

Food Businesses – Food Safety Standards and Food Safety Responsibilities

FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS

The Food Safety Standards were developed by ANZFA in consultation with State health authorities and the food industry to ensure a nationally consistent approach to food safety.

Australia and New Zealand have adopted Food Safety Codes which inform the safe and suitable production and handling of food.

The Standards in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code are legislative instruments.

The current Australian Code and Food Safety Standards Standard will be repealed on 1 March 2016, with a revised version to take effect from that date.

Food is defined in the code as “effectively covering anything that is intended or offered for human consumption” (Standard 1.1.2). A food business is any business or activity that involves the handling of any type of food for sale, or the sale of food in Australia. Thus, the food safety standards apply to food and drink within Australia and New Zealand.

This Code is adopted as the required standards for food produced in New Zealand and the States, Territories and Commonwealth of Australia in relation to food sold and/or imported under the following Regulatory Acts.

There are five food safety standards that are applicable within Australia

3.1.1 Interpretation and Application

3.2.1 Food Safety Programs

3.2.2 Food Safety Practices and General Requirements

3.2.3 Food Premises and Equipment

Standards 3.2.1, 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 are mandatory for all food businesses within Australia.

3.3.1 Food Safety Programs for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons

The following state legislation is applicable:

- Food Act 1984 (Victoria)
- Food Act 2001 (Australian Capital Territory)
- Food Act 2001 (South Australia)
- Food Act 2015 (New South Wales)
- Food Act 2003 (Tasmania)
- Food Act 2004 (Northern Territory)
- Food Act 2006 (Queensland)
- Food Act 2008 (Western Australia)

Imported Food Control Act 1992 (Commonwealth)

Thus The Code is enforced by state and territory authorities and the Department of Agriculture for imported food. Local Councils are the active enforcement agencies for retail stores in all states. ACT Health is the enforcement agency for ACT, Department of Health in Northern Territory.

Food premises and equipment should conform with Australian Standards AS 4674 – Design, Construction and Fit-out of food premises.

Some food businesses also have additional mandatory standards or voluntary Customer/ Supplier standards to comply with, such as import and export approved arrangements, HACCP certification, and Global food standards such as BRC, SQF

SPECIFIC HEALTH & HANDLING RESPONSIBILITIES

Parts 16 to 18 of this Standard set out the overall legal responsibilities of food businesses, which are expected to ensure, as far as they can, that their food handlers and anyone else on the premises do not contaminate food.

Food businesses also have specific responsibilities relating to:

- 1. Prevent contamination of food**
- 2. the health of people who handle food,**
- 3. the provision of hand washing facilities,**
- 4. making food handlers aware of their health and hygiene obligations**
- 5. Protect the privacy of food handlers**

1 .MAKING SURE THAT PEOPLE ON THE FOOD PREMISES DO NOT CONTAMINATE FOOD

Food businesses must do all they practically can to make sure that people on their premises do not contaminate food. This primarily means food handlers, but it also includes other people who visit the premises, such as tradespeople, visitors and members of the public.

In areas where food is exposed, such as the kitchen, practical steps the business can include are:

- Restricting access by people who are not food handlers to food handling areas,
- Supervising people who do have legitimate reasons for being in those areas to make sure they do not handle, sneeze, blow, cough or eat over exposed food, or over surfaces likely to come into contact with food,
- Taking steps to stop anyone from smoking in food preparation and display areas, and
- Ensuring that no-one has unnecessary contact with ready-to-eat food.

2. THE HEALTH OF PERSONS WHO HANDLE FOOD AND PREVENTING FOOD CONTAMINATION

If a food business is aware that a food handler, or anyone else handling food for the business (such as friends and relatives), has or is reasonably suspected of having a food-borne illness, the business must make sure that this person does not engage in the handling of food or food contact surfaces.

A food business may suspect a person has a food-borne illness if they have vomiting and/or diarrhoea, headache or fever.

If a person is known to have or to be carrying a foodborne illness and has been excluded from food handling activities, the person cannot resume food handling until they are no longer suffering from or carrying a food-borne illness.

If a food business knows or suspects that a food handler or anyone else handling food for the business has another condition (such as a cold, infected skin sore or discharge from their ears, nose or eyes), the food business must make sure this person takes all reasonable measures to prevent contamination of food. For example, someone with a cold could take medication to stop any nasal discharge. An exposed skin sore should be covered with a coloured bandage and waterproof covering.

