

SMOKEFREE RICHMOND LIFE AFTER THE BAN



In 2007 smoking in all enclosed public places and work places in England and Wales became illegal. This followed similar action taken in the Republic of Ireland and Scotland.

Despite the negative press generated by the pro-smoking lobby the move has been an overwhelming success and perhaps the most significant piece of public health legislation since the Clean Air Acts in the 1950s.

Very little enforcement of the law has been necessary nationally, and here in Richmond we have not had to take any formal action against individuals or businesses. This is despite Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing Officers checking for compliance at the same time as carrying out over 2,500 of their normal visits and inspections. There has been no need for any covert surveillance and it has been possible to resolve the ten complaints we have received informally.

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WINTER VOMITING

No doubt many of you have seen newspaper reports of the spread of vomiting virus cases in the UK over the winter. It is important that, in order to prevent the spread of disease, anyone who has suffered from diarrhoea and/or vomiting be kept away from areas where they may come into contact with food or vulnerable people. This would therefore include people who work in the food industry, hospitals or those who care for the young or elderly.

Current advice is that workers in these types of posts, who are suffering from diarrhoea and/or vomiting, should be excluded from food handling for 48 hours after their symptoms have stopped. If you are in any doubt please check with us first.

OFFICE MOVE

As part of a programmed reduction in expenditure we are soon going to be relocating to the Civic Centre in Twickenham. It is expected that the move will be taking place in October 2009 but is subject to change.

At the moment you can still find us located at Parkshot along with the Licensing and Trading Standards services. Our offices are open from 9am until 5pm Monday to Friday.

Our current contact details are detailed below.

*Commercial Environmental Health
7B Parkshot
Richmond
TW9 2RT*

Tel 020 8891 7994
Fax 020 8891 7726
Email commercialeh@richmond.gov.uk



*Oak processionary moths
decimate one of the borough's
beloved oaks*

INSECT INVASION - THE OAK PROCESSIONARY MOTH

Shaun Case from the Environmental Health team provides some information on the subject after his struggle with the pest.

“In 2006, following complaints of ‘itchy rash’ from residents at a housing development in Kew, it was discovered that Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) were breeding in Richmond.

A native of southern Europe, the caterpillar of OPM emerges in the spring and feeds on oak leaves, sometimes causing significant damage to the tree. The moth earned its name as the caterpillars follow nose to tail around the tree as they feed.

As well as being a pest of oak trees the caterpillar is a public health pest as each is covered with thousands of tiny hairs, which easily break off and become airborne. Contact with the hairs can cause severe skin irritation, breathing difficulties and itchy eyes which can occur some distance from the infested tree. The caterpillars remain active between April and August.

Currently OPM activity has only been found in a confined area. Richmond Council is committed to preventing the spread of this pest, but needs the assistance of the public. If you or your staff spot this pest please report it to Richmond Council on 08456 122 660.”

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A recent Department of Health report on the ban provided the following statistics:

- 98% of premises and vehicles are smoke free compliant
- 87% comply with the signage requirements
- 76% of the people and 81% of the businesses questioned supported the ban
- 70% of those questioned thought the ban has had a positive effect on health

The key improvements have been:

- Improved air quality in pubs, clubs and restaurants – a cleaner environment
- Exposure of staff and the public to second hand smoke significantly reduced – health benefits
- 20% increase in the uptake of the NHS Stop Smoking Service

**If you want to give
up smoking or help
your employees to
quit, contact the
Kingston and
Richmond Stop
Smoking Service
on 0800 085 2903 or
email at**

smokingteam@rtptc.nhs.uk



CONSTRUCTION NOISE AND VIBRATION

Acoustics expert Chris Hurst gives some background to the subject.

Construction sites can generate significant levels of noise and vibration and cause disturbance to residents and businesses. Hundreds of complaints have been received by the Department in the last few years. However, much of the noise generated is unavoidable and noise control methods are a balancing act between the needs of the developer to carry out the works and the rights of neighbours.

The environmental health service aims to minimise the impact of noise and vibration from such works on local residents and is responsible for the investigation of noise, smoke and dust from construction sites. The vast majority of issues are dealt with either informally or formally by the service of notices restricting operations or hours of work. It is extremely unusual for there to be a need to prosecute for breach of notice conditions but on occasion it has been necessary.

Construction works include

1. The erection, construction, alteration, repair or maintenance of buildings, structures or roads;
2. Breaking up, opening or boring under any road or adjacent land in connection with the construction, inspection, maintenance or removal of works;
3. Demolition or dredging work.

