

FHL GUIDE

PERSONAL HYGIENE IN SEAFOOD BUSINESSES

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Personal Hygiene in Seafood Businesses

1 INTRODUCTION

Based on the introduction of new hygiene regulations for food production from 1 March 2010, FHL has prepared a "Personal Hygiene in Seafood Businesses" guide. Meanwhile, the hygiene provisions in the quality regulations for fish and fish products of 14 June 1996 have been repealed. Previous detailed requirements for, among other things, a medical certificate for staff in businesses that process fishery products, have been replaced by the more general provisions of the EU Hygiene Package regarding goals that should be reached.

The guide was prepared by FHL together with quality managers in several member companies. The aim is to having ongoing revision of the guide in the case of amendments to relevant regulations, at least every five years.

PURPOSE

The purpose is to describe procedures for the prevention of direct or indirect transfer of human pathogens from staff and other persons to food.

The guide describes how seafood businesses can incorporate the personal hygiene requirements into their HACCP-based process control system, thereby complying with the regulations.

TARGET GROUP

The "Personal Hygiene in Seafood Businesses" guide is aimed at all businesses that process fishery products such as fish landing sites, fish slaughterhouses, filleting and processing facilities, dispatch centres for live bivalve molluscs, etc.

Primary production such as fishing vessels and aquaculture farms are not the target group, and neither are retailers, institutional households, canteens etc.

STATUS GUIDE

Compliance with the "Personal Hygiene in Seafood Businesses" guide is voluntary. But when a business has based its procedures on this guide and makes reference to it, the business will be bound to comply with it, and the guide will be a reference upon which the Norwegian Food Safety Authority may base the inspection.

THE EU HYGIENE PACKAGE CONSISTS OF THREE REGULATIONS

- The regulation of 22 December 2008 no. 1623 regarding food hygiene that implements the Regulation (EC) no. 852/2004 **(H1)**
- The regulation of 22 December 2008 no. 1624 regarding the setting of particular hygiene rules for food from animal sources that implements the Regulation (EC) no. 853/2004 **(H2)**
- The regulation of 22 December 2008 no. 1622 regarding the setting of particular rules for carrying out public controls of products from animal sources intended for human consumption that implements the Regulation (EC) no. 854/2004 **(H3)**

The EU Hygiene Package lays down rules for all food businesses, and **H1** contains general hygiene requirements for both meat businesses, seafood businesses and other food businesses.

The "Personal Hygiene in Seafood Businesses" guide is based on requirements in **H1**, Appendix II, chapter VIII regarding personal hygiene. Where relevant, the training requirements in **H1**, Appendix II, chapter XII are also included.

The following Codex Alimentarius documents are also used for reference:

- 1) Recommended International Code of Practice General principles of food hygiene, (CAC/RCP 1- 1969, rev 3-1997 and [1999]): section VII (personal hygiene)
- 2) Code of practice for fish and fishery products (CAC/RCP 52- 2003, rev 2- 2005): section 3 (pre-requisite programme)

PERSONAL HYGIENE REQUIREMENTS (H1, APPENDIX II, CHAPTER VIII)

- 1) Everyone working in a food handling area is to maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and is to wear suitable, clean and, where necessary, protective clothing.

The guide in chapter 3 describes procedures that comply with the requirements regarding personal hygiene, cleanliness and clothing. Particular emphasis is placed on hand hygiene and hand washing. There is also a point regarding procedures for visitors.

- 2) No persons suffering from or being a carrier of a disease likely to be transmitted through food or afflicted, for example, with infected cuts, skin infections, sores or

diarrhoea is to be permitted to handle food or enter any food handling area in any capacity if there is a any likelihood of direct or indirect contamination. Any person so affected and employed in a food business and who is likely to come into contact with food, is to report immediately the illness or symptoms and, if possible their causes, to the food business operator.

