

Food Safety Newsletter

Summer 2022

Welcome!

Welcome to the City of Rockingham's food safety newsletter. This newsletter aims to provide current food safety and regulatory information to food handlers and food businesses within the City. Please contact customer@rockingham.wa.gov.au if you have any feedback or suggestions for future editions of the food safety newsletter.

Topics



The use of hand sanitiser by food handlers



Food safety after a power outage



Temperature checks of fridges and display units



Use by dates and storage labelling

The use of hand sanitiser by food handlers

The COVID-19 pandemic saw a rise in the use of alcohol-based hand sanitisers to maintain good hand hygiene, but can sanitiser be used as a substitute for effective hand washing in a commercial food premises? Unfortunately not, for the following reasons:



Hand sanitisers may not be effective when hands are visibly soiled or greasy (i.e. with food residue or oil),



Hand sanitisers cannot remove or inactivate chemicals on hands (i.e. after using chemicals to clean the kitchen),



Hand sanitisers may cause chemical contamination of food if they are not absorbed before food handling activities are commenced.

Washing hands with soap and warm water, using the correct hand washing technique, is the most effective way to maintain good hand hygiene for food handling activities.



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Food safety after a power outage

The increased demand for electricity during summer can sometimes lead to a power outage. It is important that food businesses have a system in place to ensure that any food that is sold is safe and that premises are ready to re-open following an outage.

Things to consider:

- Is there hot water available for hand washing, cleaning and sanitising?
- Will any machines require emptying and cleaning before use? Slushy machines, ice machines, post mix dispensers and coffee machines may need to be emptied and cleaned if contents are stagnant.
- Were my fridges and freezers able to maintain a safe temperature during the outage? When the power comes back on, it is best to check the internal temperatures of food with a probe thermometer to determine whether they were able to maintain safe temperatures.
- Follow the 2-hour/4-hour rule as a guide to whether perishable food needs to be discarded if appliances were not able to hold temperature:
 - if the power was out for less than 2 hours, food can remain refrigerated and be used
 - if the power was out between 2 and 4 hours, the food should be used immediately
 - if the power was out more than 4 hours, it is recommended that food is discarded.
- Have any frozen items started thawing or developing freezer burn? Items should be discarded if there is any indication that food has been defrosted and/or refrozen.
- Are appliances working correctly? Check the operation of any units that will be used to store or display potentially hazardous foods.
- Were my suppliers affected? Check what measures they took if they were affected by the power outage and temporarily seek an alternative supplier if necessary.
- Are my staff trained in how to keep food safe during and after a power outage? Have a plan in place that details what needs to happen during and after an outage and ensure staff know what to do.



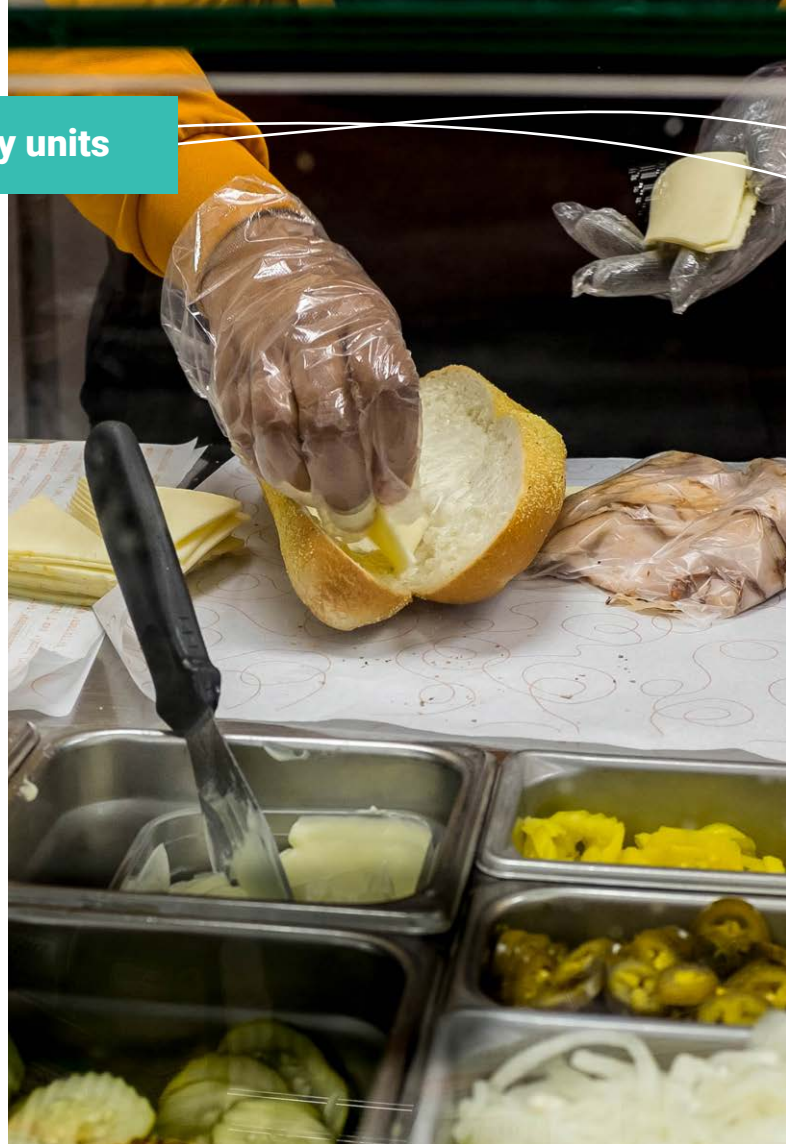
Temperature checks of fridges and display units

With warmer weather approaching it is important to check whether refrigerators can still maintain safe food temperatures below 5°C, even during busy service periods.

Use your thermometer to monitor the temperatures of food in:

- food preparation fridges
- cool rooms and other storage fridges
- display fridges.

If you find that the refrigeration unit is unable to maintain a safe temperature at the current setting, you can try to adjust the temperature setting, remove food from the unit to encourage good air flow or have it serviced or repaired. Remember, the temperature display on fridges cannot be relied upon to indicate the temperature of food in the fridge and the most accurate way to determine whether a unit is operating correctly is to conduct routine temperature checks of food within the refrigerator throughout the day.



Use by dates and storage labelling

Use by dates on food packaging are intended to indicate how long food products can be kept for before they may become unsafe to eat.

It is important for food businesses to have a good stock rotation system in place to ensure that older products are used before newer products.

Food handlers should take note of how long products can last once packaging has been opened e.g. a tub of yoghurt needs to be consumed within 5 days after opening when product directions are followed, even if the use by date indicates that the product could last longer. Products may also have a different shelf life, depending on whether they are still frozen or if they have been thawed. Food handlers can mark use by dates on packaging, charts, or labels to assist with stock rotation to ensure that only safe food is sold by the food business.

