



HUME CITY COUNCIL
**HUME FOOD
NEWS**

Spring 2020

 hume.vic.gov.au





EXHAUST CANOPIES AND FIRE SAFETY

Unfortunately there have been a number of fires in our food premises in recent years, a few of which have started in or spread to the exhaust canopies from cooking equipment.

Exhaust canopies over cooking equipment have a grease build-up, which holds food and other particles to the surface. This leads to the filters becoming clogged and a coating of grease and fat building up on the inside and outside surfaces of the canopy.

It is very important to ensure that the exhaust canopy above cooking equipment in any food premises is routinely cleaned, as well as surfaces between the cooking equipment and exhaust canopy.

The cleaning schedule should include the whole exhaust system including:

- the internal and external surface of the canopy
- the exhaust filters
- the condensation gutter
- any light fittings
- the ductwork

While some of the above can be cleaned by the business, some of the more difficult areas to access (such as the ductwork) should be cleaned by specialist trades people.

The type and quantity of cooking will affect how often you need to clean your ductwork. Annually may be sufficient for most businesses. However, some premises (such as charcoal chicken shops) will require more regular cleaning, possibly as often as every six months.

It's not just about being clean, it's also about the safety of you, your staff and your business.

GETTING HOSPITALITY BACK IN BUSINESS

We are making it as easy as possible for traders to either start or expand their outdoor dining space, to support local hospitality businesses in the recovery from COVID-19.

This means that cafés and restaurants may be able to temporarily expand their dine-in option outside either along the footpath or another public open space following approval of a temporary permit and in consultation with Council, in order to maximise the number of customers that are able to be seated.

To further support our local traders, there is no cost for this temporary permit as we have waived all applicable fees and we will fast-track the application process.

The Victorian Government is also providing grants of up to \$5,000 to assist businesses with purchasing items for outdoor dining such as umbrellas, outdoor furniture, screens and other equipment. Visit business.vic.gov.au/grants to find out more and apply.

A temporary outdoor dining permit is required for any of the following:

- To introduce or expand your dining area onto the footpath
- To take over an on-street car parking space immediately outside your business
- To join with adjacent businesses to take over sections of footpaths, on-street car parking, laneways or another Council space.

Once you submit your application, a Council officer will contact you to discuss your plans with you and help make them a reality.

Visit hume.vic.gov.au/outdoordining for further information. You can also contact the Outdoor Dining Permit team at outdoordining@hume.vic.gov.au or by calling 9205 2200.



FOOD ACT REGISTRATION COSTS WAIVED FOR 2021

As part of our response to COVID-19, Hume City Council is waiving the Renewal of Registration fees for all premises registered under the Food Act for the registration period 1 January to 31 December 2021.

Registration renewals will be issued in November as they normally are. However, there will be no fee attached. Business proprietors are still required to review business details on the renewal application and notify Council of any changes that may be required.



KEEPING DUMPSTER LIDS CLOSED

Keeping dumpster lids shut will avoid providing a source of food for pests and prevent unpleasant odours coming into your business.

Most food premises have a medium or large dumpster around or behind their food premises. Some may have a shared bin for several shops.

It is important to keep the lid closed at all times for a number of reasons.

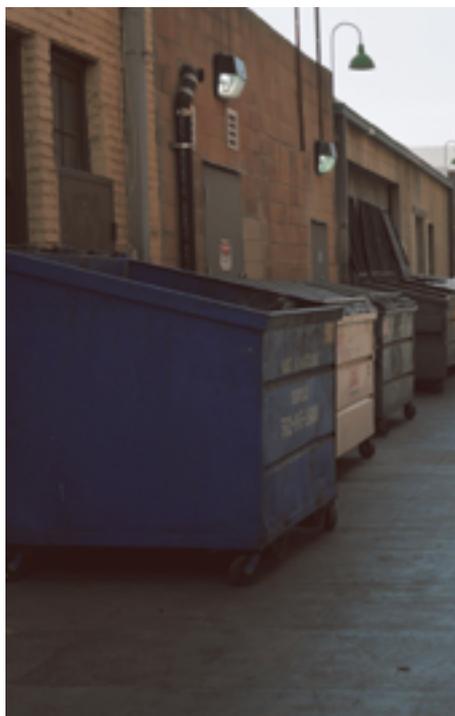
Sometimes the bin may be in view for your customers to see, even if it is only from the car park. Odours from an open bin containing decaying waste may drift into your food premises, if your bin is not regularly collected.

Leaving this bin open provides easy access for birds, which can pick out rubbish and strew it around the bin, inevitably attracting mice and rats.

Keeping dumpster lids closed will also prevent litter from being windblown, and creating an unsightly mess around your premises.

Ensure your bin is collected regularly before it gets full to make sure you can keep it closed.

You should also keep the bin area clear of rubbish, litter or too many recyclables. Empty boxes can deteriorate very quickly and, when they accumulate, they can harbour pests such as cockroaches or rodents.



CONCERNS ABOUT COVID-19 ON FOOD PACKAGING DEBUNKED

Authorities have advised it is highly unlikely that COVID-19 could be transmitted in packaging in response to recent concerns from New Zealand and China.

Concerns about the potential of transmission through packaging mounted in New Zealand as the country experienced its first outbreak in over 100 days in mid-August.

One of the cases included a worker at a company that transports and stores goods at controlled temperatures and handled frozen foods for grocery stores and other food service companies. Health officials trying to identify where the cases could have come from explored the potential of COVID-19 being spread on the packaging of frozen food.

