

Legal Health & Safety

Clean up your act

Update your cleaning schedule to ensure all areas are covered

ACCORDING TO the old adage, 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness'. And this should never ring more true, or be more apt, than in the kitchens of every company – large or small – involved in the hospitality industry.

For it must never be forgotten that though it takes years of dedication and hard work to build up the reputation of a pub hotel or restaurant, just one lapse in cleanliness and hygiene can send it all into freefall and make all the efforts count for nought.

So the cardinal rule in every kitchen should be: keep everything clean and ensure that thorough kitchen cleaning programmes are in place to maintain high standards of food hygiene and safety.

As the Food Hygiene Regulations and Food Safety Act covers all premises where food is prepared and sold, it is incumbent upon everyone involved to keep kitchens in tip-top conditions of cleanliness.

There is no better time than now to review kitchen cleaning programmes, do a thorough check and, if necessary, do a rethink.

When doing this, it might be worth entering the kitchen a different way. You'd be surprised how many hitherto unseen problems can be spotted lurking in nooks and crannies.

At the same time, review all equipment to ensure what needs renewing and what, if anything, should be discarded. Check things such as safety data, training, personal protective equipment and ensure the right chemical is always being used for the right cleaning job, (never use chemicals for cleaning purposes near food to avoid any risk of contamination) and so on.

A thorough review of the schedules will enable you to study which areas, if any, need action.

It might be helpful when going through the schedule to identify everything that needs to be done. Things such as cleaning the hood, cleaning the fryer and other such kitchen equipment, mopping the floors, cleaning the restrooms and vacuuming.

Areas for attention

These are all very obvious areas for attention, you might think, but making sure they are included in the list of things to be done, along with how often, will ensure they are not overlooked. The list you have created to accomplish all the tasks should include a schedule that identifies the regularity of execution – things that should be done every day, every week and even every three months.

Go through the list and assign who should be responsible for carrying out these tasks. If possible, try to break down the assignments fairly and equally between your staff so no-one feels overwhelmed by the number of jobs allocated. This way the task is completed every week but does not become such a time-consuming operation.

Bear in mind, too, that for a hygiene and safety regime to comply fully with due diligence provisions, periodic deep cleaning should be in place for equipment not fully cleaned as part of the daily or weekly routines.

It's a big job, but one that can't be overlooked. ■

• See www.venners.com



Health & Safety Legal



Founded in 1896, Venners is the UK's largest and longest established stock audit company servicing the hospitality and leisure sector. The company's services include liquor and

food stocktaking; inventory listings and valuations; compliance audit; and a range of health and safety services including food safety and fire safety. It services all of the UK

and key European cities using only its own employees. Pictured is food safety manager Stuart Knill.

Edited by Venners

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Q&A

How much space must I leave for fire exit and cars?

Q We have a fairly small car park and parking is limited. One of the spaces is close to a fire exit door, although it doesn't obstruct the door opening. Is there a rule about how much distance there should be between the door and a car?

A There is no direct rule, but a yellow box lining the area near the door should alleviate any potential problem. Although this may mean you lose a car parking space you are better to be safe than sorry. **File under: 13 Health and safety. February 16, 2009**

Pub's sandwiches are not chilled

Q My lunchtime food trade is mainly fresh sandwiches and trade has increased since we put them on display on the back-bar shelf. These are not chilled and I wonder how long it is safe to leave them out?

A This will depend on the contents of the sandwiches but if they are going well then it may be worth-



Investing in a chiller for sandwiches is safer and more efficient

while investing in a small refrigerated glass-fronted unit. This way you can control the temperature, label and date the food, extend shelflife and cut back on any wastage. **File under: 11 Food and hygiene. February 16, 2009**

Can I lock fire exit route when it's unoccupied?

Q Our pub is quite big and one large area is often unused during the week and occupied only at weekends. I am a little concerned about security and would prefer to leave the fire exit door locked when that area is not in use. As the area is not entirely separate I want to know if this is OK.

A It is very difficult to comment without seeing the actual premises. One has to make a risk assessment and the outcome would

depend upon things such as ease of access to other fire exits, how well they are signposted and so forth. **File under: 13 Health and safety. February 16, 2009**

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If you have a legal query write to: Legal Advice, The Publican, Ludgate House, 245 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 9UY

That glass shard could cost your reputation

Glass safety is of paramount importance in the kitchen

ONE OF the thorniest problems facing everyone concerned with safety in the kitchen is the inherent danger attached to glass.

Make no mistake, this can be one of the most dangerous hazards confronting the hospitality industry.

For should the unthinkable happen and a sliver of broken glass find its way into food, then the costs of possible litigation could be astronomical – not to mention the ramifications of damage to reputation and consequent fall-off in business.

When there is a glass breakage the near-invisible slivers can be scattered far and wide in the kitchen and could lead, at worst, to the need for a thor-

ough deep-cleaning operation before everything can be assumed to be safe.

However, before you begin to panic totally, be reassured that you can take steps to keep this risk to an absolute minimum.

Limit use of glass

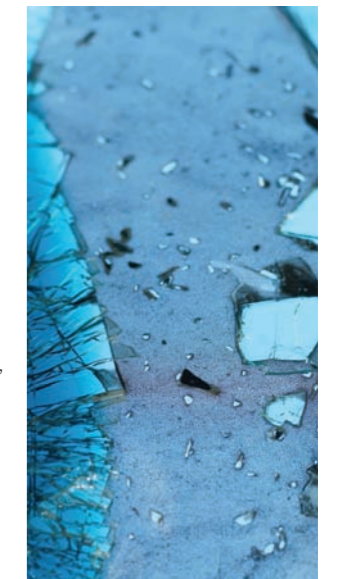
Remember, glass safety is part of any food safety policy and a key point of risk assessment is limiting the use of glass in the kitchen area – or, alternatively, finding a satisfactory substitute.

Crockery is far more visible and, if it is 'hotelware', is also stronger and more durable – so limiting the risk of any untoward incident occurring. But

if using fine glass for serving desserts, limit the risk by keeping them in lidded boxes until needed and ensuring that there is a separate preparation area.

To help keep the risks to a minimum, safe storage arrangements play a big part, as does effective stock management, while good housekeeping and having in place a good defect report system are other key factors. And the importance of staff awareness of the dangers cannot be stressed too highly.

Add all these factors together and the nightmare scenario fades – but there is still the need for constant vigilance to ensure it never reappears.



Shards of glass are almost imperceptible

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