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ACS | advice

MANAGING FOOD SAFETY AND HYGIENE

All convenience stores sell food, either wrapped, loose or heated to their customers. Food safety and hygiene laws can be seen as complex and this guide provides an overview of what is expected of you as a business owner.

1. INTRODUCTION

Main principles

Your obligations to customers with regard to food safety and hygiene are mainly contained in the Food Safety Act 1990, Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013, Food Hygiene (Scotland) Regulations 2006, Food Hygiene (Wales) Regulations 2006, Food Hygiene Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 and the EU Food Information for Consumers Regulation (EU FIC).

The most important things to know about selling food are:

- The food you sell must be safe for customers to eat.
- Allergenic ingredients must be listed for customers to see.
- You need to have a 'documented food safety management system' in place to ensure that your business complies with procedures in place.
- Your staff must be trained on how to comply with the law.
- Your business MUST be registered with your local council environmental health office before it can sell food.

Getting started

The first step to managing food safety and hygiene is to consider the foods you are selling or wish to sell, and how they are being stored. Some of the most common issues are set out on pages 4-5 and this guide includes a template food management system for you to download and complete.

Generally speaking, the more involvement you have in the preparation of food (making sandwiches, heating pies) the more you will have to do.

Getting outside help

Any person starting or taking over a food business should contact the environmental health service at their local council. The council will require you to register with them and should also be able to provide you with a range of additional advice.

Written food management system

You must have a written food safety management system in place which you can download here: <http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/caterers/sfbb/sfbbretail>

You will need to complete the safe methods sections so that the system reflects your own practices.

You may already have a system in place, or be part of a chain that provides this for you.

2. ALLERGENIC INGREDIENTS

You must protect those customers that suffer from allergic reactions to food. There are 14 allergens covered by the law, they are:

- Celery
- Cereals containing gluten
- Crustaceans (crab, lobster, prawn, scampi)
- Eggs
- Fish
- Lupin (sometimes found in bread, pasta and pastries)
- Milk
- Molluscs (mussels, land snails, squid, whelks)
- Mustard
- Tree nuts - including almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios and macadamia nuts
- Peanuts
- Sesame seeds
- Soya
- Sulphur dioxide, also known as sulphites (often contained in dried fruits, wine and other alcohol)

If you are sourcing food such as sandwiches, bread, cakes and savoury products, then the suppliers of these foods are responsible for putting the required information on a label on the food. If the food is not packaged (and therefore does not have a label attached) then the supplier must provide this information separately along with the food.

You MUST then provide this information to customers so that they are aware of what allergens are contained in the food. You can do this by signposting the consumer to the fact that allergens are present, using a notice, menu, chalkboard or information pack.

If you are preparing food yourself to sell in the store (sandwiches for example) then you must either:

- A)** Package the food and put a label on it showing what allergens are present, *or*
- B)** Signpost the consumer to the fact that allergens are present, using a notice, menu, chalkboard or information pack.

Pre-packed food for direct sale (PPDS) is food that has been put into packaging before it has been offered for sale by the same food business to the final consumer.

From **1 October 2021** if you are preparing food yourself to sell in the store (e.g sandwiches) and are pre-packing it to offer it for sale (PPDS), then you must put a label on it showing the name of the food and an ingredients list including allergenic ingredients. The allergenic ingredients within the food must be emphasised every time they appear in the ingredients list, eg by underlining, use of bold or contrasting colour.

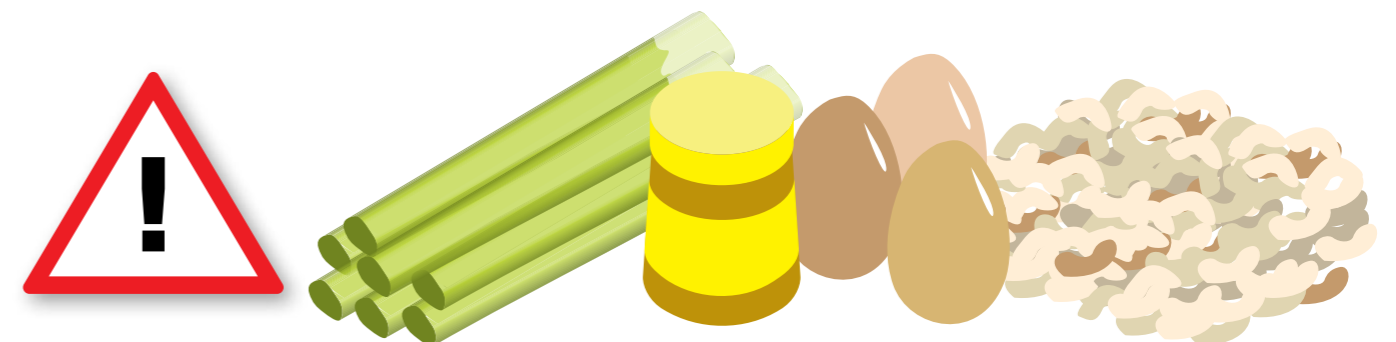
The list needs to be headed by the word 'ingredients' followed by a list of all the ingredients in descending order by weight.

