door handles and work benches for long periods. Therefore strict cleaning schedules involving the use of sodium hypochlorite (bleach) based cleaning solutions on all surfaces regularly should be enforced. Food handlers with norovirus should be excluded from work until without diarrhoea for at least 24 hours.

*48 hours after antibiotic course has been finished.

To reduce the risk of foodborne illness from infected food handlers in your food premises we recommend the following:

1. Exclude food handlers with foodborne illness symptoms (diarrhoea and vomiting) from work until 24 hours symptom free.

2. Develop and implement a written policy for staff who are ill.

NZFSA has developed a very easy to use template document which can be downloaded from the website www.nzfsa.govt.nz. This document provides valuable information regarding the risks associated with infected food handlers as well as a template policy which can be easily adapted to cover cases of illness in any food premises.

In addition to ensuring your food premises has a written policy for staff illness, strict cleaning and hand hygiene practices, policies and guidelines should be enforced to reduce the risk of infection. It is imperative that managers actively promote the 'ill worker' policy to all staff.

3. Ensure that correct hand hygiene practices are followed by all staff.

Steps for effective hand hygiene:

1. Use running water
2. Wet hands and apply soap
3. Rub hands together all over
4. If nails are very dirty use a nail brush to remove dirt
5. Rinse thoroughly under running water

6. Dry thoroughly on 2 paper towels 10 seconds on each towel (total time 20 seconds). If you are using an air towel, hands should be dried for 45 seconds (properly dry hands reduces bacteria transfer from other surfaces).

Hands should be washed:

- Before preparing food
- After having a break, particularly after having a cigarette
- After going to the toilet
- When you change tasks in the kitchen (such as cutting chicken to preparing a salad, or stocking the chiller to preparing foods)
- After touching your face or other body parts eg, blowing your nose, eating or drinking
- After handling money
- Whenever they become soiled or dirty eg, after dealing with rubbish.

The MidCentral Public Health Services have hand washing stickers and posters. If you would like some for your business contact us on 06 350 9110

For more information please contact:

MidCentral Health Public Health Services

Palmerston North
Wanganui

Ph 06 350 9110
Ph 06 348 1775

Horowhenua District Council	Ph 06 949 4949
Manawatu District Council	Ph 06 323 0000
Palmerston North City Council	Ph 06 356 8199
Rangitikei District Council	Ph 06 327 8174
Ruapehu District Council	Ph 06 385 8364
Tararua District Council	Ph 06 374 4080
Wanganui District Council	Ph 06 349 0001



Safely storing hazardous substances in the food industry

Food proprietors must be aware of how to safely store hazardous substances on their premises. Hazardous substances commonly found in the food industry include products used for cleaning, some pesticides and even certain food additives.

Safe storage tips:

- store hazardous substances in a secure area to prevent unauthorised people and children having access to them, eg, a lockable room or cupboard
- store hazardous substances away from food products to prevent the food from becoming contaminated if the containers are accidentally damaged and the substances spill
- store containers safely and, if possible, not stacked up on top of each other to prevent the possibility of containers falling down and becoming damaged
- it is advisable not to store plastic containers in direct sunlight as containers may eventually become brittle and crack
- dispose of empty containers safely.

Before using any hazardous substance always read the label as it contains useful information, including first aid. Also, refer to the Product Safety Data Sheet for each particular hazardous substance. This information can be obtained from your supplier.

Don't forget to wash your hands after handling hazardous substances.

The Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (HSNO)

This Act came into force for new organisms in July 1998 and for hazardous substances in July 2001. Its purpose is to manage the risks that hazardous substances and new organisms pose to the health and safety of people and communities and the environment of New Zealand.

Food proprietors need to be aware that some hazardous substances used on site (eg, cleaning products) may be subject to HSNO rules with which everyone has to comply. These rules may include controls on the storage, handling and disposal of hazardous substances.

Compliance information is available from the Environmental Risk Management Authority's website: www.ermanz.govt.nz.



For more information please contact:

Regional Public Health
Hutt Valley District Health Board
Private Bag 31 907
Lower Hutt
Ph 04 570 9002

Choice Health Public Health
Wairarapa District Health Board
24-26 Chapel Street
Masteron
Ph 06 370 5020

Sickness Policy

Health Protection Officers are often involved with investigating possible food poisoning cases or suspected foodborne illness outbreaks. Food business operators should develop and implement a sickness policy to assist in preventing your staff from spreading illness. This policy should cover all staff who prepare, handle, or sell food, as well as all people who repair or maintain equipment in food service areas, and any other visitors to the premises.

