

A GUIDE TO HYGIENE AND SAFETY STANDARDS FOR MOBILE FOOD BUSINESSES

This booklet is intended to provide useful advice for anyone operating a mobile food business in the Tendring District.

The leaflet also provides a record of inspections to help avoid duplication of inspection by officers from different authorities if you operate out of the Tendring District.

Hot Food Business and the Law

1. You must register your food business with the Environmental health section of the local authority in whose area your mobile vehicle is to be kept or garaged. You need to register at least 28 days before your start trading. Registration is free.
2. You will need to check where you can trade with each local authority in whose area you intend to trade, as in some places trading from a mobile vehicle can be prohibited or restricted e.g. on seafront sites. In Tendring District this is the licensing section, speak to general enquiries at 01255 686593.

If you intend to trade on privately owned land you will need to have the owner's permission. This includes some trading estates and retail parks where you need to contact the management office.

Trading at the roadside or in lay-bys will require the permission of the local authority Highways Department (Essex County Council).

3. You will need to comply with hygiene and safety regulations. Environmental Health staff are responsible for inspecting all food businesses, including mobiles, to check standards and ensure that food is being handled safely.

Failure to meet the required standards could lead to legal action with fines of up to £20,000. You could also, if insufficient care is taken, cause serious illness or injury to someone you employ or a member of the public.

It is important that you know what is required to comply with all aspects of hygiene and safety regulations and therefore the rest of the leaflet gives more information on what you need to check to make sure you will meet the standards.

Once your van has been inspected prior to trading you will be issued with a unique identification number on your mobile 'passport'. You should carry this with you on your van and when you are inspected by Environmental Health in the area you are trading they can complete the inspection section of the passport and see when you were last inspected from the log.

The Site

You must consider a variety of factors when looking for a suitable site to park your mobile catering vehicle.

1. Your site must not be close to any source of contamination or pests. For example, you should not park your vehicle where there are large amounts of rubbish which could attract flies, rats and other pests. Additionally do not park next to any sources of airborne emissions, such as industrial factories or garages which release dirt, smoke or any other unpleasant emissions into the air.
2. When choosing your site consider the dangers which may arise from moving traffic and possible dangers to pedestrians e.g. do not park your vehicle on the edge of a busy road, at a junction or blocking an entrance.
3. Make sure you park your vehicle on a flat and stable surface.
4. You should also park your vehicle near services and facilities you or your staff may need. If possible these should include:
 - A clean water supply, which will reduce the need for water containers
 - Drainage facilities. If any of your equipment or fittings are connected

To the drainage system they must have an effective trap. Drains should also have a good fall to make sure that waste flows away.

- An electricity supply
- A Toilet

FOOD HYGIENE MATTERS
The Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006
Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004

Your Vehicle

1. Your vehicle needs to be proofed against pest access. In other words there should be no access points, holes or cracks which could allow rats, mice or other pests into your vehicle.

Floor

1. The floor in your vehicle needs to be easy to clean and in a good state of repair. Acceptable floor coverings include vinyl safety flooring, or vinyl tiles and rubber matting. Some floor surfaces like carpet are unacceptable as they are not easy to clean. The surface should also be non-slip.
2. Worn or torn floor coverings are not acceptable as they cannot be properly cleaned and may result in staff tripping and becoming injured.
3. You should make sure that equipment and fittings, such as fridges, can be moved to allow you or your staff to clean the floor beneath and around them.

Walls

1. The wall surfaces in your vehicle need to be smooth and easy to clean. Acceptable wall surfaces include ceramic tiles, stainless steel or PVC sheeting, and washable wall paint.
2. The wall surfaces need to be in good repair, which will make cleaning easier, and there should be no gaps where dirt can collect. If the wall surface becomes damaged, for example if the paintwork is cracked it should be repaired or replaced.
3. To make cleaning the walls and floors easier the junction between the wall and the floor can be coved.

Ceiling

The ceiling in your vehicle needs to be a surface which is easy to clean. If the ceiling is not kept clean mould or grease with build up and may fall into food.