Compound ingredients are ingredients that are made up of more than one ingredient. All the components of the compound ingredient must be declared in brackets immediately after the compound ingredient appears in the ingredient list; the list should be in descending order of weight and emphasise any allergens.

You can still sell unpackaged food and food packed at the consumer's request, but you must ensure allergen information is available to the customer before sale in the usual way.

Food business operators who do not comply with allergen legislation requirements may be subject to prosecution, both under criminal or civil law. Criminal offences may result in a term of imprisonment

Further allergen guidance can be found here: <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-information-for-pre-packed-and-loose-foods>



3. HOW TO MANAGE FOOD SAFETY AND HYGIENE RISKS

Look closely at your shop and stock area and think about what the food safety and hygiene risks are. Do you have the correct and enough storage space for refrigerated, frozen and shelf stable products? Is there adequate pest proofing and waste storage / removal? Think about whether you have the right procedures in place. Think about whether your members of staff are sufficiently trained for the food safety and hygiene tasks that they may be asked to carry out in your shop. This illustration sets out the main areas that a convenience store must address regarding food safety. It is not intended to be a definitive list.

TEMPERATURE CHECKS

Food temperatures should be checked daily to ensure that food is being kept below 8 degrees C and records of these checks must be maintained.

HANDLING CASH

In practice the risks of transferring pathogenic bacteria from handling foods and cash is very slim, but it is a common complaint and good practice to separate these activities. Where possible separate staff should handle open high risk foods and cash / card readers. If this is not possible staff must wash hands in between handling cash / card readers and open foods, or separate the two activities using gloves or utensils such as tongs, spoons or food wrapping, to handle food.

HOT FOODS

Hot foods must be stored or displayed at temperatures above 63 degrees C, a probe thermometer should be used and records of these checks maintained. If the hot food is displayed at temperatures below 63 degrees C then it must be disposed of within two hours.

BEST BEFORE / USE BY DATES

Most prepacked foodstuffs must carry a date of minimum durability. This can be either a 'best before' date or a 'use by' date. These date marks must be in a prominent place on the label, if this is difficult the manufacturer must state where the date can be found, for example best before: see date on lid.

A 'use by' date must be used for food which is highly perishable and is likely, after a short period, to become an immediate danger to human health. Examples are cooked meat and some ready prepared meals. 'Use by' dates are made up of either a day and month or a day, month and year. It is an offence to sell or display for sale any food after its 'use by' date.

'Best before' dates are an indicator of quality not safety. Food that has passed its best before date may be sold at a reduced price to prevent wastage.

CHILLED STORAGE

Ready to eat foods such as sandwiches, milk, yoghurts, cheese, cooked meats and ready meals must all be kept below 8 degrees C. Temperature checks should be carried out with a probe on a daily basis and recorded.

HAND WASHING

Staff toilets must have a wash basin with antibacterial soap, hot and cold running water and suitable hand drying facilities.

STORE ROOM

Food must not be kept on the floor of the store room - shelving, cupboards or roll cages must be used instead.

WASTE

Keep waste well away from food. Waste must be stored in lidded containers to avoid contamination with food.

COVERING FOODS

All foods must be protected from the risk of contamination. This means it must be stored wrapped, boxed or in lidded containers. Food left open on display must be either protected by a screen or be covered by a lid, mesh cover or cling-film, etc.

CROSS CONTAMINATION

Raw food (such as uncooked sausages) and ready to eat foods (such as sandwiches and pies) must be stored and handled separately. Members of staff must wash their hands with antibacterial soap between handling raw food and ready to eat food.

HOT FOODS

If you are cooking on site, ensure food is cooked to a core temperature of 75 degrees C for at least 30 seconds. A probe thermometer should be used to check temperatures and results recorded.

PEST CONTROL

All food areas must be free from pests, including vermin and flying insects. You should seek the advice of a professional pest control company.