However, Amanda Kvalsvig, an epidemiologist at the University of Otago Wellington, said there is no evidence for that and it remains only a "low possibility".

In Shenzhen and Xian, China, city food inspectors reported finding traces of the coronavirus on packaging from imported food items. However, workers who came into contact with the items were tested and none had contracted COVID-19.

The World Health Organization (WHO) addressed these findings and has confirmed that there is no evidence that food products or the food chain is contributing to the spread of COVID-19.

WHO's head of emergencies program Mike Ryan told a briefing in Geneva that, "People should not fear food, or food packaging or processing or delivery of food."

COVID-19 is spread mainly from person to person through contact with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze.

This information is the basis for the safety measures being put in place in Australian food businesses, such as mandatory masks, screens and physical distancing.

For more information about keeping your business safe, visit business.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-safe-business

This article was adapted from Worries Persist About COVID-19 Transmission on Packaging, published by the Australian Institute of food safety (foodsafety.com.au) on Friday 14 August 2020; as well as Did we ever find out how New Zealand's coronavirus outbreak started? published by ABC News (abc.net.au) on Tuesday 1 September 2020.

HANDLING READY-TO-EAT FOOD

Foods such as sandwiches, cakes and pastries that won't undergo any further cooking should only be handled with utensils, such as tongs.

Touching these foods with your hands results in directly contaminating a product that will not have an additional 'kill step' (such as cooking) to help lower the number of bacteria present.

Ensure you have a sufficient number of tongs or other utensils to help prepare your sandwiches and service food from displays.

It is recommended that each ingredient/area have its own dedicated set of utensils, this will also give a good impression to customers potentially resulting in a better business.



Know your bacteria



TOXINS IN SEAFOOD

What toxins can be associated with seafood?

- Amnesic shellfish toxin
- Diarrhoeic shellfish toxin
- Neurotoxic shellfish toxin
- Paralytic shellfish toxin
- Ciguatoxins
- Histamine

What illness does it cause?

- Amnesic shellfish poisoning, diarrhoeic shellfish poisoning, neurotoxic shellfish poisoning and paralytic shellfish poisoning are caused by the respective shellfish toxins listed above.
- Ciguatera (or ciguatera fish poisoning) is caused by ciguatoxins.
- Scombroid fish poisoning is caused by histamine.
- None of these illnesses are nationally notifiable and don't need to be reported to health authorities unless there is an outbreak.

What are the symptoms?

Amnesic shellfish poisoning

Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhoea, headaches, confusion and seizures and usually begin within one or two days of eating toxic shellfish.

The illness can be severe and cause coma and death.

Diarrhoeic shellfish poisoning

Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhoea and headache and start within 30 minutes to 15 hours of eating toxic shellfish.

The illness usually lasts up to three days.

Neurotoxic shellfish poisoning

Symptoms include numbness and tingling of lips, fingers and toes, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

The illness usually only lasts a few days.

Paralytic shellfish poisoning

Symptoms are similar to neurotoxic shellfish poisoning (see above) but more severe and begin half an hour to two hours after eating toxic shellfish.

The illness can be serious and cause paralysis, respiratory problems and death.

Ciguatera fish poisoning

Symptoms include tingling and numbness in fingers, toes and face; burning sensation or pain on contact with cold water; joint and muscle pains and weakness; nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, headache, fatigue and fainting. In severe cases, respiratory problems and paralysis can occur. Symptoms start between 1 and 48 hours after eating toxic fish.

Gastrointestinal symptoms usually last a few days but neurological symptoms may last several weeks or months.

Scombroid fish poisoning

Symptoms include a peppery or metallic taste, flushing of the upper body, itching, headache, dizziness, vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal cramps and start 30 minutes to a few hours after eating toxic fish and last a day or two. In severe cases, people can have difficulty breathing and low blood pressure.

Who can get sick?

Anyone who eats contaminated fish or shellfish.

Where do these toxins come from?

The four shellfish toxins listed are produced by certain marine algae. These toxins can build up in shellfish as they feed on the algae, especially during algal blooms (or 'red tides'). Common shellfish that can be contaminated with these toxins include clams, oysters, mussels, scallops and crabs.

Ciguatoxins come from marine algae that are eaten by fish in and around coral reefs. These toxins build up and become more potent in the bigger fish that feed on contaminated smaller ones. Fish that can contain ciguatoxins include Chinaman fish, red bass, some wrasse, tropical snappers and coral trout.

Histamine is produced by bacteria in particular types of fish (usually in the Scombridae and Scomberesocidae families). When these fish are not properly chilled (straight after capture or in storage before eating) the bacteria can grow and produce high amounts of histamine. Fish that can contain histamine include mackerel, tuna, sardines, anchovy and marlin.

How can people get sick?

- by eating contaminated fish and shellfish
- by eating fish that has not been properly chilled.

Cooking or freezing seafood will not remove the toxins.

How can illness be prevented?

- Buy seafood from a trusted supplier.
- Keep seafood cold (5°C or colder) – refrigerate immediately after buying it; if it's frozen, thaw it in the fridge; and if you catch your own fish, chill it on ice immediately.
- Avoid eating large fish from warm ocean waters, especially the head, roe or organs.
- If harvesting shellfish or reef fish yourself, check with local authorities which species and waters are safe for harvesting.

Source: foodstandards.gov.au

