



Mayor's message to all food handlers in the Shoalhaven

Welcome to the first edition of Shoalhaven City Council's Food Newsletter.

This is an exciting time for local businesses providing food services, as this newsletter gives us an avenue to give you relevant information to help you provide safe, healthy food for your customers.

Our Environmental Health Officers are committed to upholding food safety standards for all food businesses operating in our city. It is becoming increasingly important that businesses create an environment where safe and healthy food is a key component in satisfying their customers. So these standards will actually help you retain customers and build your business.

NSW Councils have established a partnership with the NSW Food Authority to improve coordination between the two agencies. Council will now be able to provide Shoalhaven citizens with a food regulation system that further

boosts food safety and enables authorities to respond more promptly to food emergencies and recalls. The partnership also provides Council with the ability to conduct routine inspections of food retail businesses, food complaint investigations and enforce action where necessary.

For local businesses, this partnership has meant that further training and support is available to help you provide outstanding food safety in your business.

Council will conduct a number of programs that will directly help you and your business. We have recently provided advice on hand washing and temperature control with free posters available to all food premises. In addition to this, thermometers are now available free to businesses that do not have adequate temperature monitoring measures.

We are also looking at implementing an online training program for food handlers, which will further aid businesses

in their knowledge of safe food handling and preparation by providing a hands-on, interactive learning course.

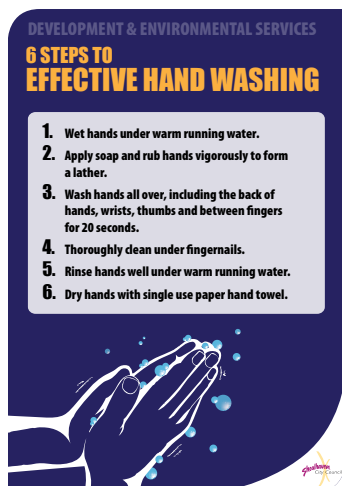
The information in this seasonal newsletter will be a benefit to your business, and we encourage you to make this newsletter available to your staff.

Council's Environmental Health Officers are available to provide assistance and advice to you and your business in relation to food safety issues, so please do not hesitate to give them a call.

Councillor Paul Green
Shoalhaven City Mayor



Six steps to effective hand washing



All food handlers must wash their hands regularly to ensure they do not contaminate food. There are "6 steps to effective hand washing":

1. Wet hands under warm running water.
2. Apply soap and rub hands vigorously to form a lather.
3. Wash hands all over, including the back of hands, wrists, thumbs and between fingers for 20 seconds.
4. Thoroughly clean under fingernails.
5. Rinse hands well under warm running water.
6. Dry hands with single use paper hand towel.

The Food Act 2003 requires food businesses to ensure that such provisions are made available to all their food han-

dling staff at all times and promote the washing of hands whenever they are likely to be a source of contamination. For example, before handling food, after going to the toilet, smoking, coughing or sneezing.

Free posters on the "6 steps to effective hand washing" are available from Council. Council Environmental Health Officers will also be handing out these posters during routine food premises inspections.

Food Regulation Partnership underway

From the 1st of July 2008 Shoalhaven City Council's Food Regulation Partnership with the NSW Food Authority commenced. This partnership will ensure that all NSW council's provide a consistent approach to food premises inspection with the ultimate aim of achieving an overall improved level of food safety in both the Shoalhaven and the state.

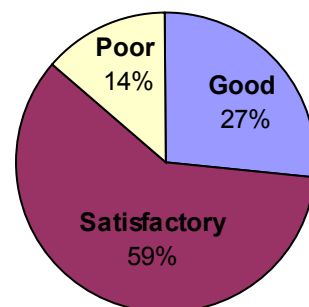
One of the key functions to the partnership involves regular 6 monthly reporting. This reporting process will identify numerous aspects relating to food businesses. In particular, areas of non compliance identified by Council Environmental Health Officers in regard to breaches of Critical Food Handling Practices. Examples of such practices include;

- Hot and cold holding temperatures for Potentially Hazardous Foods
- Hand washing facilities
- Cleaning, sanitising and maintenance practices
- Food processing
- Pest control

The adjacent pie chart depicts the status of food businesses in the city for the first reporting period; 1st July 2008 to 31st December 2008. During this period, 448 food premises were inspected with the majority (86%) achieving either a satisfactory or good rating. The remaining 14% of food premises were found to be poor due to breaches identified with certain Critical Food Handling Practices.

These premises were required to implement specified rectification work with follow up inspections to ensure the work was carried out satisfactorily.

Status of Food Premises in the Shoalhaven from 1/7/08 - 31/12/08
Total number of inspections - 448



Food Safety Training

To assist food handlers in acquiring the basic skills and knowledge required to work in the food industry, Council Environmental Health Officers are available to provide local food businesses with on-site food safety training. This training is designed to work in with the food handler and where possible provide a convenient, free of charge service.

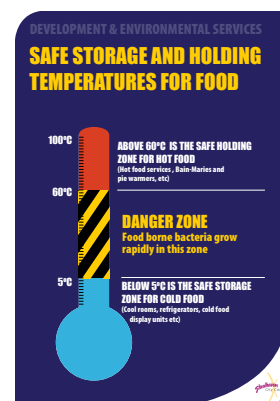
Food businesses interested in participating in this training, should contact Shoalhaven City Council on 4429 3431 during business hours.

Temperature danger zone for Potentially Hazardous Foods

Food borne bacteria can grow rapidly to unsafe levels where food is being stored between 5°C and 60°C. This temperature range is commonly referred to as the temperature danger zone. Food that is potentially hazardous, like dairy, seafood, meat and poultry must be kept below 5°C when kept under refrigeration conditions. The low temperature slows down the potential for bacteria to multiply and reach levels that could result in food poisoning.

Conversely hot food stored in bain-maries or the like must be kept above 60°C at all times. These higher temperatures will kill bacteria and viruses.

Free posters on the "Safe storage and holding temperatures for food" are also available from Council.



If you have any comments, suggested items or would like to receive future editions of 'Food News' via email please contact the Environmental Services section by emailing council@shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au or visit our website www.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au

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