

Food Safety Advice Note T7

Outdoor and Mobile Catering (part 1)

Introduction

This Advice Note is based on environmental health experience in managing food safety in catering at outdoor events. It aims to provide guidance to help food business operators comply with the requirements of food safety legislation and improve standards so as to provide safe and high quality food.

The type of events that this advice covers include: trade shows, promotional events, agricultural fairs, community fairs, carnivals, street events, festivals, sporting events and other events that may use outdoor catering such as weddings.

Although dealing primarily with food hygiene, some health and safety guidance will be included. You are still advised to seek further information and direct advice from your local environmental health service within your local council.

Catering at an outdoor event or from mobile facilities is a high risk activity and will always carry with it the possibility of causing food poisoning to a large number of people. There is a general requirement in the hygiene legislation for all food businesses to be operated in a hygienic manner. However, the remaining advice is recommended as it may be necessary to help you to meet a legal requirement or to achieve good management practice.

Pre event planning by the event

Organiser

- The event organiser should contact the local environmental health service within the local council in advance so that appropriate advice can be given. If possible, a plan showing the intended location of marquees, position of services, access/egress together with policies on refuse/recycling, emergency planning, crowd management
- The event organiser will need to undertake a risk assessment and a fire risk assessment
- The event organiser may need to contact other services such as the Police, Fire Brigade and Health and Safety Executive
- A list of exhibitors/food stalls (including those giving away food as part of demonstration) should be given to environmental health services.
- Public toilets must be provided as agreed with the environmental health services
- A Temporary Events Notice may be required and should be discussed with the licensing officer within the local council

Further information on event management can be found in Health and Safety Executive (1999) The event safety guide: A guide to the health and safety and welfare at music and similar events (HSG195).

Food safety advice for the caterer

The food business operator must:

- Make sure food is supplied or sold in a hygienic way
- Have in place a documented food safety management system such as “Safer Food Better Business”, which identifies food safety hazards, which steps are critical for food safety and ensures that safety controls are in place, maintained and reviewed
- Your food business must be registered with the local authority where your unit is based
- Selling alcohol may need a licence – check with the licensing officer at your local council
- If someone asks about an allergy – be honest and do not guess about ingredients
- Buy from reputable suppliers and keep a record
- Food and drink must be described fairly and labelled accurately (check with Trading Standards if you need more advice on this)
- Make sure you risk assess and do a fire risk assessment and take with you a suitable fire extinguisher and fire blanket
- Do you provide healthier options?
- Are you eco-friendly?
- Weather forecast - be prepared

Design and structure

- All stalls/vehicles should be designed and constructed to protect food from risk of contamination
- Fittings and equipment for mobile units should be of good quality materials capable of being readily cleaned. Bare wood is not acceptable
- Floors in mobile units should be of smooth, impervious and non-slip material and preferably covered to the wall fixtures
- Stalls should be screened at the sides and back to prevent risk of contamination and pests
- Tent/marquees should be of cleanable materials or the kitchen/preparation areas should be provided with washable wall linings
- Frequently used walkways should be effectively weatherproofed
- Lighting levels within the marquee must be adequate

Layout

- Ideally catering exhibitors should be sited close to essential services e.g. water/power
- Allow adequate space for preparation, cooking, storage and wash-up
- Ensure that refrigerated storage vehicles and trailers are easily accessible

Food Safety Advice Note T7

Outdoor and Mobile Catering (part 2)

- Dirty crockery and dirty laundry should not be carried through food handling areas
- The event organiser should arrange collection and removal of refuse and recycling from the site
- Check for any tripping and safety hazards

Services

Outdoor events take place in a wide variety of sites and locations. At some sites it may be possible to provide essential services such as water, drainage and electricity, others may not. You need to find out the service arrangements before arriving on site.

Water supply

- There must be an adequate supply of clean and wholesome water provided (ideally from the mains)
- If water containers are used they must be cleaned and sanitised on a regular basis

Drainage

Waste water from sinks and wash hand basins should be discharged into foul water system or into suitable containers and not directly onto the ground

Equipment

- All equipment should readily cleanable
- Preparation surfaces and tables must have smooth, impervious surfaces, stainless steel or laminate surfaces are suitable

Washing facilities

- Suitable and sufficient hand wash basins must be provided and accessible for use by food handlers. Supplies of soap and means of hygienic hand drying must be available at each basin
- Suitable sinks must be provided for food preparation and for equipment washing
- A constant supply of hot water should be provided at the sink(s) and wash hand basin
- The use of plastic bowls as sinks or wash hand basins is not recommended

Staff toilets

- Separate toilets for the exclusive use of food handlers should be provided on site where possible
- All sanitary accommodation must be maintained in a clean condition
- Suitable and sufficient wash hand basins with hot and cold water, soap, towels must be provided at the sanitary accommodation

Temperature control

Effective temperature control and storage is one of the most important safeguards for controlling the growth of food poisoning organisms. You should consider the following points:

