

I already have a system in place; do I have to change to SFBB?

No. We are aware that some premises may already have a documented food safety system in place, which has either been provided by their parent company or has been developed in-house. If you already have one of these systems then it may mean that you already comply with the new requirements. You are however advised to speak to your company or contact us for further advice.

Will the pack be available in other languages?

The Food Standards Agency is working on producing packs for a range of cuisines, including Chinese, Indian and Thai, but these are likely to be produced in English. Plymouth City Council will be running courses for food operators whose first language is not English later on in the year. We will use translators where possible. If you would like to volunteer to help in the delivery of these courses, please contact us. If English is not your first language and you require this information translated please let us know.

Is there a deadline for me to implement SFBB?

The new regulations come into force on the 1st January 2006. However, we understand that businesses that do not already have a written food safety management system in place will need a reasonable period of time to implement this. We will be providing assistance to help meet this requirement.

What happens if I don't implement SFBB?

The new regulations require you to implement a documented food safety system. SFBB has been developed to assist food businesses in complying with this new requirement.

Ultimately, if you choose not to use SFBB and do not implement and maintain any other suitable system, the City Council may take legal action in line with its enforcement policy. Formal action will only be taken where businesses fail to take reasonable steps to comply with the new legislation. In view of the extensive free training and coaching that is being offered we hope that such legal action will not be necessary.

What do I do now?

We will be writing to you over the next 18 months to invite you to attend an initial seminar. If you decide you would like to use SFBB, then you will receive personal tuition on the pack. You will also need to make sure that your business complies with the other requirements of the new food hygiene legislation, which is similar to the current food safety requirements.

During routine inspections, your food officer will explain the new requirements and check your progress on implementing a food safety management system.

If you have any further questions on the new legislation, please contact a member of our team on 01752 304532 or email us at environmental.regulation@plymouth.gov.uk.

Visit our website for the latest information at www.plymouth.gov.uk

We will be in touch



Food hygiene legislation changes 1 January 2006

A special edition newsletter from Environmental Regulation Service, Plymouth City Council



Important!

New Food Law is coming soon

From 1st January 2006, food hygiene legislation will change across Europe. The new regulations consolidate and simplify the existing legislation. The majority of the requirements will not change. However you need to know about one major new requirement, which is explained in this newsletter.

If you run a food business you will need to have a documented food safety management system. In other words, you must be able to show what you do to make sure food is safe to eat and have this written down.

The new regulations are flexible and the amount of documentation will depend on the size and nature of the business. For example a full Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system is more suited to food manufacturers who produce large amounts of similar foods. This system can be onerous in a busy café or restaurant with a wide ranging, evolving menu, and many people have had difficulty understanding it.

A jargon free, simple, common sense tool has been developed by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), called Safer Food Better Business (SFBB). This has been developed with the catering industry and enables compliance with the new requirements with minimal documentation.

Don't panic!

Safer Food Better Business is here...

Safer Food Better Business is a series of 'Safe Method' Fact sheets, based on the FSA's Food Hygiene 4C's campaign: Cooking, Chilling, Cleaning and avoiding Cross Contamination, which detail how key areas of food preparation and handling are dealt with safely. The methods have been based on traditional catering craft skills wherever possible. A section to help the Manager deal with supervision and management issues is also included and a simple daily diary forms the record-keeping requirement.

Safer Food Better Business is a simple fact sheet system



Cross contamination



Cleaning



Chilling



Cooking



Management

You will need to look at the pack and select the safe method sheets, which apply to your business and follow them. The diary is used to record opening and closing checks, note any problems that have happened during the day and most importantly what was done to rectify the problem. The diary also includes a four-weekly review to ensure that the document remains up to date and to allow common problems to be identified and addressed.

So, from 1st January 2006, you will need to have a documented food safety management system in place. It doesn't have to be SFBB, but any alternative may involve a lot of work if you do not have a system in place already.

