



Scrupulous cleaning and hygiene is essential in an industry where cutting corners could endanger both customers and business, says **Andrew Don**

**D**irt and contamination kills. At least, it can do. That is why anyone involved in the retailing or manufacturing of food has a huge responsibility. Get it wrong and not only will you have sick customers and the risk of litigation on your hands, your business could be forced to close. So it makes sense to get it right.

### Risks

Risks are both internal and external – internal in that they could come from the poor environment in which you store and produce items, poor controls, an inadequate cleaning regime and from your own staff's dirty habits. For hygiene in a shop or production facility is only as good as its dirtiest member of staff. How many people have you seen lick their fingers to separate paper bags before slipping in the Cornish pasties or bread, for example?

And risks are external in the form of pests, such as rodents, birds and insects, which gain access to the inside of buildings or store-rooms. You may think your property is impervious to little furry creatures that can give birth to hundreds of other furry creatures in the blink of an eye, but your property will be unusual if not at risk.

Access by all creatures great and small is made possible, for example, via door frames that have gaps, air-brick holes, gaps in perimeter building cladding, and doors and windows that are left open, says Paul Bates, managing director of pest company Cleankill. Hidden ledges on tables and recesses of trolley wheels can sometimes harbour moth larvae, and hoppers and cen-

tral motor compartments, mixers and anywhere where flour leakage can occur will be a magnet to insects.

### Legal bits

*The Industry Guide to Good Hygiene Practice – Baking Guide* was produced to help operators comply with the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995. The up-to-date legislation is Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004 on the hygiene of food-stuffs, implemented by the Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006, and the equivalent Regulations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Richard Stevenson, technical and hygiene

consultant to the National Association of Master Bakers says the *Baking Guide* can still be mostly relied upon today, although some minor updating would not be amiss.

The British Retail Consortium's *Food Industry Guide to Good Hygiene Practice: Retail* is more recent and came out in 2009. But Stevenson says the cleaning and disinfection section in the Food Standards Agency's *E.coli 0157 Control of Cross-contamination – Guidance for food business operators and enforcement authorities* provides the most current advice.

"Small businesses are generally not always completely au fait with the properties of the different cleaning chemicals they are using and there is big confusion between the difference between disinfectant, detergent and sanitiser," Stevenson says (see panel, left).

Andrew McLeod, a key account manager at Kimberley-Clark Professional, advises that, in both in retail and preparation areas, a colour-coding system should be used to segregate tasks to eliminate the risk of cross-contamination. This should also be implemented across the different tools used, from cloths and wipers to utensils, mops and buckets, to minimise the risk of items transferred from one zone to the other. He says appropriate sanitisers should be used to ensure all areas are clean and free of bacteria. And the use of dispensers to hold wipers and clothes is important to ensure they are protected and kept hygienic.

Stephen Clifford, marketing controller of Country Choice, which supplies a range of non-food products that helps retailers to keep control of food hygiene and safety in-store, says bakers should follow a documented hygiene programme to provide a safe and

### Know your cleaners

- Detergents are used for general cleaning. These do not have disinfectant properties and, if used on their own, are not able to destroy harmful bacteria such as *E.coli* 0157.
  - Disinfectants are capable of destroying harmful bacteria when applied to visibly clean surfaces at a specified dilution and contact time.
  - Sanitisers combine a disinfectant and a detergent in a single product. The same product can be used to provide a visibly clean surface and it must be used a second time to disinfect the surface.
- Source E.coli 0157 Control of Cross-contamination – Guidance for food business operators and enforcement authorities (Food Standards Agency).*





Creatures can hide in all kinds of places around a business



hygienic environment for both customers and staff (see panel) regardless of size.

### Bakers' approach

Cooks The Bakery, in Crawley, West Sussex, cleans everything daily in accordance with the cleaning schedule. But everything that comes into contact with food is cleaned as they go along. Wendy Longmate, manager, says the schedule is printed so everyone knows what they need to do to meet the satisfaction of environmental health officers (EHOs). "EHOs understand your floor cannot be spotless all day when you are cutting bread and rolls, but there is a limit they accept."

It hires a company to undertake random audits and Ecolab monitors for pests and environments that might attract them.

Beane's bakery, based in Strood, Kent, requires staff to clean up as they go along. They are responsible for their own areas and the girls mop down at the end of the day and clean down the shelves in the shop. A pensioner comes in at lunchtimes and his first job is to clean the black trays ready for the next morning. He also washes the floor every day once everyone has gone home to avoid slips and trips.

A couple come in more periodically and do the jobs that are required less frequently, such as washing the walls, and a Saturday boy helps with cleaning some of the big machines that staff cannot get to during the week. The racks are taken out in the yard monthly or bimonthly and steam-cleaned.

Owner Chris Beane says he uses bleach, but not on the tables, and a strong floor cleaner with antibacterial properties. "If we use water, it is hot and has antibacterial cleaner added to it. We buy light industrial

chemicals from a cash and carry that do a good job for us."

Greggs has a strict cleaning regime for each area of its bakeries, including regular audits to ensure compliance, and keeps comprehensive records of all cleaning processes. It conducts regular reviews when physical changes to the buildings or equipment are made. Each bakery has its own technical team, supported by centrally-based technical food safety experts, who advise local management teams in the shops and bakeries and updates them on any impending changes to food safety law.

Greggs uses in-house personnel for its regular process cleaning, but it occasionally hires external contractors to help with specialised areas of cleaning in the bakeries—such as overheads and flour silos, for example. It also hires external contractors for high-level and deep cleans in the shops. Every member of staff is trained in all hygiene duties carried out in shops and bakeries through the company's formalised training procedures.

Internal food safety auditors regularly audit the sites and shop managers carry out daily standards checks, in which hygiene is key and staff training records are regularly checked. Hand-wash stations are prevalent throughout all production areas in the shops and bakeries and segregation is in place within all bakeries to separate areas of differing hygiene requirements from each other.

Greggs says reminders of standards the company upholds are evident throughout all the production areas in both shops and bakeries covering issues such as the correct wearing of protective clothing and accessories such as hairnets and jewellery and the correct hand-washing procedures.

### Hygiene tips

- Clean hands are essential when handling or preparing food
  - Hands need to be thoroughly washed before and during food preparation
  - Use liquid hand-soap rather than bar soap
  - Use paper towels for drying hands rather than clothes or tea towels
- Incorporate a hygiene programme including safe use of chemicals that includes:

- a) Documentation to show that cleaning tasks have been completed
- b) Documented information on how to clean each piece of equipment
- c) A breakdown of daily, weekly and monthly cleaning procedures
- d) The appropriate cleaning solutions including dosage and safety information for the user.

Source: Country Choice