Doors and Windows

The doors and windows on your vehicle must be easy to clean and there should be no mouldings or other areas where dirt can collect, and which you or your staff are likely to touch.

The Vehicle Cab

1. If your vehicle has a cab you should make sure it is kept clean and tidy. Nothing should be kept in the cab which will pose a risk to the food being stored, displayed and sold. For example, do not keep animals in the cab if it opens directly into the area where food is stored, prepared and cooked.
2. No food should be stored or prepared in the vehicle's cab unless the cab complies with all the relevant requirements detailed in this guidance.

Equipment and Facilities

1. The surfaces of all benches and other fixed units need to be smooth and easy to clean e.g. "Formica" and there should be no gaps where dirt can collect.
2. You need to provide a basin to be used only for washing hands. This needs to be permanently fitted in the vehicle. You will need to be able to provide hot and cold water to the basin so that water in the basin is at a suitable temperature for washing hands i.e. hand hot. Sufficient water needs to be available so that the water can be frequently changed.

Used waste water needs to then be drained/emptied after use into a suitable container for disposal into a suitable drain. It is likely that this disposal may need to be done at your own premises as it is **not** permissible to empty waste water onto the ground or into street gullies.

A supply of bacterial soap and clean towels are needed. The hand towels must only be used for drying hands. Disposable paper towels are best. If other towels are used they need to be changed daily.

3. A separate sink is needed for washing items of equipment whilst you are trading. This needs to be permanently fitted in the vehicle and you need to be able to provide sufficient hot and cold water to it. Water for washing equipment needs to be as hot as possible.
4. Water containers used to provide water on the vehicle for the sink and wash hand basin, and for water boilers need to be filled from a clean water supply. This will usually be at your own premises. You need to make sure that you have sufficient water on the vehicle for you and your staff to use to regularly wash their hands, clean equipment, and for tea/coffee making all the time you will trading. The containers you use need to be cleaned out with a suitable disinfectant at least once a week.

In addition separate containers should be used to collect waste (used) water from the sink and wash hand basin than those used for the clean fresh water. To make sure they are mixed up they should be different colours or be labelled to show which is which.

5. You will need to provide a rubbish bin with a lid for use on the vehicle. A bin should also be provided for your customers to use so that the area around the vehicle is kept tidy. If any litter is left on the ground when you finish trading it is your responsibility to tidy it up. All rubbish needs to be taken away in the bins or in black sacks and disposed of properly.

Personal Hygiene Rules

Everyone working in a food handling area should make sure they keep themselves clean. This includes thoroughly washing hands with clean, hand-hot water and suitable soap (preferably containing a bactericide) before starting work, before handling food, after using the toilet, and after handling raw food, or waste.

Fingernails should be kept clean and short, and nail varnish should not be worn. Jewellery should be kept to a minimum, a wedding ring and sleeper earrings are acceptable. Cuts, sores or broken skin should be covered by a clean waterproof dressing, which should be brightly coloured e.g. blue so that it is noticeable if it comes off while handling food.

Long hair should be tied back and all hair should be covered.

Food handlers should wear suitable, clean overclothing, which should only be used in connection with their work. In other words, the overall or uniform should not be worn when travelling to work, or when on a break outside the vehicle. The overalls should be changed and washed on a frequent basis.

Anyone handling food should not eat or drink whilst working, should not cough or sneeze over food, and should not smoke or spit in the food handling area.

If a food handler has any infected wounds, skin infections, sickness and/or diarrhoea, chest/noise/throat/ear infections or disorders they should report these to the manager or owner before starting work. Food handlers suffering from any of these conditions may have to be excluded from work. You should contact your local Environmental health department for advice on the precautions necessary.

Keep Food at The Right Temperature

Some foods can become harmful if they are not stored at the correct temperature, and can lead to food poisoning. Foods which are likely to allow the growth of harmful bacteria should be stored at 8°C or below. This can be done either by having a fridge, or sufficient other cold storage e.g. cool boxes with ice packs.