What's in it for me?

Safer Food Better Business provides you with a documented food safety management system that will ensure you comply with the requirements of the new law, as long as you follow it.

It is designed to cut out jargon and can be easily tailored to your business. It will be widely recognised and will be used by businesses across England. It will help ensure you produce safe food and may result in fewer visits by your Food Inspector. **It is also FREE!**

How do I start to use SFBB?

Plymouth City Council has successfully bid for funding from the Food Standards Agency to provide help to catering businesses in meeting the requirements of the new legislation and on how to implement the packs. We will be using the money awarded to implement an eighteen month coaching programme initially targeting

700 small businesses.

Seminars will be held, in conjunction with a private food hygiene consultancy approved by the Food Standards Agency who will initially run introductory seminars. We will then arrange to visit the business and provide coaching and guidance on the implementation of the pack.

During this period, your district food inspectors will continue to provide advice and guidance on any issues that may arise. We will also be operating a 'hotline' service to answer questions on SFBB.

Your questions answered

The following information is provided in response to some of the questions you will undoubtedly have, however if you have any other questions please let us know.

Why the change?

The new European Food Hygiene Regulations replace and amend the existing UK legislation. They aim to provide clear information to food businesses to ensure food is produced safely and to achieve consistency throughout Europe. The legislation includes farming for the first time, so it covers the whole food chain from farm to fork.

How do I get a SFBB pack?

Initially the packs are being supplied at the seminars. We will be writing to you shortly advising of the dates of the seminars. Due to the number of premises in Plymouth, we will be targeting premises throughout the year. However, if you would like to receive a pack before you attend a seminar, you can order a copy directly from the Food Standards Agency on Tel: 0845 6060667 or email at foodstandards@eclogistics.co.uk. The pack can also be downloaded from the Food Standards Agency Website www.food.gov.uk/catering.

How much does the pack cost?

The packs are to be provided free of charge, although the implementation will require your time to complete each section.

How long will it take me to implement the system?

The safe methods are split into five sections. It will take you about one hour to complete each section and it is suggested that you complete one section per week.

What happens once I have implemented the system?

Once you have implemented the pack, you need to ensure that it is adhered to by all your employees. You should also review your diary every four weeks and when anything changes, e.g. change of menu, new equipment.

Won't this take up a lot of time and require me to keep lots of records?

With SFBB, filling out the diary is the only daily record you will need to complete. This should only take you a few minutes each day.

You don't need to keep lots of records.

The system is based on recording by exception i.e. only recording when things have gone wrong and what action you have taken. Once you have worked through the safe methods, you will have a record of what your business does to make sure the food is safe to eat. This will only need to be reviewed and amended if you change the way your food business operates.

I currently write down the temperatures of fridges and cooked foods every day, do I need to keep doing this?

Keeping a written record of fridge/freezer temperatures and cooked food temperatures is good practice and helps to highlight when a problem arises. SFBB still requires you to monitor these temperatures but you would only need to record problems that have arisen and what you have done to correct them.

However, if you currently record these temperatures, you are encouraged to continue as it does allow you to review how well your equipment is working. You can also use the diary sections to record your temperatures daily.

Do I need any additional training?

As you are aware, all food handlers must receive adequate instruction and/or training in food hygiene to enable them to handle food safely.

If you have received foundation level food hygiene training or equivalent more than 3 years ago, it is recommended that you attend a refresher course before attending the SFBB seminars.

As the owner/manager of a business you will be responsible for implementing a food safety management system in the business and therefore must have a higher level of knowledge and understanding to ensure the procedures are operated effectively. The free seminars and coaching sessions should provide you with sufficient knowledge to successfully implement and maintain the SFBB pack.

However, you may wish to attend further training courses such as the Award in Supervising Food Safety in Catering or Award in Implementing Food Safety Procedures available in the new year. Please contact 01752 304141 for details.

