# The Importance of Health and Safety Checks in Hospitality and Catering

Health and safety is vitally important; and hotels, restaurants, cafes and catering outlets must enforce strict guidelines in the workplace and complete regular health and safety and hygiene checks.  Due diligence must be taken, not only to comply with health and safety law and HACCP principles, but also to ensure the safety of employees and consumers alike.

According to the Food Standards Agency (FSA), cross-contamination is one of the most common causes of food poisoning. It happens when harmful bacteria are spread onto food from other food, surfaces, hands or equipment! Raw meat and poultry, and eggs, are more likely to contain harmful bacteria than other foods.

Extra procedures must therefore be put in place and proficient cleaning and handling practices can help to manage the risk of cross-contamination.  Good personal hygiene practices help to prevent bacteria from spreading to food. Thorough hand washing is a priority, particularly before handling and preparing food.  Personal protective clothing should also be worn to minimise the spread of dirt and bacteria and to prevent hair and fibres getting into food.

Within the hospitality and catering sector, professional health, safety and hygiene training for staff will result in a safer working environment, which is ultimately better for business! Food allergies are a major cause for concern and it is extremely important to check all the contents of a dish if asked by a customer who has a food allergy. Accurate and up-to-date ingredient information must be displayed and regularly checked.

Effective cleaning regimes should also be observed, recorded and reviewed so that the cleaning schedule is thorough and strict standards are sustained. Additional data also needs to be recorded, particularly with regards to temperature control, chilled storage and displaying chilled food. Food with ‘use-by’ dates, cooked dishes and other ready-to-eat food has a limited shelf life and needs to be carefully monitored.

Effective management and regular food hygiene checks are imperative for food safety. All hospitality and catering businesses therefore need to maintain up-to-date and accurate safety records. Health and Safety Due Diligence Diaries are designed to enable businesses to efficiently record all compliance activities, as well as to easily introduce new health, safety and hygiene procedures.