

Moyle District Council

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

Environmental Health News for Businesses in Moyle District



Issue 3

November 2012

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! Safe Maintenance

Saves Time >> Saves Money >> Saves Lives

Campaign Update

The campaign's message is still being reinforced during inspections by both health and safety regulators, District Councils and HSENI.

Two further topic areas, **cleaning** and **contractors** have been added to the campaign. Supporting this work is guidance materials and an interactive on-line tool, all designed to encourage safe maintenance practices.

What is workplace maintenance?

Maintenance simply means keeping the workplace, its structures, equipment, machines, furniture and facilities operating safely, while also making sure that their condition does not decline. Regular maintenance can also prevent their sudden and unexpected failure.

There are two main types of maintenance:

- Preventive or proactive maintenance - periodic checks and repairs; and
- Corrective or reactive maintenance - carrying out unforeseen repairs on workplace facilities or equipment after sudden breakage or failure. This is usually more hazardous than scheduled maintenance.

5 Basic rules need to be followed:

- Planning
- Make the Work Area Safe
- Using appropriate equipment
- Working as planned
- Making final checks



Further information can be obtained at www.hseni.gov.uk/safemaintenance or by contacting the Environmental Health Unit on 028 2076 2225.

E. coli - Are you doing all you can?

E coli phone home

All food businesses will have received a mail shot from this Environmental Health Unit containing guidance on E coli in light of the outbreak of food poisoning associated with Flicks restaurant in Belfast. As the source of the outbreak remains unknown at the time of writing, this serves to reinforce the importance of good hygiene practice at your premises. Please be sure to read the guidance, bring it to the attention of all food handlers and apply it to your premises as it will affect your food hygiene rating. If you have any queries about its contents or how to apply it to your premises, feel free to contact a member of the food safety team on 028 2076 2225.

Hallowe'en may be behind us for another year but have you considered two seemingly innocent but potential horrors which could introduce food poisoning bacteria to your kitchen?



A recent study by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Queen Mary, University of London found that 1 in 6 of the UK mobile phones studied were contaminated with E coli bacteria due to poor personal hygiene. This can cause food poisoning when people fail to wash their hands properly after going to the toilet. The average mobile phone can be contaminated with up to 10 times more germs than a toilet seat.

Phones become contaminated from our hands and mouths. As people are so attached to mobile phones they are taken everywhere including the kitchen, the gym, bed and even the toilet. As phones are rarely cleaned and disinfected bacteria continue multiplying thereby spreading disease. Products are available to clean and disinfect phones safely.

Routine inspections have shown that mobile

phones are widely used in food preparation areas which is reason for concern. Placing a mobile phone on a food preparation surface will contaminate that surface and food subsequently placed on the surface. Food handlers hands will become contaminated as they handle their phones. This will be transferred to food unless staff observe good personal hygiene and wash their hands after using their phones.

Handbags at dawn

Whatever the bag - handbag or manbag - they go everywhere and are often placed on floors picking up germs throughout the day. A study by microbiologists tested swabs taken from the outside and bottom of handbags found that handbags could contain thousands, or even millions, of bacteria, including faecal bacteria and viruses that can cause colds and stomach upsets. It's not just the outside of handbags that cause problems. Contents could include make up, used tissues and partly drunk bottles of water which can also cause illness or contaminate hands.

Storing bags and phones in a secure manner away from food preparation surfaces will reduce the risk of contamination to food and hands.

KEEP IT CLEAN !

Cleaning isn't just for kitchens and toilets! Cleaning is an essential task in all workplaces to keep buildings and equipment safe and well maintained; in addition to providing a pleasant working environment for visitors and employees.

All businesses will carry out some form of cleaning activity including:

- Scheduled routine cleaning - e.g. floor polishing at end of the day.
- Reactive, unplanned cleaning - e.g. mopping up a spill, removing matter from industrial equipment.
- Specialist cleaning - e.g. gutters, dismantling complex equipment, or working in dangerous conditions.

These may be carried out in house or contracted to external cleaning firms or specialist contractors.

What's the problem?

Every year there are accidents resulting from cleaning activities - many are serious and some are even fatal. There were 86 accidents involving cleaners or cleaning equipment in 2011, which resulted in the injured person being off work for 3 days or more. 15 of these were major injuries.

What do I need to do?

Look at all the cleaning activities that take place, decide what could cause risks and how.