WEIGHING SCALES

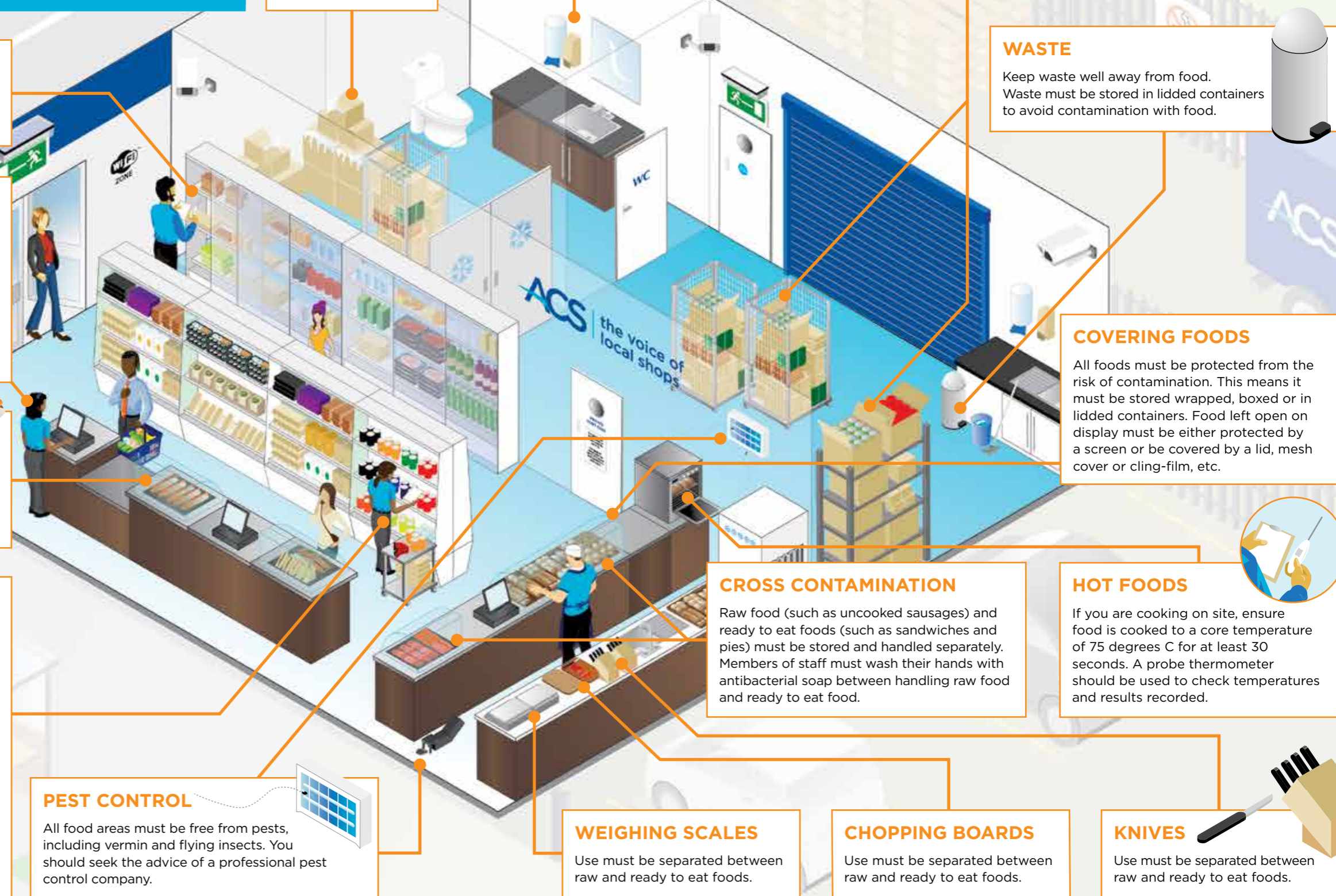
Use must be separated between raw and ready to eat foods.

CHOPPING BOARDS

Use must be separated between raw and ready to eat foods.

KNIVES

Use must be separated between raw and ready to eat foods.



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is provided by the Association of Convenience Stores in consultation with Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards and Woking Borough Council. It was last updated in January 2021. Please refer to the ACS website for the most current version of this guidance.

ACS Primary Authority Scheme

This advice was developed by ACS, Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards, Woking Borough Council and Surrey Fire and Rescue Service; as part of a dedicated primary authority scheme. This means that all the advice that has this mark against it is 'Assured Advice'.

Assured Advice means that if you adopt this policy in your business, then it must be respected by all other local authorities and they cannot ask you to adopt a different policy.



This guide covers a range of different issues of best practice and law. Those that qualify as assured advice are marked by this hallmark.

To benefit from assured advice you must sign up to the ACS scheme. All ACS members can sign up to the ACS Primary Authority Scheme for details of how to join up visit www.acs.org.uk/advice

CONTACT

For more details on this guidance, contact a member of the ACS team on 01252 515001.

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