If a food handler knows or suspects he or she might have contaminated some food?

Food handlers must tell their supervisor if they know or think they may have made any food unsafe or unsuitable to eat. For example, jewellery worn by a food handler may have fallen into food.

What about personal hygiene of food handlers?

Food handlers' personal hygiene practices and cleanliness must minimise the risk of food contamination.

The most important things they need to know are that they must:

- do whatever is reasonable to prevent their body, anything from their body or anything they are wearing, coming into contact with food or food contact surfaces;
- do whatever is reasonable to stop unnecessary contact with ready-to-eat food;
- wear clean outer clothing, depending on the type of work they do;
- make sure bandages or dressings on any exposed parts of the body are covered with a waterproof covering;
- not eat over unprotected food or surfaces likely to come in contact with food;
- not sneeze, blow or cough over unprotected food or surfaces likely to come into contact with food;
- not spit, smoke or use tobacco or similar preparations where food is handled; and
- not urinate or defecate except in a toilet.

3. HAND WASH BASINS FOR FOOD HANDLERS

Standard 3.2.2 Food Safety Practices and General Requirements and Standard 3.2.3 Food Premises and Equipment include hand washing requirements.

Specific hand washing requirements are set out in Standard 3.2.2 Food Safety Practices and General Requirements. Under Part 17 of this Standard, businesses must: maintain, at or near basins, a supply of warm running water, soap or other items to thoroughly clean hands, and facilities for staff to thoroughly dry their hands (such as single use cloths or paper towels). There must be a container for used towels if this is appropriate, and businesses must also make sure that the basins are not used for anything other than washing hands, arms or faces.

Under Part 14 of Standard 3.2.3 Food Premises and Equipment, businesses must provide hand basins that are easily accessible and located in the places where food handlers need to wash their hands, for example, in food preparation areas and near the toilets.

Businesses must also make sure that the basins have a constant supply of clean, warm running water

Some special hand washing rules for food handlers

Food handlers are expected to wash their hands whenever their hands are likely to contaminate food.

This includes washing their hands:

- immediately before working with ready-to-eat food after handling raw food;
- immediately after using the toilet;
- before they start handling food or go back to handling food after other work;
- immediately after smoking, coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or disposable tissue, eating, drinking or using tobacco or similar substances; and
- after touching their hair, scalp or a body opening.

OTHER HEALTH AND HYGIENE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR FOOD BUSINESSES

Under Standard 3.2.3 Food Premises and Equipment, food businesses must make sure that staff have access to adequate toilets and that there are adequate storage facilities for any items likely to be the source of contamination of food. These items include chemicals, personal belongings and clothing.

4. ADVISING FOOD HANDLERS OF THEIR HEALTH AND HYGIENE RESPONSIBILITIES

Under the requirements of Standard 3.2.2 Food Safety Practices and General Requirements (Parts 13 to 15); a food business must inform all its food handlers of their health and hygiene obligations.

The requirements are designed to ensure that food handlers do whatever is reasonable to make sure that they do not contaminate food.

5. PROTECT THE PRIVACY OF FOOD HANDLERS

Food handlers must tell their supervisor if they:

- Know or suspect they are suffering from or carrying a food-borne disease,

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- Are suffering from a skin sore or discharges from their ears, nose or eyes and there is a possibility that food may be contaminated as a result of this, or
- Know or suspect they have contaminated food while handling it.

If a food handler notifies his or her supervisor of any of the above, the supervisor must not disclose this information to anyone without the consent of the food handler, with the exception of the owner of the business or an Environmental Health Officer (EHO). Also, the food business must not use this information for any purpose other than to protect food which is not already contaminated, from contamination.

FURTHER INFORMATION/ASSISTANCE

Further Information on food safety requirements or technical expertise:

- **Food Standards Australia New Zealand.**
Develop and administer the **[Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx)**
<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>
- **NSW Food Authority**
responsible for regulating and monitoring food safety across the food industry supply chain in NSW
<http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/>
- **Local council or Environmental Health Inspector**
- **Australian Institute of Food Safety & Technology**
National Association facilitating food learning, networking and communication
<https://www.aifst.asn.au/about-us/>

Adapted from :

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/safety/faqsafety/pages/foodsafetyfactsheets/healthandhygienesp101.aspx>

Townsville City Council Food Businesses – Your responsibilities factsheet

https://www.townsville.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/7706/Food-Businesses-Your-Responsibilities.pdf