Foods which need to be stored cold are:

- dairy products (such as soft or semi-hard cheese, dairy based desserts, and products containing whipped cream).
- cooked products (containing eggs, milk, meat, fish, or their products, cereals, pulses, vegetables and sandwiches containing any of these).
- Prepared foods (such as prepared salads like coleslaw and prepared products containing mayonnaise).

Please note: this is not a complete list.

The only times where the normal temperature control requirements do not apply are:

- when you are loading and unloading vehicles (but not transporting) whilst you are handling and preparing food, and when you are defrosting equipment.
- whilst the food is on display for sale. These foods may then be kept above 8°C only for a single period of up to four hours. After this period the food must be either thrown away or chilled to a temperature of 8°C or below and stored at that temperature until use.

Any food to be served hot must be kept at a temperature of 63°C or above until service. Food may be exempt from this for a period of two hours only, and after this time the food should either be thrown away or cooled as quickly as possible to a temperature of 8°C or below, before final reheating for sale.

To make sure that the temperatures are correct to ensure food safety, you should check the food using a thermometer and record the temperatures in a diary or notebook.

Food Hygiene Training

As the owner of a food business you are required to ensure that you and your staff are trained in food hygiene matters. The amount of training will depend upon the persons involvement with food handling and preparation but the law says everyone who works in a food business has to have an understanding of food hygiene and their responsibilities and be able to have good hygiene practices.

The requirements for training have been split into 3 stages.

Essentials of Food Hygiene. Stage 1 or Induction training should be covered before any person starts working in a food business. It covers personal hygiene, food handling, and temperature control.

Hygiene Awareness Instruction. Stage 2 training should be completed within 4 weeks of starting work. Your staff should be made aware of risks to food, how bacteria cause illness, the importance of high standards of personal health and hygiene, prevention of cross contamination, temperature control, food storage, waste disposal and cleaning methods, and an awareness of pests.

Formal Training. Stage 3 training should be completed within 3 months of starting work. Anyone handling or preparing high risk foods (including yourself) must be able to demonstrate that they are aware of:- food poisoning types, sources and causes, how bacteria cause food poisoning, common food hazards (chemical, physical, bacterial), the standards for premises and equipment, legal obligations, pest control and effective temperature control. It will take approx. 6 hours to complete instruction in these matters and your Local Authority or college should be able to provide such training. A suitable course would be 'Level 2 Food Safety in Catering'.

Making Sure That Problems do not Occur

Recognise that you, the owner, have a heavy responsibility in running a food business. Most owners already fulfil this responsibility, however the law now requires you to be able to show this.

The regulations require you to ensure that you conduct your business in a way which will not cause food poisoning, that your food is of the quality required by the customer, and it is free from any object or material that would make the food undesirable or unsafe. To enable you to satisfy these points you are required to look critically at the way in which your business is run.

The areas you should look at are:

- Supply and delivery of food
- Storage – including chilled storage
- Preparation of food
- Cooking – including reheating
- Display and Service – hot holding, cold service

At each stage you should be asking yourself 4 basic questions:

- What can go wrong?
- Where can it go wrong?
- How can I stop it from going wrong?
- What do I do if things go wrong?

What Can Go Wrong? and Where Can It Go Wrong?

At each stage outlined above food may become contaminated with an object, material or ingredient, which should not be in the food i.e. hair, bits of paper, screws, flakes of paint, black carbon deposits from the pot or pan, jewellery, pieces of glass etc. This can mean one food item such as salt contaminating sugar.

Food may already contain bacteria i.e. raw meat, fish, veg etc. Some food may also allow food poisoning bacteria to grow rapidly i.e. **HIGH RISK FOODS** such as cooked meats, meat products, fish, fish products, cream gravy, cooked rice, dishes containing eggs or milk, etc. Cooked food

may therefore become contaminated with food poisoning bacteria, or, if already present on high risk foods, may grow in number sufficient to cause illness.

Food may also become contaminated with chemicals such as bleach, detergents (washing up liquid) etc.

