



Induction Training - the Hygiene Element

INTRODUCTION

Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs states Food business operators are to ensure:

1. That food handlers are supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters commensurate with their work activity;
2. That those responsible for the development and maintenance of the procedure referred to in Article 5(1) of this Regulation Or for the operation of relevant guides have received adequate training in the application of the HACCP principles; *and*
3. Compliance with any requirements of national law concerning training programmes for persons working in certain food sectors.

The requirements for training should be seen in the context of the nature and size of the business.

INDUCTION TRAINING

The objectives of induction training for new employees in food companies are to:
Introduce them to their conditions of employment.

- Inform them of the company rules.
- Give them an understanding of Health and Safety at Work.
- Make them aware of their responsibilities as Food Handlers for the safety and quality of the product through the application of food hygiene.

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FOOD HYGIENE ELEMENT

Because of the safety risks involved in allowing untrained staff to handle food, all new employees must be instructed in the hygiene requirements of their assigned jobs before they begin work. This applies to temporary as well as permanent staff.

Permanent Staff

The time allotted to food hygiene training during induction will vary with the hygiene sensitivity of the product and the job.

In formal courses of up to six hours duration, it should be not less than 11/2 hours. This will allow sufficient time for the essential elements of food hygiene to be taught. However, further training may be necessary to meet the legal requirement that food handlers engaged in the food business are supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters commensurate with their work activities. Such training should be completed as soon as possible after the employee has started work.

Alternatively, if Induction is continued over a number of days the hygiene training element may be extended to meet corporate and legal requirements in full.

With either system, it is essential that an on-going hygiene training programme is in place to ensure that all employees receive a refresher course after an interval of two to three years.

Temporary Staff

Some agencies supplying workers to the food industry train them in basic food hygiene. Such training is of a general nature, therefore it is essential that all new temporary staff are instructed in the food safety requirements which relate specifically to their work.

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If the temporary staff are to be supervised, the content of the induction course may be reduced to describing the personal hygiene standards required for the work assigned. The instruction should include short explanations of the reasons for imposing the standards with emphasis on the personal responsibility of the individual employee.

FOOD HYGIENE CONTENT

An induction course should include the following food hygiene topics. The depth to which each is presented will be determined by its importance in the work assigned to the new employees.

Customer Confidence

A short explanation of the relationship between food product safety and quality and customer confidence with loyalty provides a useful introduction to the course.

Legal Responsibilities

A summary of corporate responsibility and the personal accountability of food handlers introduces the legal aspects of food hygiene.

Food Contamination

The following types of food contamination should be included:

1. Pests

With emphasis on:

- the in-house procedure for reporting evidence of pests;
- the risks associated with food operatives handling pesticides;
- the importance of working to good manufacturing practices.

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2. Foreign Matter

With emphasis on:

- foreign matter in relation to the products with which the employees will work;
- possible consequences of foreign matter contamination;
- control of foreign matter specific to the product;
- the importance of working to good manufacturing practices.

3. Chemicals

With emphasis on:

- hazardous chemicals with which the employees may work;
- the risks to the product;
- the risks to employees.

See also "protective equipment".

4. Food Spoilage

Food Spoilage should be related to the shelf life of the product emphasising that:

- the production process has been designed to achieve the required shelf-life;
- all employees are required to work to written operating procedures or "as instructed";
- the procedure for reporting abnormal events must be followed.

5. Food Poisoning

The main causal agents of food poisoning and its transmission via food should be described with emphasis on:

- cross contamination;
- the significance of the food handler in the spread of food poisoning;
- the legal obligations of a food handler.

Personal Hygiene

Because of the importance of the personal standards of health and hygiene of employees to the safety and quality of food products, this topic must be strongly emphasised during induction training.

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New employees should be instructed that, as food handlers, they have the following responsibilities for hygiene standards at work:

1. Personal appearance

It should be emphasised that a good standard of personal hygiene must be maintained and that food handlers have a responsibility to:

- be clean and tidy in appearance;
- take baths or showers regularly;
- maintain good dental hygiene;
- keep finger nails short and without varnish;
- wear clean personal clothing with no pins or loose fastenings;
- keep personal belongings in the lockers provided while at work.

2. Detachable personal items

It should be emphasised that:

- jewellery (with the exception of a plain wedding band and sleeper earrings), watches, badges, pins and all detachable ornamentation are prohibited in the work place;
- metal and plastic hair fasteners are positively discouraged (or banned);
- staff who wear glasses, contact lenses and/or hearing aids must be aware that these have the potential to become detached and form items of foreign matter.

3. Perfumes and cosmetics

It should be emphasised that:

- false nails and eyelashes, heavy make-up, strong perfume, deodorant or after-shave are not permitted;
- they must be removed before entering the work area.

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4. Hand to mouth or hand to head contact on the job

It should be emphasised that:

- eating including sweets, chewing gum, spitting, smoking and taking snuff are prohibited in the work area;
- touching ears, nose, mouth, eyes, hair and hair-covering is positively discouraged.

5. Personal health

The following must be explained:

- the requirement to cover spots, sores, cuts and burns on hands and arms with metal-detectable, blue, waterproof plasters to prevent the possibility of *S. Aureus* contamination;
- the policy of wearing gloves to cover slight abrasions and plasters on hands in hygiene sensitive operations;
- the provision of tissues for use when coughing or sneezing and the bins for used tissues;
- the legal obligations and the company's hygiene policy for reporting gastro-enteritis and other communicable diseases both for employees and their families, particularly after holidays abroad;
- if stool samples are required new employees should be instructed in a procedure for taking them.

6. Hand/glove hygiene

New employees should be instructed that hands must be washed:

- before entering any food process area;
- after coughing or sneezing;
- after touching any part of the face or hair;
- after using the toilet;
- before and after handling food or food contact material;
- on entering and leaving a high risk area;
- after handling waste food and refuse.

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The location of hand-wash stations should be pointed out to new employees, and a demonstration given of the correct method of hand washing and drying, with an explanation of the use of disinfectant hand-sprays given.

It should be emphasised that, when gloves are worn for food handling operations, the hands within the gloves as well as the gloves must be maintained to the same standard of hygiene.

7. Protective clothing and equipment

The details of protective clothing requirements, including head-covering, beard protection and footwear, vary across the food industry.

It should be emphasised that:

- protective clothing must be worn in such a way there is no risk of foreign matter e.g. micro-organisms, detachable items and personal detritus such as hair, entering the product;
- the procedure for robing and de-robing must be followed at all times;
- the clean/dirty protective clothing policy and laundry arrangements must be followed at all times;
- where operations require additional protective equipment, eg high care areas, to be worn, this must be complied with at all times.

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TRAINING RECORDS

Records should be kept for all members of staff which detail the name of the trainee, date of training, duration of training, course content and training provider details.

PRESENTATION

The hygiene training element of an induction course defines the corporate food safety standard to new employees. It should be presented in a way which will give the trainees an interest and awareness of food hygiene and a thorough grounding in the hygienic practices applicable to their work.



The Society of Food Hygiene and Technology will be pleased to advise on *food hygiene training and awareness schemes* suitable for use in induction course requiring a 1.5 hour input and for longer in-depth training.