

Food safety advice for caterers at outdoor events in the Tees Valley

Preparing food to be sold, or given to the public, at an outdoor event, from movable or temporary premises such as marquees, market stalls, mobile vans, and people's homes, is a high risk activity and will always carry with it the possibility of causing food poisoning to a large number of people.

The Food Safety Enforcement Officers working for the five Local Authorities in Tees Valley have adopted a common approach towards catering businesses operating outdoors and have developed this general guidance for each trader to keep in a folder that includes a form providing essential details about the vehicle and the business; and the completed self assessment forms detailing Fire Risk and Food Safety assessment. Copies of documents that prove food hygiene training or safety tests carried out should also be kept in this folder. The folder is expected to be available for an authorised enforcement officer to check at an event helping to reduce inspection times to a minimum. This is particularly important for traders that move from one Council area to another.

Requirement to register the food business

The operator of a mobile food business must, 28 days before food operations commence, register with the local authority in which the vehicle is ordinarily kept. For non-permanent market stalls it is the local authority in which their stocks of food are ordinarily kept. The business does not have to register with any other local authority in whose area the vehicle, or stall, trades.

Enforcement

Mobile establishments and market stalls may be subject to an enforcement intervention by any local authority in whose area the vehicle or stall is found to be trading and details passed to the local authority with whom the business has registered. Enforcement officers who visit your stall will give you a record of inspection form summarising the details of their visit including contraventions found and remedial actions required. You should keep the two most recent records of inspection forms in the folder.

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

The local authorities within the Tees Valley Councils operate the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. You will be provided with a certificate and sticker that you can use to advise your customers of your rating. The local authority registering your business will explain how the scheme works. Consumers will be able to access ratings and information about the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme at the Food Standards Agency website at www.food.gov.uk/ratings

General Advice

The food business operator should:

- Make sure food is supplied or sold in a hygienic way. Completing the self assessment checklist should assist you in this
- 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. (Copies of this document are available free of charge.)
- Register the food business - approach the local authority where your unit is stored.
- Buy from reputable suppliers and keep a record
- Describe food and drink fairly and label accurately – also be honest and do not guess about ingredients when asked by customers as they may have allergies to some ingredients.
- Complete a fire risk assessment and keep a suitable fire extinguisher and fire blanket
- Check with the Council’s licensing officer if planning to sell alcohol for the first time.
- Be prepared for variable weather – check the forecast for weather warnings

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 coved 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
- Interior lighting levels 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
- Dirty crockery and dirty laundry should not be carried through food handling areas
- Check for any tripping and safety hazards

Services

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

- Waste water from sinks and wash hand basins should be discharged into the foul water system or into suitable containers and not directly on to the ground
- It is a legal requirement for food premises to have 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
- 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

Equipment

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

Washing facilities

- Suitable and sufficient wash hand basins must be provided and be 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
- sufficient refrigerated 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 system
- Cooked food should reach core temperature 75°C. Take particular care when barbequing as cooking temperatures can be less predictable.
- Hot food displayed for sale/service should be kept above 63°C e.g. bain maries
- 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

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 and 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 45 cm above ground and protected from the weather
- Equipment/utensils/crockery should be stored above ground, covered and kept free from contamination
- Protect food from general public and pests (insects, birds and rodents)

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
- Food should be kept in appropriate containers and some foods will require 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
- 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 until they have been free of symptoms for 48 hours

Food safety training

- Food handlers must be trained to a level appropriate to their work and it is recommended that any person who handles, prepares or cooks high-risk food have a Level 2 Certificate in food hygiene.

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 storage containers provided
- If the food is sold in packaging then litter bins and litter picking will also need to be addressed.
- Plastic sacks must be tied securely and stored to prevent attraction of pests

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)

- Gas appliances should be fitted and tested by a competent person who will provide you with a certificate. You can check that a person is competent by checking the “Gas Safe” register <http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk> .
- 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

For further guidance on Food Safety contact the Local Authority where your business is based:

DARLINGTON - Environmental Health Section, Town Hall, Darlington, DL1 5QT.
Telephone: 01325 388799 or e mail environmentalhealth@darlington.gov.uk

HARTLEPOOL - Commercial Services Section, Bryan Hanson House, Hanson Square, Hartlepool TS24 7BT. Telephone: 01429 523321

STOCKTON - Environmental Health Unit, 16 Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1XD,
Telephone:01642 526574

MIDDLESBROUGH Community Protection Service, PO Box 502, Vancouver House, Gurney Street, Middlesbrough, TS1 9FW
Telephone 01642 728665 or e mail food&safety@middlesbrough.gov.uk

REDCAR AND CLEVELAND Food Team, Area Management, Belmont House, Rectory Lane, Guisborough, TS14 7FD
Tel: 01287 612404 or Email: food_team@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk