Hygiene and Safety Guidelines for Village, Community and Church Halls

This guidance has been produced to provide information for those running village, community and church halls about some of the requirements of the food hygiene legislation (Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 and the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013, and to outline some good food hygiene practices. It also includes some basic information on health and safety legislation. Please note the guidance covers only the minimum standards for food premises operating in the Eden District Council area.

Registration as a Food Business

Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 Article 6(2) requires food business operators to register each establishment under their control with the local Environmental Health Department, at least twenty-eight days before opening. Nearly all business types will need to be registered, including restaurants, hotels, cafes, shops, supermarkets, staff canteens, kitchens in offices, warehouses, guest houses, delivery vehicles, buffet cars on trains, market and other stalls, hot dog and ice cream vans, etc. There is no fee to register and a registration form is available on request or on line on the Eden District Council website.

For some community and village halls you will require to be registered with Environmental Health if there are regular activities, groups and entertainment where food and drink is served even if this is just light refreshments. Registration means you will receive information and guidance from ourselves and contact and inspections will be carried out by ourselves to provide useful hygiene information tailored to the activities carried out at your venue. For community buildings where there is very little and no activity registration may not be appropriate, however please check by contacting the department on the contact details overleaf.

Licences

A licence will be required to do the following things:

- sell or supply alcohol
- sell hot food between 11pm and 5am
- provide entertainment, such as theatre, cinema or live music
- sell food from a stall or van on certain, designated streets

Businesses should contact the Council’s Licensing Department (01768 817817) or Food, Health and Safety team (01768 212491) for more information on licensing.
But Is Your Village Hall A Food Business?

Many village halls technically don’t operate as food businesses. The village hall committee may let the hall to individual organisations which run food businesses from the village hall, but they don’t actually run a food business from there themselves. For example, if the village hall committee lets the hall to Age Concern, which puts on a lunch club for residents in the area, then Age Concern would be the food business operator, not the village hall committee. However, if the village hall committee ran a lunch club each month then the village hall committee would be the food business operator. In the first instance, Age Concern would need to register with the local authority as the food business operator, but in the second case, it would be the village hall.

Also, how frequently events take place affect whether the village hall should be regarded as a food business or not. An annual dinner at Christmas wouldn’t be classed as running a food business, because it’s just a one off, but a monthly lunch club would. So if the village hall committee runs the odd event during the year, that wouldn’t be a food business, but events organised on a regular and frequent basis would.

Obviously the village hall committee would want to ensure that any food they served, whether for a one off event or a regular thing, was safe to eat and they wouldn’t want to put people’s health and safety at risk, so they would want to comply with good food hygiene and health and safety practice.

All of the organisations using the village hall for their food businesses need to register with the local authority, so there might be several registrations for one village hall.

If Our Village Hall Is A Food Business….

Eden District Council has produced a range of guidance notes to help to comply with the food legislation which applies to different activities. These are listed below:

- Catering and Other Food Preparation Facilities
- Retail Shops
- Food Vending Vehicles
- Food Stalls and Marquees (including Food Stalls at Farmers’ Markets)
- Bed and Breakfast Establishments and Guest Houses
- Childminders and Nurseries
- Guidance on Temperature Control in Food Premises
- Guidance on Safer Cooked Meat Production
- Guidance on Fitness for Work for Food Handlers
The guidance documents can be obtained from Eden District Council’s website.

So if the village hall committee is running a lunch club on a regular basis it may be useful to read through the guidance on Catering and Other Food Preparation Facilities. This provides comprehensive advice on food handling, food safety management systems, structural requirements for food rooms, personal hygiene for food handlers, training, pest control and so on. It may be helpful to go through the guidance on catering if only a Christmas lunch is cooked.

**Basic Requirements for Food Businesses**

Set out below are some of the basic requirements for any food business:

- Floors must be in good condition, non-absorbent, non-slip and easily cleaned.
- Walls must be smooth, non-absorbent, non-flaking and easily cleaned. Gloss or vinyl paint on smooth plaster is acceptable.
- Ceilings must be designed to prevent the accumulation of dirt, reduce condensation, prevent the growth of moulds and prevent the shedding of particles.
- Any woodwork (eg window frames, shelves, doors) must be sealed (eg painted or varnished) to allow cleaning.
- Work surfaces must be impervious and easy to clean with no gaps or crevices at the sides, back or joins. There should be no open chipboard visible, it should be sealed so that it is easy to clean.
- Drainage facilities must be capable of carrying away the amount of waste water produced and must be designed and constructed to avoid the risk of contamination. Waste pipes need water traps to prevent odours getting into food rooms. It may be necessary to install a grease trap. The Council’s Building Control Department can advise on this.
- A suitably located wash hand basin must be provided in the food preparation area, supplied with hot and cold water, soap and drying facilities. Please contact the Food, Health and Safety Department if you require any advice on this matter.
- Suitable facilities, like sinks or dishwashers must be provided to clean and disinfect all tools and equipment that come into contact with food. These units must be supplied with hot and cold water. Please contact the Food, Health and Safety Department if you require any advice on this matter.
- There must be sufficient ventilation to prevent heat and steam build up and to remove odours. Natural ventilation will usually be sufficient but halls that are more frequently used may need additional mechanical ventilation.
• There must be adequate lighting, either natural (daylight) and/or artificial (electric light).

• Food waste and other refuse must be deposited in closable containers, preferably pedal bins. Waste should not be allowed to accumulate in the kitchen or left overnight but should be transferred into dustbins with lids. Arrangements should be made for the regular removal of waste from the site.

• Perishable foods will need to be kept safely (see below for details) so a refrigerator (or maybe more than one) will usually need to be provided. A freezer may be needed as well.

• The structure and equipment in any food preparation or service areas must be kept clean. Cleaning before and after the facilities are used is usually adequate but it may be necessary to arrange for deep cleaning or spring cleaning for areas such as behind cookers, inside cupboards and ventilation hoods, and the higher parts of walls.

• Food businesses must make sure that any staff who handle food are supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene in a way that is appropriate for the work they do.

The person or people responsible for developing and maintaining the business’s food safety management procedures, based on the principles of HACCP must have received adequate training to enable them to do this.

Packs produced by the FSA, or industry guides to good hygiene practice, can be used for training purposes.

Food business operators and their staff do not have to attend a formal course but many food handlers have found attending short basic food hygiene courses run by education establishments and private training companies have helped them get a clearer understanding of safe food handling practices.

Such courses have the added advantage of giving food handlers the opportunity to ask questions on things they are not sure about. Certificates are usually awarded on successful completion of courses. There are a number of on line courses available also.

**Regular Large Scale Catering**

Kitchens where regular large scale catering is carried out will have to meet higher standards. Additional matters to consider include mechanical ventilation, increased provision of sinks, more comprehensive food safety management procedures, provision of additional chilled/frozen storage, monitoring of fridge, freezer and cooked food temperatures. Please contact the Food, Health and Safety Department for further advice.
Food Allergy and Intolerance

Food allergy and food intolerance are both types of food sensitivity. When someone has a food allergy, their immune system reacts to a particular food as if it isn't safe. If someone has a severe food allergy, this can cause a life-threatening reaction.

Food intolerance does not involve the immune system and is generally not life-threatening. However, if someone eats a food they are intolerant to, this could make them feel ill or affect their long-term health.

In theory, any food can cause a food allergy, but in fact just a small number of foods are to blame for 90% of allergic reactions to food in the UK. The 14 allergens are: celery; cereals containing gluten; crustaceans; eggs; fish; lupin; milk; molluscs; mustard; nuts; peanuts; sesame seeds; soya and sulphur dioxide.

Food labelling rules require pre-packed food sold in the UK or the rest of the European Union (EU) to show clearly on the label if it contains one of the fourteen allergens stated above.

It is essential to look carefully at the label on any pre-packed food you buy if you are buying food for someone who has an allergy or intolerance. Even if you have bought the product before, you should still check the label as the recipe might have changed.

All food businesses even charity and voluntary organisations serving loose foods must now be able to supply accurate information about menu items that contain any of the 14 allergens listed above and contained in the Food Information Regulations. These rules enable people to avoid the most common allergens. If you display foods for self-service by consumers, you should ensure that information on allergen content is readily available.

It is also important to consider the potential for cross contamination of allergens, as even tiny amounts of an allergen can cause a reaction in some individuals.

Training

Staff who prepare open high risk foods or handle food and have a supervisory role should have training to a level equivalent to the Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificate. Various organisations providing this training can be found on line.
Toilet Facilities

Adequate numbers of flush lavatories, connected to an effective drainage system, must be provided.

On 2 November 1995 the Council formally adopted the provisions of Section 20 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous) Provisions Act 1976, together with the following standards:

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Within new buildings, sanitary accommodation for the disabled must be provided (contact the Building Control Department, (01768) 817817)

The standard will apply to both licensed and unlicensed premises and assumes equal numbers of men and women.

In unlicensed premises with a capacity of twenty covers or less, one unisex toilet and a wash hand basin is acceptable.

Wash hand basins must be provided with hot and cold water, properly plumbed in and connected to the drainage system.

The standard will apply to new buildings and premises being converted to places of refreshment for the first time. In respect of existing premises undergoing major alteration or improvement work it is proposed that the standards will form the basis of discussion with the respective developers in order to determine the appropriate standards for that development.

The requirement to provide sanitary provision will apply in all places of refreshment, not withstanding the type of meal served, the number of covers or the presence of public conveniences within close proximity to the premises.

Toilets must not open directly into rooms where you handle food. There needs to be an intervening space, a lobby between the toilet compartment and the food room.
Health and Safety Topics

Overall Responsibility for Health and Safety

The main piece of health and safety legislation is the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. This sets out the general duties which employers, the self-employed, and people in control of premises have towards their employees, and others who could be affected by their work activities. It also gives employees the general duty to ensure the health and safety of themselves and each other.

The responsibility for the safe condition, maintenance and use of the hall lies with the person in ultimate control of the building, which may be the committee, the building owner or the landlord. Event organisers may also be responsible for ensuring that those attending use the hall safely. It is important that hall hirers are given sufficient information and instruction about the safe use of the hall. Both those letting the hall and those hiring it will need to have regard to the following, in varying degrees.

Risk Assessments

A risk assessment is a careful examination of what, in an activity, could cause harm to people. It helps to assess whether enough precautions are being taken or if more needs to be done to prevent harm. A 5 step approach to risk assessment is recommended:

1. Identify the hazards.
2. Decide who might be harmed, and how.
3. For each hazard evaluate the chance, big or small, of harm actually being done and whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done.
4. Record the significant findings of the risk assessment, eg the main risks and the measures taken to deal with them.
5. Review the assessment from time to time, and revise if necessary.

The significant findings of risk assessments need only be documented by law if there are 5 or more people at work in the hall. Therefore, some halls won’t need to document their risk assessments. However, it is good practice to do so, and can be helpful if an accident or problem should occur.

A simple risk assessment form and guidelines on carrying out an assessment can be obtained from the Food, Health and Safety team at Eden District Council.
First Aid

It is not a legal requirement for low risk premises to have a qualified first aider. However, they can prove extremely useful. The minimum requirement is to appoint a person to take charge of the first aid arrangements, including looking after the equipment and facilities and calling the emergency services as required. Arrangements should be made for an appointed person to be available to undertake these duties at all times. As an appointed person is not a first aider they should not attempt to give first aid for which they have not been trained. All premises must have a first aid box and equipment. Equipment in the box will vary depending on the establishment. For guidance on what to include in a first aid box please contact the Food, Health and Safety Department.

Accident Recording

All accidents should be recorded in an accident book which allows previous completed details to be kept confidential, for instance the new B510 accident book. This should be kept on the premises. Also, under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) it is a legal requirement for certain incidents to be reported on a standard form (F2508), or by telephone to the Incident Contact Centre. For details of the injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences that must be reported, a copy of the standard form or contact details of the Incident Contact Centre please contact the Food, Health and Safety Department.

Manual Handling

Some of the equipment and stock which has to be lifted and moved in village halls can be heavy, laying out bowling mats for example. When looking at these manual handling tasks, consideration should be given to the whole task, rather than just lifting. Things such as lifting loads away from the body, excessive vertical lifts, twisting, stooping, pulling, pushing (these things relating to “the task”), heavy, bulky, unstable items (these things relate to “the load”), the working environment and the individual’s capability need to be taken into account when deciding how to move something.

When managing risk from manual handling there are three key steps to take:

1. avoid the need for manual handling, so far as is reasonably practicable;
2. assess the risk of injury from any hazardous manual handling that can’t be avoided; and
3. reduce the risk of injury from manual handling, so far as is reasonably practicable.

The leaflet “Manual handling at work: A brief guide” provides useful information on assessing and reducing risk from manual handling. Copies can be obtained from the HSE website or the Food, Health and Safety team.
Slips and Trips

Recent statistics have shown that slips, trips and falls on the same level account for over a third of all injuries reported to the HSE and local authorities. Such injuries may be prevented by assessing risk and taking simple, cost-effective steps such as the following:

- Use slip resistant surfaces, gratings or put down mats in areas prone to contamination, for instance at access doors when the weather is wet.
- Clean up spillages, spilled drinks for example, promptly and use a dry mop instead of wet mopping as it cleans up spills faster.
- Floors and shoes should be slip resistant as far as possible.
- Floors should be even and free from holes.
- Gangways should be well marked and lit and access routes free from trip hazards, eg trailing cables.
- Stairs should be well constructed and lit and fitted with handrails.
- Any changes in floor level should be clearly differentiated, for instance many places have white edging around the edge of stages.

Electrical Safety

Poor electrical installations and faulty equipment can lead to fires, injuries and even death. It is recommended that those in control of the hall (committee) arrange for the electrical installation to be checked by a competent person every 5 years (or such other time that the contractor specifies). It is also recommended that routine, periodic checks should be carried out of all portable electrical equipment (eg kettles, lamps, heaters, etc) annually by a competent and responsible person. The installation check and Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) should be recorded. Anything with faults should be taken out of use until made safe for use.

Simple checks should be carried out regularly on all portable appliances and extension leads and these can be done by anyone with enough knowledge and experience to know what to look for.

Switch the item off, disconnect the plug and look for signs of:

- Damage to the covering;
- Damage to the plug;
- Non-standard joint, ie taped joints in the cable;
- Exposure of the coloured insulation wires;
- Equipment being used in unsuitable conditions, for example, a wet environment;
- Damage to the equipment itself;
• Overheating (burn marks or staining).

The plug can also be checked for:

• A correct rated fuse is being used;
• The cord grip is holding the outer part (sheath) of the cable tightly;
• There is no sign of internal damage, overheating or entry of liquid, dust or dirt.

Residual Current Devices (RCDs) should be fitted on installations or equipment where necessary to protect operators of certain equipment like amplified equipment, water pressure cleaners and outdoor equipment. It may be a requirement of the premises licence that such devises are fitted to certain plug points.

**Gas Safety**

Any gas appliances should be routinely maintained by a competent person who is Gas Safe registered. Certificates should always be obtained for such checks. It is recommended checks are carried out annually. All gas cylinders should be stored correctly, guidance is available from the Food, Health and Safety team.

**Chemical Safety**

When working with chemicals it is important to consider if the chemical is harmful. Obtain the safety data sheet from the supplier of each harmful chemical, display the data sheet and decide if any precautions need to be taken when using it, for instance does the supplier recommend users wear gloves, goggles. Consideration should be given to substituting the harmful chemical for a less harmful one or restricting its use. Safety data sheets are helpful in considering what precautions are needed and are also an essential piece of information if medical treatment is required, if a chemical splashes in someone’s eye, is swallowed or contacts the skin. Chemicals must be stored securely and must not be accessible to people who don’t know how to use them, and particularly to children.

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) sets out basic measures for employers and employees to take to control exposure to hazardous substances and to prevent ill health. Even if no one is employed to work at the hall it is good practice to follow the steps of a COSHH assessment. For more information on COSHH assessments please contact the Food, Health and Safety Department for an information leaflet.

**Grounds Maintenance**

Many village halls have grounds that are looked after by committee members or caretakers. There are many areas of risk involved in grounds maintenance, manual handling, maintenance and use of machinery, chemical and public safety. If ground maintenance is an activity carried out at the hall please contact the Food, Health and Safety Department and an information pack can be provided.
Asbestos

Inhaling asbestos fibres can lead to asbestos related diseases, mainly cancers of the lungs and chest lining. Asbestos is harmful when it is disturbed, and fibres are released for instance in maintenance work. Asbestos can be found in a variety of building materials, pipe and boiler lagging, ceiling tiles and dry wall lining. Owners, occupiers and managers of non-domestic premises have a legal duty to manage the risk from any asbestos containing material (ACM). The duty to manage will help people such as plumbers and electricians who could be exposed to asbestos fibres while carrying out maintenance work. To manage the risk those in control of the building must:

1. Find out if there are any ACMs in the premises, where they are and in what condition.
2. Presume any unknown materials are ACMs.
3. Make and keep an up to date record of the location and condition of ACMs on a drawing of the building (or record that none have been found).
4. Assess the risk from the material.
5. Prepare a plan that sets out how the risk will be managed.
6. Put the plan into action.
7. Review and monitor the plan.
8. Provide information on the location and condition of the material to anyone likely to work on it or disturb it, any maintenance contractors and the fire service. Health and safety inspectors also have the right to see the asbestos plan. If the ACM is in good, sound condition then no further action needs to be taken. However, the condition of the ACM must be reviewed on a regular basis. Any work on ACMs should be carried out by a licensed and certified contractor, unless it is asbestos cement which can be worked on without a licence.

Guidance on managing asbestos in buildings is available from the Food, Health and Safety team.

Working at Height

Falls from height are the most common cause of workplace fatalities; the main cause of all injuries is falls from ladders. Ladders should only be used for one-off, irregular work like changing a light bulb. Any longer term work over 2m high, for example decorating, roof work, should be carried out using a properly constructed platform with handrails, toe bars and proper ladder access. A free booklet ‘Safe use of ladders: A brief guide’ is available from the HSE website.

When working at height make sure the ladder is well maintained and checked before use. Ladders should also have a load restriction. Fragile walls, beams, roofs should also be marked. When working at height it is often best to work in pairs.
Fire Safety and Emergency Evacuation

Fire safety is obviously important in village halls. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 has replaced most fire safety legislation. It requires that any person who has some sort of control in premises must take reasonable steps to reduce the risk from fire and make sure people can safely escape if there is a fire.

The following example of how to carry out a risk assessment is taken from the HM Government publication ‘A short guide to making your premises safe from fire’ but in complicated premises it might be appropriate to get specialist advice from a competent person.

An example of how to carry out a simple risk assessment

Step 1 – Identify the hazards within the premises

Identify:
- sources of ignition such as naked flames, heaters or some commercial processes;
- sources of fuel such as built-up waste, display materials, textiles or overstocked products; and
- sources of oxygen such as air conditioning or medicinal or commercial oxygen supplies.

Step 2 – Identify people at risk

Identify those people who may be especially at risk such as:
- people working near to fire dangers;
- people working alone or in isolated areas (such as in roof spaces or storerooms);
- children or parents with babies; and
- the elderly or infirm and people who are disabled.

Step 3 – Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk

Evaluate the level of risk in the premises. Remove or reduce any fire hazards where possible and reduce any risks identified. For example:
- replace highly flammable materials with less flammable ones;
- make sure flammable materials are kept separate from sources of ignition; and
- have a safe-smoking policy.

When the risks have been reduced as far as possible, assess any risk that is left and decide whether there are any further measures which need to taken to make sure a reasonable level of fire safety is provided.
It is impossible to give detailed guidance for every type of premises but the minimum which might be considered would include the following:

- A suitable fire-detection system, which could range from a shouted warning to an electrical detection and warning system. Whatever system you have, it must be able to warn people in all circumstances.

- A way of fighting a small fire. It may be acceptable to have multi-purpose fire extinguishers with a guaranteed shelf life. As a rule of thumb you should have one extinguisher for every 200 square metres (m²) of floor space with at least one on each floor.

- Safe routes for people to leave the premises. The ideal situation is when there is more than one escape route from all parts of the premises, although this is not always possible.

  If only one route is available, it may be necessary to make it fire resisting (protected) or install an automatic fire-detection system.

  The distance people need to go to escape (the travel distance) should be as short as possible. The travel distance should be measured from the farthest point in a room to the door to a protected stairway or, if there is no protected stairway, to the final exit from the building.

  If there is only one escape route, the travel distance should not normally be more than 18 metres. This distance should be shorter (12 metres or less) in any parts of the premises where there is a high chance of a fire starting or spreading quickly. The distance can be longer (up to about 25 metres) where the chance of a fire starting or spreading quickly is very low.

  If there is more than one escape route, the travel distance should not normally be more than 45 metres (around 25 metres in areas where the risk of fire is high and about 60 metres in areas where the risk of fire is very low).

  Stairways, corridors and areas near the fire exits should be kept clear of obstructions and material which can catch fire.

  The escape route should lead to a final exit and a safe place.

  If the stairway is not protected, the travel distance should be in line with those suggested above for single escape routes and the final exit should be easy to see and get to from the stairway at ground-floor level.

  High-risk rooms should not generally open directly into a fire-protected stairway.

  If the fire-risk assessment shows that people using any floor would not be aware of a fire, other fire-protection measures may be needed, for example, an automatic fire-detection and warning system.
Follow the above guidelines with caution. Look at each part of the premises and decide how quickly people would react to a warning of fire. If in any doubt read the more detailed guidance published by the Government or get expert advice.

- Suitable fire exit doors. Fire exit doors and any doors on the escape routes should be able to be used without a key and without any specialist knowledge.

  In premises used by the public or large numbers of people, push (panic) bars or push pads may need to be fitted.

- Other things to consider:
  - Whether emergency lighting is required.
  - Suitable fire-safety signs in all but the smallest premises.
  - Training for staff or anyone else who may reasonably be expected to help in a fire.
  - A management system to make sure that fire safety systems are maintained.

**Step 4 – Record, plan, instruct, inform and train**

Record the dangers and people who have been identified as especially at risk in step 1 and step 2. Record what was done in step 3. A simple plan can help to achieve this.

Make an emergency plan, tailored to the premises. It should include the action that needs to taken in a fire in the premises or any premises nearby. Give staff, and occasionally others, such as guests or volunteer stewards, instructions. All employees should receive enough information and training about the risks in the premises. Some, such as fire marshals, will need more thorough training.

**Step 5 – Review**

Make sure the fire-risk assessment is up to date. Re-examine it if it is suspected that it is no longer valid, such as after a near miss and every time there is a significant change to the level of risk in the premises. This could include:

- if more materials which can catch fire easily are stored;
- a new activity starting; or
- a change in the type or number of people using the premises.

As mentioned above, this is only a very simple example. Further information can be obtained by using the website detailed at the end of this document but you may wish to consider getting some expert advice since fire safety is so important.
Sources of Additional Information

Information on the topics included in this leaflet are available from the Food, Health and Safety Section, see contact details below. There are also a number of free leaflets which can be accessed from the Eden District Council website.

Also, downloadable information is available from:

**Food Standards Agency**
www.food.gov.uk

**Health and Safety Executive**
www.hse.gov.uk

**Gov.uk**
For further information on fire safety law and guidance please use the search facility on the below website.
www.gov.uk

ACTion with communities in Cumbria – Support for your Community Building

**ACTion with communities in Cumbria** is the Rural Community Council for the County of Cumbria. It is a registered charity (No 1080875) responsible for the delivery of a wide range of advice, information and support services to rural communities. It was established 54 years ago and is part of a national network of Rural Community Councils across rural England.

The Community Buildings Service operates within the ACTion for communities in Cumbria Team, offering advice (including village hall guidance documents) and support to Management Committees, from queries on management requirements to fundraising strategies and also runs training workshops for Management Committees. For further details telephone 01228 817224 or email info@cumbriaaction.org.uk.

For further information

- **Contact:** Food, Health and Safety Team
- **Address:** Environmental Services Section, Eden District Council, Mansion House, Penrith CA11 7YG
- **Telephone:** 01768 212491
- **Email:** env.health@eden.gov.uk
- **Website:** www.eden.gov.uk