



And to tick off the boxes and sign to record there have been no problems that day only takes a matter of seconds – far less time consuming than the need to document individual fridge and freezer temperatures, hot food temperatures, delivery checks and so on.

By now you should have also included some checks in the 'prove it' section too – whether these are using a separate thermometer in addition to the display gauge to check refrigeration temperatures, or a probe to measure the centre temperature of a cooked dish to verify the 'safe methods' are working in your business. In addition 'extra checks' such as calibration of probe thermometers or that yearly spring clean of a stockroom should also be recorded.

Your food safety management system will be the main focus of routine food hygiene inspections over the coming years. Officers will be reading through your Safe Methods, then checking that they are happening in practice, as well as looking through the dairy to see that you have been keeping adequate records. They will also be talking to kitchen staff to check that they are familiar with the system. One further advantage of having a documented food safety management system is it should reduce the amount of time that the officer needs to spend with the food business operator or Head Chef, as much of the information which we would previously have needed from them will now be available to read in your documentation.

Aside from the fact that producing a documented food safety management system is a legal requirement, many businesses have found having an effective system to be an powerful business management tool, reducing waste and therefore costs to their business. So keep it up!

Critical issues

All food businesses need to have a documented food safety management system. However, not all need anything as detailed as a HACCP plan or even Safer Food Better Business. If your business is very low risk, for example if you are a newsagent or garage selling a small amount of food or if you prepare low risk foods such as cakes or preserves at home, and/or if you operate only infrequently, then our Food Safety Management System for Low Risk businesses is for you. This consists of just two self-duplicating A4 pages which prompt you to record how you are controlling the critical issues in your food operation. These may be accompanied, if appropriate, by some basic monitoring records, which you could record in an ordinary diary. For example if you operate a monthly lunch club, you might record the numbers that attended, what food was served, and the core temperature of the main dish.

We will be taking copies out to businesses as we visit, and posting them out with Alternate Enforcement questionnaires, but as low risk businesses come up for inspection only infrequently it may be a while before you receive a copy. If you would like to get your copy sooner please call 01473 825890 or email food.safety@babergh.gov.uk. You should complete the two pages, keep the white copy for your records and send the yellow copy back to us. If you have any queries on how you should complete it feel free to contact us on the above number for help.