- Consider whether any of these measures are in place already.
- Decide whether more needs to be done. Then do it!

Cleaning and disinfection of food premises

The Food Standards Agency's E coli guidance states Food Business Operators (FBOs) must ensure that cleaning and disinfection procedures are in place that will ensure effective removal of E coli 0157 and other pathogens from all surfaces and equipment involved in food preparation. Food business operators must also ensure that personal hygiene and hand washing procedures are regularly monitored to ensure they are consistently maintained. It is critical that all procedures are strictly adhered to on every occasion prior to contact with ready to eat foods.

There are so many cleaning products available on the market, it's no wonder confusion arises, however, using the correct product in the correct manner is vital to clean and disinfect surfaces effectively and remove harmful bacteria from surfaces and equipment. Staff must understand what these chemicals do and the correct products purchased from reputable suppliers must always be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Detergents are products for general cleaning e.g. fairy liquid. They do not have disinfectant properties and if used on their own do not kill harmful bacteria e.g. E coli 0157.

Disinfectants are products that are capable of destroying harmful bacteria when applied to visibly clean surfaces at a specified dilution and contact time.

Sanitisers are single products which combine a disinfectant and detergent. Whilst these products can be used to provide a visibly clean surface, it must be used a second time in order to disinfect the surface.

Effective cleaning must use a combination of physical cleaning, using a detergent, followed by a disinfectant and used at the correct temperature, contact time and dilution. Understanding the processes required to effectively decontaminate surfaces is essential in minimising the cross-contamination risks associated with E coli 0157 and other pathogens.

Chemical Disinfection is a 2 stage process comprising:

Stage 1 – General Cleaning using a detergent. Physical removal of visible dirt, food particles and debris from surfaces and equipment that come into contact with food should always be completed by rinsing to ensure removal of all residues prior to disinfection.

Stage 2 - Disinfection. This can only be successfully completed following general cleaning. Appropriate disinfectants are required to reduce microbial contamination to an acceptable level. Different types of disinfectants require different dilutions and contact times. These are specified and validated by the manufacturer and the FBO must follow the manufacturer's instructions for dilution and contact time to ensure the product is effective. Some products will require a final rinse – see product instructions.

Disinfection will only be effective when carried out on a visibly clean surface that is free from grease, film or solid matter. For a disinfectant to be effective in destroying bacteria, the correct dilution and contact time must be followed according to the manufacturer's instructions.



E coli guidance recommends use of cleaning products which meet either BS EN 1276:1997 or BS EN 13697:2001. Food business operators should ensure they are using the appropriate disinfectant products by confirming with suppliers the products meet these standards. A list of cleaning products meeting this standard is available on the Moyle Council website.

Moyle District Council offers a Level 2 Cleaning in Food Premises course. This course runs over 2 evenings and combines Health and Safety with Food Safety. The course fee is £45. For further information regarding the course, contact Debbie O'Neill or Amber Holmes on 028 2076 2225.

What's in a name ?

Routine inspections have shown that some people become very creative when describing food on menus and labels! Customers must not be misled as to the nature, substance or quality of food. Food must not be described falsely. You need to make sure you can stand over any food descriptions or claims made on labels and menus.

Describing food as 'fresh' when it has been frozen, 'hand cut' or 'hand carved' when it has been through a slicer and even 'hand-made' or 'home made' when it has come from a packet are all examples of food fraud. Food fraud is committed when food is deliberately placed on the market for financial gain with the intention of deceiving the consumer. Substitution of cheap alternatives but charging customers more is an offence such as Pangassius as cod, farmed salmon as wild salmon, non organic produce as organic and cheddar as mozzarella.

The Environmental Health Unit routinely checks menus and ingredients during food standards during inspections. Samples are also taken and the council participates in surveys to ensure that food is sold as described.

Top tips

- Traditional names such as Roast Beef cannot be used to describe 'flash' roasted products or reformed meat.
- Beefburgers must contain a minimum of 62% beef.
- Margarine must not be described as butter.
- Only whole tail scampi and chicken nuggets made from whole pieces of chicken may be described simply as 'scampi' or 'chicken nuggets'. If it is a reformed or chopped and shaped product it must be described as such.
- Ham should be sliced from a whole cured piece of meat from the hind-quarters of a pig. Products which are from the shoulder or are 'formed' or 'reformed' must be correctly described.
- Cheese analogue used on some pizzas cannot be described as cheese.
- Imported meat cannot be described as local.
- Purchasers must be informed at the point of choosing the food as to whether the food they are purchasing contains genetically modified (GM) soya or maize. You should seek this information from your supplier.