The guide in chapter 4 describes procedures that comply with the requirements regarding staff members who are sick. Chapter 5 describes procedures for new staff. It also includes procedures for the use of personal statements of health and health certificates, and templates have been prepared for these.

TRAINING (H1, APPENDIX II, CHAPTER XII)

Point 1: Food business operators are to ensure that food handlers are supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters commensurate with their work activity.

The guide in chapter 6 describes procedures for training new staff as well as procedures for updating knowledge. The way in which this training should be documented is also described.

2 FOOD-BORNE DISEASES

CONTAMINATION OF FOOD WITH HUMAN PATHOGENS

When working with seafood, from the raw material stage to the finished product, food contamination may occur at any stage of the process. Pathogens may come from the fish or other raw material, from the facility or the equipment, or from the staff.

RELEVANT COMMUNICABLE AGENTS

Many infectious diseases may be transmitted to people via food, and they are then called food-borne diseases. The most common pathogens that cause food-borne diseases are bacterial, viral or parasitological infections.

Of the bacterial diseases, those leading to gastrointestinal disorders represent the highest risk of cross-contamination of food with human pathogens. That sort of bacteria can lead to stomach cramps, loose bowel movements, diarrhoea and fever. The severity of the illness may vary from a single episode of diarrhoea to illness that necessitates admission to hospital. In the worst possible cases, some food-borne diseases may be fatal.

The most common bacterial gastrointestinal disorders are *Salmonella*, *EHEC*, *Campylobacter* and *Yersinia infection*.

Viruses and parasites can also be transmitted through contaminated food. The most common viral illness is Norovirus infection, which is often the cause of "Gastric flu", i.e. gastrointestinal disorder epidemics. The symptoms would be nausea, stomach cramps, diarrhoea and fever. It usually lasts about one-two days. Hepatitis A can also be transmitted by food.

A known parasite that may be transmitted via food is the single-cell parasite, *Giardia lamblia*, which in acute illness can lead to watery diarrhoea and can progress to become a chronic illness.

TRANSMISSION OF HUMAN PATHOGENS BY PERSONELL IN SEAFOOD BUSINESSES

All staff in seafood businesses that come into direct or indirect contact with unpackaged food can contaminate food and transmit human pathogens.

Persons who do not maintain an appropriate degree of personal cleanliness, who have certain illnesses or conditions, or who carry out work in an inappropriate manner, can contaminate food and transmit illness to the consumer.

Common ways of contaminating food include not washing one's hands immediately after using the toilet, or after touching different objects such as tools, devices, door handles, light switches, hand rails or when shaking hands etc., prior to contact with unpackaged seafood.

PREVENTION OF CONTAMINATION OF FOOD AND TRANSMISSION OF ILLNESS

Seafood business operators are responsible for establishing procedures in their process control system to prevent food from being contaminated with human pathogens; this obviously also applies to transmission from staff and other persons entering the food handling area. Cross-contamination of food caused by persons can be prevented in different ways. Procedures for how to comply with the personal hygiene requirements are described in the following chapters.

3 PERSONAL HYGIENE

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Protective clothing

- Work clothes should be clean and cover all personal clothing.
- Hairnets that cover all hair and ears should be used.
- Beard masks should be worn where applicable.
- Clean boots and work shoes should be worn. These should be cleaned in the same way as the floor of the food handling area.
- Helmets, hearing protection, protective goggles etc. should be cleaned regularly.

Personal items

- Personal items such as jewellery, rings, piercings, watches, MP3 players etc. should not be taken into the production areas. Perfume should be used in moderation at work.

Other

- One should not eat, drink, take medicines or use tobacco, snuff, chewing gum or spit in the processing area.
- Neither should one sneeze or cough on unpackaged food.

PROCEDURES FOR VISITORS

Visitors to the processing area should wear protective clothing and otherwise comply with relevant personal hygiene provisions as described in this guide.