Now you have realised what can go wrong the law requires you to find out where in your business these things could happen. This is why you are required by law to have a Food Safety Management System. There are several type of Management System available e.g. the 'Safer Food Better Business' catering pack (or retail pack) issued free of charge by the Food Standards Agency has been developed specifically for small businesses (0845 606 0667).

Buying/Delivery/Storage

When food is **bought/delivered** it could contain mould or foreign objects. Bacteria may already be contained in/on the food. This may be due to poor handling by your supplier e.g. he may have stored food at the wrong temperature allowing bacteria to increase, or allowed food to become contaminated with bacteria. Food may have been stored in areas where the risk of contamination was high.

You should look at where you store your food; is it cool? Is the area free from rats and mice and in good repair (i.e. no holes to get in)? Is the store clean, and free from flaking paint or mould growth? Is anything else stored with the food i.e. cleaning materials and equipment or other items? Is all shelving accessible allowing rotation of stock? Is the food stored open or wrapped? Is it raw or cooked foods? Food poisoning bacteria can pass from one food to another or be carried in the air so if food is left uncovered the bacteria may settle and grow rapidly.

Preparation

During preparation food is often handled and can touch many surfaces e.g. utensils, work tops, hands, pots and pans etc. Preparation takes time and bacteria can quickly increase in number if the temperature is above fridge temperature, 8°C. During preparation area: Is it clean? Are the surfaces in good order i.e. no peeling paint, cracked or worn surfaces? Is all equipment clean and in good repair? Most important of all have you washed your hands? Are they free from cuts and grazes? Jewellery and uncovered hair also present a risk of contamination to the food.

Cooking

If food is not thoroughly **cooked** bacteria present in the food will survive and may cause food poisoning later on. This may happen if you cook food which is not defrosted properly, if thermostats on ovens are not functioning correctly or even if the fat in deep fat fryers is too hot. Fat which is too hot would cause the outside of the food to appear cooked whilst the inside may not be thoroughly cooked.

Display and Service

Even after cooking **further storage** methods may cause problems with the food. Food which is cooked then stored at room temperature may allow bacteria to grow to unsafe levels. Where food is stored before sale, cooked food may become contaminated with foreign objects or bacteria from uncooked foods.

What Can I Do To Prevent It Happening?

Buying

All foods should be bought from reputable suppliers e.g. suppliers from whom you have received goods which have been of good quality, and where you believe that goods are handled and stored

correctly and there is good stock rotation etc. All goods you receive should be in date, undamaged, and arrive at the correct storage temperature i.e. high risk foods should be below 8°C.

Storing

Ensure that storage areas are free from pests and there are no holes in walls, around pipes or under doors that would allow access. Cooked and uncooked food should not be stored together or in areas where there are non food items e.g. chemicals. Bags and containers of food should never be left open. Foods which require chilling to prevent the growth of bacteria should be stored in a fridge/cool box and you should check and record the temperatures twice a day. Only buy the amount of food you can use within the date code, and only have on the trailer what is needed for that day, using oldest first.

Preparing

During preparation food should be handled as little as possible and kept above 8°C for the shortest time. Do not prepare too much food in advance. If cooked food is not wanted immediately, cool it quickly to below 8°C, or make sure it is kept above 63°C. Always wear clean overalls and keep hair covered. Remove all jewellery and nail varnish.

Cooking

Food must be thoroughly cooked. Some frozen food will need to be properly defrosted before cooking. You should regularly check that food is cooked right through by using a temperature probe or by cutting into the food e.g. burgers to make sure there are no pink bits inside.

Display and Service

If cooked food is not used straight away you need to keep it hot or cool it down quickly and then keep it cold in your fridge or cool box.

What Should I Do If Things Do Go Wrong?

If the fridge goes off or the hot water heater does not work you should assess the danger to the food if you continue to trade from growth of bacteria in the food to your ability to wash your hands, clean worktops etc. Also you should consider if you are complying with the food legislation. You may be able to provide an alternative safe method e.g. use coolboxes until the fridge is repaired, don't sell/use any food that needs refrigeration until the fridge is repaired, remove the food from the fridge and throw away if it is not at a safe temperature. If you cannot provide an adequate supply of hot water to the van you should not be trading until you can. Use your Food Safety Management System to help you decide the action you take.