Anyone planning extensive building works, including piling, is recommended to sign up to the national Considerate Constructors scheme. For more information contact Commercial Environmental Health or visit the website at: www.considerateconstructorscheme.org.uk .

CONSTRUCTION CONTROLS

Typically the main control that is imposed on construction sites is to limit the times during which they are permitted to make noise that their neighbours can hear to:

- **Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm**
- **Saturdays 8am to 1pm**
- **Sundays and Public Holidays - no noisy activities allowed**

Some activities may be allowed outside of normal working hours when there is a good reason for this to happen. This might be for health and safety reasons or because the particular operation cannot be completed within the time normally allowed.

The Commercial Environmental Health Service will require that all contractors use the “best practical means” to minimise noise from their activities and on occasion we will also specify the level of noise or vibration which may be emitted (usually for large developments or piling works).



BASMATI RICE – ARE YOU SURE?

We carry out a regular programme of food sampling to ensure compliance with food safety and food standards. In 2008 we participated in a survey looking at the authenticity of rice sold as Basmati.

Valued for its characteristic aroma and shape of the grain basmati rice is sold at a premium. With the current international shortage of rice and the associated increases in world prices it is considered that there is currently an increased risk of Basmati substitution. It is however an offence to sell food that is not of the nature, substance or quality demanded by the consumer or to use misleading or false descriptions on labels.

Samples of Basmati rice were taken by officers from retailers and restaurants and submitted to the Public Analyst for examination. DNA testing was carried out to determine the percentage of rice that was genuine Basmati variety.

“The results were very interesting. All contained some non-basmati rice.”

Karen Alvey from the Environmental Health team

story continues below...

SAFER FOOD BETTER BUSINESS

The SFBB initiative adopted by Richmond Environmental Health is helping small businesses manage food safety.



Safer food, better business

Safer food, better business (SFBB) is an innovative and practical approach to food safety management. It has been developed to help small businesses put in place food safety management procedures and comply with food hygiene regulations.

There are a number of SFBB packs available which are designed to meet the specific needs of different food businesses. There are packs for small **catering** businesses, small **retail** businesses and restaurants and takeaways that serve different cuisines, such as **Chinese** or **Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi** and **Sri Lankan** cuisines. There is also a supplement for **care homes** that is designed to be used with the pack for caterers.

To accompany the SFBB packs an introduction to food hygiene 'Working with food? What you need to know before you start' and a **DVD guide**, available in 16 different languages, have been produced to help food businesses implement SFBB and train staff on SFBB. The guide can be viewed online at food.gov.uk/sfbbtraining or you can download a copy to your computer.

If you would like to order an SFBB pack or the DVD guide call Food Standards Agency Publications on 0845 606 0667 or email foodstandards@ecgroup.co.uk

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There is a Code of Practice on Basmati Rice which details the specific varieties of rice that are allowed to be designated as “Basmati” and sets limits for the presence of “non-basmati” varieties.

Although the majority of the rice samples were not in excess of the limits set by the Code of Practice, all contained some non-basmati rice. Of the samples taken from restaurants, two were found to have a proportion of non-basmati rice that did not conform to the Code of Practice and in the opinion of the Public Analyst rendered the rice to be not of the quality demanded. Of the retail samples, one was found to be 100% non-basmati rice and therefore not of the nature demanded. Follow up samples are to be taken of the unsatisfactory brands of rice with a view to formal action.



SCORES ON THE DOORS

For the past year the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames has been signed up to a London-wide food hygiene project.

The scheme applies to restaurants, cafes, pubs, takeaways, canteens and food shops. Essentially this means that all food premises (apart from those trading from home) have their latest results published on a centrally held website.

The existing London scheme is based upon levels of compliance with three elements of the food hygiene risk rating determined by the inspecting officer at the time of their programmed inspection. These factors are food hygiene, structure and confidence in management. These then translate into an overall score in the form a star rating from 0 stars (very poor standards and general failure to comply) to 5 stars (excellent levels of compliance).

Premises ratings are updated weekly on the web and a certificate and sticker with the appropriate rating is sent to each food business with their inspection report. The intention is that the sticker should be displayed in a prominent position, allowing customers to quickly see what the standard of hygiene is actually like. Although, at present, it is not a legal requirement for businesses to display their ratings this is one aspect currently under review.

Surveys conducted so far have shown that the website has been well-used and that the 5 star scheme is generally popular. Work is now underway with the FSA to roll out a 5 star scheme nationally (although further details are to be confirmed). You can check out food business scores at www.yourlondon.gov.uk .