- High-risk products such as cooked meat and dairy products, must be kept at or below 8°C or above 63°C
- Ideally food should be prepared immediately before service, if this is not possible then the food should be prepared in small batches and kept at the correct temperature
- All should have sufficient fridge space for the storage of high-risk foods or the use of commercial cool boxes with eutectic freezer blocks. Keep a check of the temperatures in your food management diary
- Cooked food should reach core temperature 75°C. Take particular care when barbecuing as cooking temperatures can be less predictable. Use a probe thermometer and disinfect before and after use
- Hot food displayed for sale/service should be kept above 63°C
- Thermometers with probes should be used to check temperatures (all probes should be disinfected after use)
- Keep food covered when stored in the fridge
- Vehicles used for transporting high-risk food should be refrigerated
- Four hour rule
- Protect stored food from public access and contact

Cross-contamination

One of the main risks facing event and mobile catering is to protect food from contamination. This is an important legal requirement:

- Food preparation areas/chopping boards should be cleaned/disinfected after use
- Raw and cooked food should be kept separate at all times, raw food should always be stored below cooked food, ideally separate refrigerators should be used
- Clean sinks after washing/preparing vegetables and raw food
- Avoid touching food use tongs etc
- All equipment including knives and containers should be cleaned and disinfected after use
- Disinfect all cloths regularly and replace as soon as they become worn/damaged. The use of disposable cloths and paper towels is recommended
- Food must not be stored on the ground and must be kept away from risk of contamination
- Food may be kept at a suggested height of 45cm above ground and protected from the weather
- Equipment/utensils/crockery should be stored above ground, covered and kept free from contamination
- Protect food from pests (insects, birds and rodents)

Food Safety Advice Note T7

Outdoor and Mobile Catering (part 3)

Cleaning

- Adequate supplies of suitable food grade disinfectants or sanitising agents should be used for the regular disinfection of equipment and work surfaces
- Hazardous substances such as cleaning materials must be used and stored in a safe manner
- Hot and cold water (or water at a suitably mixed temperature) must be available at sinks and basins and must be available before food preparation begins

Transporting food

- Vehicles and storage areas should be of sound construction, kept in good repair and able to be cleaned
- Ensure that appropriate containers are used
- Recommended use of refrigerated vehicles

Personal hygiene

High standards of personal hygiene are essential and the following rules must be followed:

- Hand washing must be carried out: Before starting work, after handling any raw foods. After using the toilet, after a break, after sneezing, coughing, etc
- Where possible tongs should be used for handling food
- All cuts or boils should be covered with a waterproof plaster preferably coloured
- Jewellery and nail varnish should not be worn. Hair should be covered and tied back
- Clean, washable, over-clothing must be worn at all times when handling food
- Outdoor clothing must be stored away from any food area
- Any food handler who knows, or suspects, they are suffering from symptoms of food poisoning (particularly diarrhoea and vomiting) must notify their employer or manager and refrain from working with food

Food safety training

- Event catering is a high-risk activity with potential for food poisoning. Food handlers must be trained to a level appropriate to their work
- It is recommended that any person who handles, prepares or cooks high-risk food have a Level 2 Certificate in food hygiene. The courses developed by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health are suitable

First aid

A first aid-kit including washable (preferably coloured blue) plasters must be provided.

Refuse

- There must be an adequate supply of suitable refuse containers provided
- Plastic sacks must be tied securely and stored to prevent attraction of pests

Electrical Supply

- Permanent mains electricity should be provided for lighting/power where practicable
- Electrical appliances must be protected from weather, physical damage and interference
- Appliances must be protected by residual current circuit breakers
- Cables and flexes must be positioned so as not to cause a tripping hazard
- If generators have to be used, steps should be taken to place them safely, protect from interference and to reduce noise and fume nuisance
- A competent electrician should carry out all electrical work

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)

- Gas appliances should be fitted and tested by a competent person and certificate required
- LPG cylinders should be in a fire-resisting lockable compartment (with ½ hour fire resistance). Compartments must have adequate ventilation at high and low levels
- Cylinders should be fitted with automatic cut-off valves and be protected from tampering
- All cylinders should be kept away from heat and ignition sources
- All pipes and fittings should be as short as possible with appropriate crimp or compression fittings (not slip-on fittings)
- All pipes should be protected from abrasion or mechanical damage (armoured if subject to temperatures over 50°C)
- All pipes should be renewed every two years
- All gas appliances must be fitted with a flame failure device and adequately ventilated
- All fryers should be fitted with an automatic high temperature-limiting device (operates at a fat temperature of 250°C or lower)
- Suitable signs indicating "Caution – LPG" and "Highly Flammable" should be displayed

References

Regulation (EC) 852/2004 on the Hygiene of Foodstuffs
The Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006
Health and safety references

Further information

www.cieh.org
www.foodsafety.gov

Now use the checklists to make sure you have covered the key hygiene rules.