

 <b>West Lothian Council</b>	<b>Environmental Health</b>		<b>SUBJECT:</b> <b>CHOOSING YOUR SUPPLIERS</b>
	4	Food Safety/Food Hygiene	<b>NUMBER:</b> FH07
<b>Reviewed:</b> 24/12/2007		Health & Safety	
		Public Health	
<b>STATUS:</b> TRADE ADVICE		Pollution Control	
		Pest Control/Dog Warden	

## Information Sheet FH07

### Choosing Your Suppliers

#### What's the problem?

As the Food Business Operator you are responsible for all the food operations within the business. This means that you must:

- Decide which food-handling steps are critical to ensuring food safety
- Identify, implement and maintain suitable control measures to ensure food safety

The first food-handling step in the majority of businesses is placing orders or purchasing directly from suppliers. The choice of suppliers is very important, as using a poor supplier may cause not only food safety problems, but many others too. Remember that it is on your raw ingredients that you build your business and reputation.

Listed below are a few of the possible food safety problems (hazards) that may arise if your choice of supplier is poor.

- Food with high levels of bacteria, because it has not been kept at the right temperature
- Food contaminated by poor hygiene practices, pests, physical contamination, chemicals etc.
- Short dated or out of date food
- Food with poor appearance, taste or smell
- Rapid spoilage, and hence waste
- Incorrectly labelled food

As can be seen, it is essential that businesses choose their suppliers carefully.

#### Choosing Your Suppliers

Many of the problems outlined above can be overcome by using a few selected suppliers. You should choose those who have the knowledge, facilities and practices to ensure the safety of their food. Remember that they too have a responsibility to carry out a Food Safety Hazard Analysis.

As a minimum, you should ensure that your supplier is registered as a food business with their local council. If they are not registered, Environmental Health may not regularly inspect

them. You may check that a company is registered by contacting your proposed supplier's local council.

A number of ways of selecting a supplier with good standards include:

- Asking if the company has a written Food Safety Policy, including a Hazard Analysis or Risk Assessment
- Asking what part of their Hazard Analysis ensures that they deliver a safe product. If their answer isn't what you would expect or desire, change your supplier.
- Finding out if a suitable pest control contract is in place
- Finding out what level of training is given to staff
- If products require refrigeration, check to see if the company has the ability to keep food at a suitable temperature during transport
- Arranging to visit the premises to see operations for yourself
- Asking other businesses if they have had any problems with your proposed supplier

One good way of finding out some of this information is to make up a questionnaire, that you request suppliers to complete

### **Getting Food the Way You Need It**

You may also request that the company supply food in a way that suits your business. Examples include:

- Deliveries made when staff are present and at the required interval
- Deliveries in suitable quantities
- Food packaged according to your needs
- Specifying a minimum shelf life
- Specifying the delivery temperature and the use of temperature controlled vehicles.

### **Further help**

Remember it is your responsibility to ensure that the ice food served to your customers is safe and wholesome. If you would like help, or need any further advice, then please contact us on 01506 282500 or [environmentalhealth@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:environmentalhealth@westlothian.gov.uk)