Managing Food Safety and Keeping Records

Food hygiene regulations say that you must write down simple details of what you will do and what records you will keep to make sure food that is safe to eat.

You must:

- (a) Identify all the potential food safety hazards in your business and then think about and decide the points in the food operation at which things could actually go wrong.
- (b) Decide which of these points are actually critical to making sure food is safe, and therefore must be properly controlled (e.g. the thorough cooking of foods which must not be eaten raw).
- (c) Put in place procedures to stop these things going wrong (controls), and make sure that you/your staff always carry them out (e.g. cooking particular foods for a set time and temperature which is known to kill bacteria or ensuring that equipment has been cleaned and sanitised at proper and regular intervals).
- (d) Provide some simple documentation to show how you have achieved the above and monitored the controls which are critical to making sure food is safe.

- (e) From time to time, you must examine your food business to see if anything has changed which might need your control measures to change (e.g. new menu dishes may have new hazards and need new controls, or new equipment may require different thermostat settings).

Food safety enforcement officers visiting your mobile will ask to see this information and check to see that you and your staff are following the simple procedures you have put in place.

There are a number of different easy to use guides available to help you comply with this legal requirement. Some of these are free of charge e.g. the Safer Food Better Business manual. Please enquire with your local environmental health officer on the availability of these guides.

HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS

Making Sure That Problems Do Not Occur

One of first steps towards having a safer mobile catering unit is to look at your operation and try to list as many possible causes of accidents as you can. You should involve your staff when you do this as it is important to get their views on the dangers. You need to look at how serious any accidents would be and how likely they are to happen. Then starting with the accident which is the most likely to happen or would be the most serious, sort out what you would do to reduce the chances of it occurring e.g. giving training and proper instructions, use safe working methods, carrying out routine maintenance.

Here are two examples:

1. **Slips and Trips.** These can be prevented by cleaning up spills immediately, wearing suitable footwear, and having a floor covering which is non-slip and in good repair. Also check appliances such as boilers for leaks, and as far as is possible avoid moving full containers which could spill.
2. **Scalds and Burns.** Surfaces of equipment such as boilers, generators and deep fat fryers may cause burns. You also need to consider whether members of the public can come into contact with hot surfaces. Staff need to be adequately trained. The movement of boiling water should be avoided as much as possible, or carried out with great care. Fat should always be cooled before emptying friers.

Manual Handling

Activities such as unhitching a trailer from a van, manually handling a trailer, and carrying equipment and heavy water containers could easily cause back problems if done incorrectly. You and your staff need to know how to carry out these types of activities safely. Leaflets are available from your local Environmental Health Department to help you.

Use of Chemicals

The law requires you to make sure that chemicals used in your business e.g. bleach, oven cleaner etc. are used and stored safely. The manufacturers instructions must always be followed carefully e.g. gloves may need to be worn.

Equipment

The law requires equipment used at work to be properly designed, constructed, maintained and used in a proper manner. Some equipment e.g. generators, needs fixed guarding to dangerous parts such as moving belts and nipping hazards. Equipment should be regularly checked and maintained. Proper instructions and training must also be given.

First Aid

A suitably stocked first aid kit must be provided. The contents are specified in guidance leaflet First Aid At Work (ISBN 011 883958 6). Remember aspirin, paracetamol, TCP, antiseptic creams etc. are not allowed in the first aid kit.

Fire Safety

You need to have a dry powder extinguisher (1.36kg min size). If you have deep fat fryers you also need a fire blanket. Both should be easy to reach and next to the door.