Failure to comply with these regulations is an offence. Contact the food safety team for advice on correctly labelling your food tel. 028 2076 2225 or email : food@moyle-council.org

Alcohol Sales

Any premises selling alcohol such as licensed restaurants, public houses etc. must avoid buying and selling illegal alcohol and adulterating spirits. You may be aware of recent media attention regarding Czech vodka and rum containing methanol which tragically caused several fatalities. Environmental Health Officers are authorised to undertake regular visits to licensed premises to advise on correct practices and check compliance with the law. One such visit resulted in a recent successful prosecution by Moyle District Council in respect of the sale of vodka falsely described as a premium brand at a licensed premises in the District. Further visits are scheduled over the coming weeks.

Substitution or tipping

It is illegal to refill a branded spirit bottle with an alternative product for re-sale.

Dispensing cheaper spirits from premium branded spirit bottles 'rips off' consumers and produces an unfair competitive advantage. Enforcement officers are particularly active in detecting this practice.

It should be noted that this is a 'strict liability' offence so explanations such as:

- It was an accident
- I was away on holiday at the time
- Gin is gin
- It was a higher strength therefore better value

are not considered as acceptable defences by the courts.

Testing

Environmental Health Officers from this department have test equipment and take alcohol samples to test for authenticity and watering down to ensure customers are being served what they request and pay for. Where spirits fail tests, officers take formal samples for further testing by the Public Analyst.



Under strength spirits

Spirits lose strength when water is added and as a result of evaporation. Bottles of spirits should be resealed at the end of a day's trading to reduce evaporation. **It is a criminal offence to sell under strength spirits.** Original caps should be retained and spirit bottles resealed when not trading. If the screening test for alcohol content fails then the officer will take formal samples for further testing by a Public Analyst.

Passing off

When a requested brand is not available, the customer must be advised of this and given the choice of accepting the alternative offered. If this does not happen and the customer is served an alternative without his or her knowledge then this is known as '**passing off**' is illegal. If premium brands are on display and alternative brands are served then this also constitutes an act of 'passing off' even when a brand name isn't mentioned when ordering.

Topping up or refilling

It is illegal to top up bottles ready for a busy evening or to fill a 3 litre bottle on an optic from smaller bottles.

Duty Stamps

It is illegal to sell bottles of spirits over 30% ABV without a duty stamp. It is also illegal to refill stamped bottles – even with the correct brand from another stamped bottle.



Traceability

It is illegal to refill lot marked bottles (all bottles are lot marked), as this affects product traceability. It is also a legal requirement to have the



Illicit and counterfeit spirits

There has been an increase in the availability of illicit spirits (no tax paid) bogus brands and counterfeit brands. It is therefore essential to purchase only from known legitimate suppliers and always ask for and keep purchase invoices. You must be able to produce the necessary paperwork to identify the source of all your spirits as well as your food. Failure to do so could result in a fine of up to £5,000.

Penalties for substitution, selling bootlegged alcohol or under-strength spirits are a heavy fine (maximum £5,000 per offence), court costs and a criminal record.

Tips to help avoid substituting brands, adulterating spirits and stocking illegal alcohol:

- * Ensure all staff are aware of these legal requirements
- * Only buy spirits from reputable sources and keep your receipts.
- * Do not top up or refill bottles
- * Do not pour back unfinished drinks into the bottle
- * Ensure all spirit measures are cleaned after use, any cleaning detergents are rinsed through and the measure is dried.
- * Do not leave bottles open or with open pourers for any length of time. Re-seal them when not trading.
- * Avoid buying opened bottles when taking over a new premises as you will become legally responsible for the contents.

New Sun-bed Regulations for Beauty Businesses

New legislation which bans people under the age of 18 from using, hiring or buying sun-beds in Northern Ireland came into effect in May 2012.



The legislation covers other issues, such as, ensuring those adults who wish to use sun-beds are provided with information on the health risks, ensuring supervision of sun-bed sessions, ensuring that appropriate protective eye-wear is provided and worn, etc. It is important that people are aware of the potential risks associated with overexposure to ultraviolet radiation, which is emitted by sunbeds.