The policy should stipulate that:

- No one (including an employee, contractor, maintenance worker or visitor) is permitted to be in a food-handling area if suffering from vomiting or diarrhoea.
- Anyone who has had an episode of vomiting or diarrhoea in the 24 hours before entering the food premises must report it to the supervisor or other designated person.
- Any food handler who has had two or more episodes of diarrhoea or any vomiting within a 24 hour period must seek medical advice and have a faecal specimen analysed to identify the cause of illness.
- The food handler must be excluded from the premises for at least 24 hours after the symptoms have ceased. If it is found to be a notifiable disease, the exclusion period may increase and clearance specimens may be required.
- If the supervisor or designated person carries out a risk assessment and finds there is no risk, it may be possible to allow a sick food handler to be given safe alternative work that does not involve direct contact with open food or with surfaces and equipment in areas where food is stored or processed.
- If a food handler has a vomiting episode while at work this must be reported immediately to the supervisor or designated person and the food handler must be excluded immediately. The affected area and all contaminated surfaces, including equipment and utensils, must be cleaned and sanitised (this may also include toilet seats, handles, and taps in staff facilities where appropriate).
- Any food that may have become contaminated must be disposed of immediately.
- No one with jaundice (yellowing of the skin) who is suspected of having, or has, Hepatitis A is permitted in a food handling area.

- No one is permitted to handle food if they have scaly, weeping or infected skin that cannot be totally covered during food handling.
- No one is permitted to handle food if they have a sore throat, even in the absence of a runny nose or cough.
- A record of all employee illnesses must be kept on site.
- You should consult with a Health Protection Officer at your local Public Health Service if in doubt.

Sickness Policy Template

The New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) has developed a very easy to use template document which can be downloaded from www.nzfsa.govt.nz. This document provides valuable information regarding the risks associated with infected food handlers, as well as a template policy which can be easily adapted to cover cases of illness in any food premises.



For more information please contact:

Nelson Marlborough District Health Board Public Health Service

Nelson Office
Blenheim Office

36 Franklyn Street
Wairau Hospital

Nelson
Blenheim

Ph 03 54 61537
Ph 03 520 9914



Snack pack labelling



Community & Public Health has come across a number of 'snack packs' containing items such as potato chips, biscuits, confectionery and drinks, as well as a number of foods that have been repackaged (eg, confectionery or biscuits) that are without a suitable label.

When foods are repacked ready for customer selection such as 'snack packs' or bags of 'lolly mix', the repackaged food is required to be labelled to comply with the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (FSC).

The requirements include that the label must be in English and incorporate the name and address of the premises, a full ingredient list and nutrition information panel, a batch number, and all warning statements (eg, regarding allergens).

If an item is packed within the snack pack, such as individual biscuits or small bags of chips, these individual inner bags must carry warning statements regarding the allergens present. Even if an item is fully labelled within the pack this does not exempt the requirement for the information to appear on the outer wrapper.

Complete food labels are not necessary if food is packaged in the presence of the purchaser eg, if the seller packs confectionery in front of the customer. In some instances specific health and safety information about food products must be given to consumers even when a complete label is not required eg, the presence of caffeine and allergenic substances.

For full labelling requirements refer to the FSC online at: www.foodstandards.govt.nz. Or, contact Community and Public Health for more information.

Hepatitis A

In January 2006 Community & Public Health investigated an outbreak of Hepatitis A in the Canterbury region.

Food was initially considered as the source as it has been implicated in past outbreaks but in this case the infection was found to have been brought into New Zealand from someone who had holidayed overseas, and was then further spread through poor hand hygiene.

Hepatitis A is spread by contact with faecal matter from infected people. This can happen when people don't wash their hands properly after going to the toilet, changing nappies, cleaning the toilet or handling contaminated objects. These people may then go on to handle or prepare food. Food can also be contaminated if it has been grown or washed in water contaminated by sewage.

This outbreak serves as a timely reminder of the importance of hand washing for anyone involved in the preparation and handling of food. Many illnesses can be spread in the same way as Hepatitis A and people who are unwell with vomiting and/or diarrhoea should not handle or work with food for at least 48 hours after their symptoms cease.

A person who has Hepatitis A is infectious before they become unwell and then for at least seven days after jaundice (yellow eyes/skin) appears. It is important to consult a doctor if Hepatitis A is suspected.



Safely storing hazardous substances in the food industry

Food proprietors must be aware of how to safely store hazardous substances on their premises. Hazardous substances commonly found in the food industry include products used for cleaning, some pesticides and even certain food additives.

Safe storage tips:

- store hazardous substances in a secure area to prevent unauthorised people and children having access to them, eg, a lockable room or cupboard
- store hazardous substances away from food products to prevent the food from becoming contaminated if the containers are accidentally damaged and the substances spill
- store containers safely and, if possible, not stacked up on top of each other to prevent the possibility of containers falling down and becoming damaged
- it is advisable not to store plastic containers in direct sunlight as containers may eventually become brittle and crack
- dispose of empty containers safely.

Before using any hazardous substance always read the label as it contains useful information, including first aid. Also, refer to the Product Safety Data Sheet for each particular hazardous substance. This information can be obtained from your supplier.

Don't forget to wash your hands after handling hazardous substances.

The Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (HSNO)

This Act came into force for new organisms in July 1998 and for hazardous substances in July 2001. Its purpose is to manage the risks that hazardous substances and new organisms pose to the health and safety of people and communities and the environment of New Zealand.

Food proprietors need to be aware that some hazardous substances used on site (eg, cleaning products) may be subject to HSNO rules with which everyone has to comply. These rules may include controls on the storage, handling and disposal of hazardous substances.

Compliance information is available from the Environmental Risk Management Authority's website: www.ermanz.govt.nz.



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