COOKING ISSUES

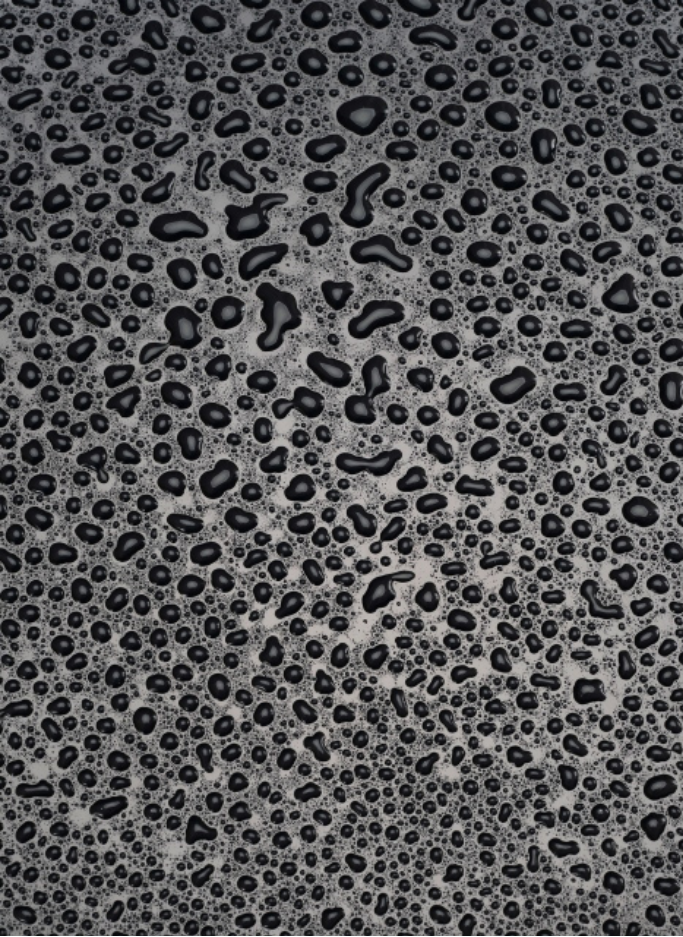
Officers have seen a small increase in popularity recently for undercooked food such as rare burgers and steak tartare to be put onto menus. Every food operator should know that minced meat products (and rolled joints) pose a risk of causing food poisoning if they have not been cooked thoroughly.

Risks of food poisoning in speciality foods, such as *Carpaccio* (sliced raw beef), can be reduced through careful preparation, for example by searing the outside of the entire fillet before preparation.

Poultry must always be cooked thoroughly until the juices run clear as there are risks from bacteria such as salmonella and campylobacter. Only whole cuts of red meats such as beef and lamb may be served rare.

As it is not good practice to use raw eggs in food or sauces that are not cooked thoroughly. Liquid pasteurised egg can be used as an alternative for many dishes or desserts and minimises the risk of food poisoning.





Most outbreaks of Legionnaire's in the UK have been linked to installations such as cooling towers

LEGIONNAIRES DISEASE

What it is and what businesses have to do.

Legionnaire's disease is caused by bacteria called *Legionella*. It thrives in warm water in pipes and tanks (20-45°C), and can be carried in the open air in invisible water droplets (aerosols). It is a disease which develops in the lungs if infected water droplets are inhaled, and can kill.

You may have heard of some high profile cases in recent years where people have died from the disease. These cases have generally been as a result of people inhaling infected aerosols from large buildings with 'wet' air conditioning systems.

'Wet' air conditioning systems are those which use water to cool the air as it is pumped around the building. If the water is not treated to prevent the growth of *Legionella* bacteria, it can build up in the system and be spread in aerosols into the open air. Wet systems are most commonly found in large commercial buildings and office blocks.

Although 'wet' air conditioning systems are the most common source of *Legionella* bacteria getting into the open air, any building with hot and cold water services has the potential for the bacteria to grow. Aerosols can still be produced by flushing toilets, and at taps and showers, thereby causing a potential risk to using users.