Moyle District Council's Environmental Health Unit is responsible for enforcing the new legislation and compliance with the law will be checked, using different measures including unannounced spot checks and pre-planned visits.

Failure to comply with the new legislation is a criminal offence. Sunbed operators and those who hire and sell sunbeds may be prosecuted or fined by way of a fixed penalty, of varying amounts, for particular offences in the Act.

For further information and advice regarding the legislation, you can contact Debbie O'Neill, Senior Environmental Health Officer on 028 20762225 or email Debbie at doneill@moyle-



Employers would you like FREE and confidential workplace health & safety advice?

Health and Safety Works NI (HSWNI), the small business advisory service of the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) was set up in 2004 specifically to help all Northern Ireland small businesses improve their workplace health and safety management, understand their legal responsibilities and compete effectively in the marketplace.

Although HSWNI is an integral part of HSENI it is separate and distinct from HSENI's compliance arm and has no enforcement powers.

The aim of HSWNI is to address the barriers faced by small businesses in managing workplace health and safety by providing a **free** and **confidential** service offering practical advice and guidance from a reliable and trusted source which is tailored to the business owner's needs.



Whether you are just starting in business, are new to health and safety or are already set up and looking to improve your health and safety management, you will find the practical advice and useful information provided by this service useful to help you manage your own health and safety.

Further information regarding the service can be obtained contact Health and Safety Works NI on 0300 020 0030 or email hswni@detini.gov.uk

New Age Restrictions on the Sale of Aerosol Paint

It is now an offence to sell an aerosol paint container to anyone under the age of 18. The age restriction on the sale of these goods was introduced by new legislation called the Clean Neighbourhoods Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 which came into force in April 2012 giving Councils a range of new powers. The aim of this new offence is to try to reduce the misuse of spray paint for antisocial reasons such as graffiti.



Employers are responsible for the actions of their staff and could be prosecuted if employees sell spray paint to children. Business owners should therefore take all reasonable steps to avoid their staff committing such an offence by providing adequate training to staff to ensure they are aware of the law and routinely ask for proof if they are in any doubt of a person's age. Records of such training and a log of refusals should also be kept. Contact us if you require any further information or advice on age restricted sales and how to comply with the law.



Grants to help your business be more energy efficient

To help your business, there are some grants available at times during the year. These include:

- Air source heat pumps
- Biomass Boilers
- Solar PV
- Solar water heating
- Fluorescent lighting enhancement
- Variable speed drives
- Hysave 'Liquid Pump Amplification' for refrigeration systems

For full details of grants, eligibility criteria and availability, please contact the respective companies:

Power NI www.powerni.co.uk Tel: 0800 0321 894

Electric Ireland patick.mccarney@electricireland.ie
Tel: 028 9051 1246

Energia Janine.Brady@energja.ie Tel: 028 9068 5908

Any Comments?

We hope you find this newsletter informative and would really appreciate it if you would share it with your employees. We would welcome your comments on this newsletter; any suggestions for issues you would like to see covered in future editions or any aspect of how we could improve the Environmental Health Service. You can contact us as detailed below: Environmental Health Unit, Moyle District Council, Sheshkburn House, 7 Mary Street, Ballycastle, Co Antrim. BT54 6QH. Tel: **028 2076 2225** Fax: **028 2076 9891** E-mail: environmentalhealth@moyle-council.org Web: www.moyle-council.org



We would like to increase the speed and efficiency of providing information to business by using email correspondence. If you have an email address which we could send the Environmental Health Newsletter to in the future, please let us know using any of the contact details shown opposite.



The Environmental Health Unit of Moyle District Council offers a wide range of business friendly food safety and health and safety courses at locations throughout the district to suit staff working at all levels. Course schedules and costs are available on our website www.moyle-council.org and further information can be obtained by phoning us on 028 2076 2225.



Would you prefer to receive your newsletter electronically?

Accident reporting - Don't slip up !

It is a legal requirement to report certain types of work related accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences to the relevant enforcing authority i.e. HSENI or Moyle District Council .



The following **must** be reported:

- Work related death or injury
- Member of the public killed or taken to hospital from the work premises
- Injuries to an employee or self employed person resulting in being unable to do normal work for more than 3 days
- Dangerous occurrence which does not result in a reportable injury but clearly could have
- Notification from a doctor that an employee suffers from a specified work related disease.

Further information and report forms are available on our website. However if you are in any doubt as to whether you need to make a report contact Debbie on 028 2076 2225.