

food safety complaint procedure

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedures necessary to investigate a complaint of food poisoning.

PLEASE NOTE

Restaurant Association members are strongly advised to seek guidance from the employment team on 0800 737 827.

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[PLEASE NOTE. Restaurant Association members are strongly advised to seek guidance from the employment team on 0800 737 827 if you have any employment questions.]

Does your business have a set process for dealing with general customer complaints or those alleging food poisoning? This guideline provides some procedures around dealing with complaints of this nature.

Firstly check your food control plan as this will have guidance on troubleshooting customer food complaints. If you do receive a phone call or written complaint from a customer:

1. Speak to the customer in person, and do not rely solely on written complaints, or records of conversations.
2. Treat all complaints seriously. Thank the customer for bringing the problem to your attention and listen carefully to what they have to say.
3. Treat the customer with empathy and courtesy. Apologise without apportioning blame.
4. Do not jump to conclusions, or become defensive. The more information you can get from the customer the better position you will be in to respond and it will help if they consider you are on their side.
5. It is advisable to take notes. Ask questions to clarify the situation.
6. Tell the customer how it will be handled and tell them when they can expect a response.

If a customer contacts an employer with a concern around foodborne illness they should recommend the person seeks medical advice. If it is a foodborne illness the local Public Health Unit will be contacted by their GP and that will set in motion contact with the local Council and MPI who will investigate.

The business can also contact their local council and/or Public Health Unit if they have any concerns. The Environmental Health Officer will probably visit or call the business and work with them to resolve any issues and they will also, in turn work with the local Public Health Unit and MPI if necessary.

A template form is on page 4, with explanations of each point on pages 3 & 4 of this document.

Problem / complaints form details

Details of the problem or complaint should be recorded on the problem / complaint form. The problem or complaint is categorised by management as Critical, Major or Minor.

Critical examples

- All customer complaints relating to final product such as food poisoning complaints, foreign object complaints.
- Any instance of prepared raw high risk products (that were supposed to be cooked) or that is past its shelf life and is served to a customer or is found in the preparation area ready to be served to a customer.
- Instances of cross contamination between raw and cooked food or between utensils and containers used for raw and cooked food in the preparation or food serving areas.

Major examples

- Where handling procedures could result in any of the critical situations.
- Where quality problems are found in any of the raw materials received that could impact on the final products served to customers.

Minor examples

- Lipstick on glasses.

Investigation and possible causes

Any information and / or records relating to the problem or complaint should be investigated and assessed, such as storage temperatures, conditions, cooking cycles, preparation procedures, cleaning practices, supplier quality reports staff training, the product temperature and storage history for example.

Immediate and preventative action

The immediate action taken should be recorded, such as the response to the customer. Product replacement should be documented as well as the preventative action that has been taken to prevent a recurrence of the problem or complaint. Any changes to procedures should be referenced or summarised.

Review of action taken

A management representative or someone with authority should review the action taken and should confirm whether or not the action was effective.

Target dates

A log will need to be kept of outstanding Problem / Complaint Reports or a system of keeping outstanding reports separate to Actioned Reports on file. Regular reviews of outstanding reports should be made to ensure that target dates are adhered to. The target dates decided on should reflect the Critical, Major or Minor nature of the Problem or Complaint.

Problem or complaint report form template on the following page ▼

Problem / complaint report

Raised By: _____ Report#: _____ Date: _____

Problem: Complaint Foreign Object Other

Details of Problem: Critical Major Minor

Investigation and Possible Causes: _____ Target Date: _____

Investigated By: _____ Date: _____

Immediate and Preventative Action: _____ Target Date: _____

Actioned by: _____ Date: _____

Review Of Action and Comments: _____ Target Date: _____

Reviewed by: _____ Date: _____