In general, the larger the building and the more complex the water services in your business, the greater the risk of legionella being present and the greater the need for proper management

In brief, the issues businesses need to look at are:

- Water temperature; can water be kept colder than 20°C or higher than 45°C?
- Pipe layout and design; are there any 'dead legs' (lengths of pipe where water is not regularly flushed through)?
- Water tanks – any that are open to contamination or contain sludge and or rust?
- A 'schematic' plan of your water services is always a good idea.
- A proper 'risk management' plan with an appointed manager/co-ordinator

The best source of guidance is Approved Code of Practice L8; *Legionnaire's disease; the control of legionella bacteria in water systems*. Price £8 available from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). There is also a brief guidance booklet produced by the (HSE) called; Legionnaire's disease; a guide for employers, which can be downloaded from: www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/index.htm

For printed copies of any HSE guidance and codes of practice please contact HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 2WA, tel. 01787 881165.

Visit their website at:

www.hse.gov.uk

1974
e UK Statute Law
quent amendments to the
not yet been applied to SLD for the
page on the SLD website.



Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

1974 CHAPTER 37

CONTENTS

HEALTH AND SAFETY – GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Health and safety is about sensible, proportionate actions that protect people - not unnecessary bureaucracy and paperwork.

This 10-point list shows some of the key actions required by law that apply to nearly every business.

1. **Register a new business** with the Health and Safety Executive or Environmental Health department; depending on the sort of business you have (check with us if you are unsure).
2. Take out **Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance** and display the certificate.
3. Make sure you have **someone competent to help you** meet your health and safety duties. This does not have to be an external consultant. It could even be you or one of your workers.
4. Decide how you are going to manage health and safety. This is your **health and safety policy**. A health and safety policy sets out your general approach and objectives (your vision) and the arrangements you have put in place for managing health and safety in your business. It is a unique document that says who does what, when and how. If you have five or more employees, you must write your policy down.
5. Decide what could harm people and what precautions to take. This is your **risk assessment**. A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people. It means you can weigh up if you have taken enough precautions, or if you should do more to prevent harm. **You must act on the findings of your risk assessment**, by putting sensible controls in place to prevent accidents and ill health and making sure they are followed.
6. Provide **basic welfare** facilities, such as toilets, washing facilities, drinking water, good lighting and temperature.

7. Provide free health and safety **training** for your workers. Everyone who works for you, including self-employed people, needs to know how to work safely and without risks to health.
8. **Consult** your workers on health and safety. Consultation does not mean telling workers about health and safety. It means discussing health and safety with them, allowing them to raise concerns and influence decisions.
9. Display the **health and safety law poster** or give workers a leaflet with the information. The poster includes basic health and safety information and lets people know who is responsible for health and safety in your workplace.
10. **Report** some work-related accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences, including:
 - deaths;
 - major injuries;
 - over-3-day injuries to workers
 - injuries to members of the public where they are taken to hospital;
 - some work-related diseases;
 - dangerous occurrences
 - CORGI registered gas fitters must also report dangerous gas fittings.

Please contact us if you need any more information on any of the above points or alternatively visit the HSE's website at www.hse.gov.uk



A ROUNDUP OF OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NEWS



New rules planned may provide powers for officers to impose fixed penalty fines on businesses that do not comply with hygiene and safety laws. However officers will most often be educating and warning through the use of letters and post inspection reports rather than imposing fines.



Later this year we plan to undertake a study in conjunction with Richmond schools to monitor the sound levels from portable music players.

We hope to bring you the results in the next issue but keep an eye on our website.



Three out of four sewerage blockages in the UK are caused by businesses tipping waste fats down the sink, according to the CIEH.

If you need advice on grease collection and disposal please contact us or Thames Water on 0845 9200 800.

HEALTH RISKS AND “FISH & CHIPS”

An investigation has found that people who regularly eat the nation's favourite takeaway dinner - fish and chips - could be facing health risks. Some of the fish and chip suppers tested in a recent study by Environmental Health Officers revealed that some portions contained over twice the recommended daily allowance of saturated fats; almost all having high salt contents.

A Council spokesperson for Richmond Council said:

“We are not warning people off eating fish and chips, but we are advising them that eating it regularly could mean they risk having an excessive amount of fats and salts in their diets, which can increase the risk of heart disease”.

Shop owners are being advised to pay particular attention to the temperature and freshness of their oil, the length of cooking times and the importance of allowing the food to drain before being wrapped.

Any fish and chip shop owner who wants advice on how to serve up healthier meals can telephone 020 8891 7994

STAG BREWERY TO CLOSE

It has been announced that the famous Stag Brewery in Mortlake will be closing next year. It is said that the site has been producing beer since 1497.

Over the years Environmental Health Officers have been involved with the brewery for a range of different reasons; not least with respect to that iconic odour which we are sure will be sorely missed by some. We wish all the employees of the brewery well.

Please contact us if you need this document in Braille, large print, audio tape or another language.

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