You should always ensure that you can easily leave the vehicle in the event of an emergency. Clear instructions on what to do in the event of fire or gas leakage should be displayed inside the vehicle. For example:

- If there is a gas leak – turn off equipment. Turn off the gas supply from the cylinder. If a cylinder is leaking, carefully move it from the vehicle into the open air.
- If there is a fire – Evacuate the area immediately. If possible turn off the gas supply by closing the valve. Fire fighting should only be carried out by the fire brigade or persons who have been properly trained.

The Safe Use, Storage and Handling of Liquid Petroleum Gas

LPG is a pressurised liquid and the main danger is of the risk of fire and explosion especially if leakage occurs in confined spaces, such as a vehicle. LPG is heavier than air and collects at low level. Leaks are normally detected by the smell. The other main danger is from the production of carbon monoxide which occurs due to incomplete combustion of the gas in cases where there is insufficient ventilation.

Cylinders and Compartments

Cylinders should be secured with the valves uppermost in a well ventilated compartment, preferably outside, gas tight to the inside of the vehicle. The compartment should have 30 mins. fire resistance. Only the gas bottle, regular and pipe should be in the compartment. Access to the compartment must only be from outside the vehicle.

Adequate high and low ventilation (min. 27 square inches) needs to be provided. There should be no sources of ignition or any openings into the vehicle at or below valve, or within 1 metre of the cylinder. Cylinders and compartments need to be protected from damage and vandalism.

Cabin

Pipework should be kept short and contact with high temperatures avoided. Pipework should be supported every 1m, or 0.5m if it is flexible. The pipework needs to be protected against abrasion where it passes through walls using rubber grommets. Lengths of flexible rubber hose need to be kept to a minimum and should comply with BS (British Standard) 3212.

Appliances

Appliances need to be secure and fitted with flame failure devices. Do not light appliances whilst in motion. All LPG pipes should terminate with a shut off valve or trap immediately before the appliance and the on and off positions clearly labelled.

A master on/off gas valve must be positioned inside the vehicle, clearly labelled to terminate all gas appliances in the vehicle. This is in addition to the shut off gas valve/tap sited just before the appliance.

Fish and Chip Ranges

A canopy should be installed to collect the products of combustion. An automatic high temperature cut off device should be fitted, which shuts off the gas supply to the main burner if the temperature of the fat exceeds 230°C. In addition, an automatic high temperature control should be fitted to control the temperature of the fat at 250°C.

Refrigerators

Refrigerators should be fitted with a flame failure device and be fitted with a suitable flue. An additional air intake is recommended whilst the vehicle is on the road.

Ventilation

All vehicles should have adequate ventilation equally divided between high and low levels. The more gas appliances used, the more ventilation you will need.

Flues

Flue outlets should be made of non-combustible material and be at high level away from an openings in the vehicle.

Maintenance

Daily checks of containers, pipe-work, vents etc. should be carried out and a complete check of the whole system carried out annually by a competent gas engineer. It is advisable to renew flexible rubber hose every five years. However if it becomes damaged or worn it should be renewed immediately. Leakages can be checked with soapy water. NEVER USE A NAKED FLAME TO CHECK FOR LEAKS.

Please note CORGI registration has been replaced by **The Gas Safe Registration Scheme** (operated by Capita). The new scheme is the **only** gas engineer scheme approved by the HSE under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998. All gas engineers wanting to undertake domestic and certain other gas work in Great Britain from **1st April 2009** will need, under those regulations, to be registered with this scheme in order to be able lawfully to carry out any work on gas fittings, which includes gas appliances.

Training

You and your staff need to be aware of the dangers of LPG, should know emergency procedures, and safe methods of changing cylinders.

Summary

It is important for you to comply with all aspects of food safety and health and safety legislation. Generally the law gives a common sense approach which is aimed at preventing problems occurring such a food poisoning, or injury to yourself, your employees, or anybody else who may be affected by your actions. It is no excuse to say that you were unaware of the legislation. It is up to you to ensure you are complying. So don't wait for the inspector to call!

Final Note: This leaflet does not aim to state exact legal requirements, and compliance with this guidance may not secure full compliance with the law. For further information on the exact requirements of the legislation you should contact your local Environmental Health Department.