

The Importance of Health and Safety in the Kitchen Environment –

Disposal of Waste

In this edition of the e-news, we will focus on the risks associated with the disposal of waste in the kitchen environment.

Much of the guidance on waste issues is aimed at organisations operating in the waste management and recycling industries.

However, any organisation which deals with waste needs to give consideration to how to manage it safely.

We will focus here on the potential risks arising from the kitchen environment, but care operators should also consider this across the whole of their organisation, particularly as they are likely to deal with potentially hazardous waste such as hygiene waste.

Risks

The HSE's guidance on health hazards in the waste and recycling industry identifies four routes by which waste can cause a health hazard:

- skin contact, e.g. through cuts in the skin or contact with the eye;
- skin penetration, e.g. sharps injuries;
- ingestion, e.g. from eating or drinking; and
- inhalation.

Waste can be generated in the kitchen environment in a number of ways, including from the preparation of food, the disposal of food which has not been consumed, the disposal of any cleaning products which are stored in the kitchen or the disposal of glass or any redundant kitchen equipment such as pans or knives.

If normal food waste is disposed of properly, then it should not pose a hazard to employees.

However, if it is not removed from the premises within an appropriate timescale, there is a risk of attracting pests and vermin, which would create a risk to both employees and service users.

Equally, if food spillages are not properly cleaned up, or waste is stored in an unsafe location, then the risk of employee accidents such as trips and slips is likely to increase. Of course, a further issue is that if waste is not being disposed of properly this will have an impact on the cleanliness and hygiene of the kitchen environment which could lead to the risk of food which is not safe for consumption being consumed, and the consequent risk of sickness and ill health.

It is equally important to ensure that non-food waste is disposed of properly. For example, if glass or discarded kitchen equipment such as knives is put in the general waste bins, then there is a risk that an employee picking up the bin liner could cut themselves.

Managing risks

To manage these risks, care providers should ensure that they have considered the types of waste which will arise in the kitchen environment, and how these types of waste should be disposed of. Issues which providers should consider include:

- Do any of these types of waste require separate waste bins?
- Are the waste bins provided of an appropriate size and in an appropriate location?
- How often are waste facilities cleaned?
- How often should the waste be collected?
- Do staff understand the processes in place to deal with waste?

When considering these issues, care providers should speak to employees to find out if there are any other areas of concern to be aware of. Once an appropriate system of managing waste has been agreed on, care operators should ensure that staff are fully aware of these procedures, and who to speak to should they have any concerns.

In the next edition, we will look at substances in the kitchen which care providers may be required to assess under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002

Look out in future editions for tips on how to manage other key areas of risk which are providers should be aware of.

Our thanks to both

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