HAND HYGIENE

No rings should be worn in the processing area apart from smooth wedding rings. Nails should be kept short and nail polish is not allowed. Bracelets or watches should not be worn. Hands should always be clean and washed if there is a chance that they are contaminated. See the following regarding hand washing.

HANDS SHOULD ALWAYS BE WASHED:

- Before commencing work.
- Immediately after using the toilet.
- After contact with objects or materials that may be contaminated.
- On entering the processing area/room.

USING GLOVES

Gloves/single-use gloves are used in cases where it is desirable to protect the food from cross-contamination from the hands or to protect the hands. Rules for hand hygiene also apply to gloved hands! Gloves must be changed just as frequently and following the same events as those requiring hands to be washed, i.e. that gloves must be changed at least as frequently as one needs to wash ones hands.

Keeping hands clean is the single most important measure to prevent contamination of food with human pathogens!

- Wet your hands with clean running water (warm or cold) and apply soap.
- Rub your hands together to make a lather (foam) and scrub them well;
 - be sure to scrub the backs of your hands,
 - between your fingers,
 - and under your nails.
- Continue rubbing your hands for at least 20 seconds.
 - Need a timer?
 - Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
- Rinse your hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry.

Disinfectants should only be used when there is a particular reason for this.



Wet your hands with clean running water



Apply soap



Rub your hands together to make a lather (foam) and scrub them well; be sure to scrub wrists and forearm thoroughly. Continue rubbing your hands for at least 20 seconds



Rinse your hands well under running water.



Finally dry hands thoroughly with single use towel or equivalent.

4 PROCEDURES FOR STAFF WHO ARE SICK

If illness or conditions that may compromise food safety is suspected, the employee should inform the line manager at once. This may include gastric or intestinal infections (diarrhoea and vomiting), fever, infected cuts, skin infections, boils, other wounds etc.

The person in question should not work with unpackaged food or be in the processing areas until the employee is non-infectious. Contact the Occupational Health Service at work for further advice, if you have a gastrointestinal disorder (diarrhoea) that lasts for more than 24-48 hours.

Either the Occupational Health Service or the doctor treating the sick person will decide whether samples should be taken and, if so, which samples should be taken. It is up to the same to decide when the sick person can return to normal work.

PROCEDURES FOR STAFF WHO HAVE CUTS AND SCRATCHES

Scratches and cuts to the hands and lower arms should be covered with waterproof bandages, and gloves should be worn for work.

DUTY TO REPORT IF ILLNESS SUSPECTED

Each individual member of staff is responsible for their own personal hygiene and for reporting to their superiors if they suspect any illness or if they have cuts and scratches.

5 PROCEDURES FOR NEW STAFF

FIRST DAY

On the first day at work, all new staff members receive a concise introduction to the company procedures with regard to personal hygiene and food hygiene. The term *new staff* includes temporary staff, hired labour and similar.

A concise introduction shall, at the very least, include the significance of personal hygiene and hand washing, clean work clothes, covering hair and adequate routines when using the locker room and when using the sluices before/when entering the processing area/room. Information is also given regarding the ban on jewellery, watches, earrings etc. It is important to inform them of their duty to report if they are sick and procedures in the event of cuts.

A guided tour of the company is also given where the locker room and sluices, clean clothes, toilets and washbasins are pointed out.

A personal statement of health (see below) has to be signed on the first day.

NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS

If non-native speakers do not have a good understanding of Norwegian, training should be provided in English or in another language, possibly with the assistance of an interpreter. Emphasise hand washing procedures in particular.

TEMPORARY AGENCY STAFF

It should be a requirement of the temporary staff recruitment agency, that hired labour have reviewed the seafood company's hygiene rules in a language that they understand. A personal statement of health should also be signed before arrival at the processing facility. Further training is provided in the same way as for all other members of staff.

PERSONAL STATEMENT OF HEALTH

New staff members complete and sign a personal statement of health. This will be the basis of the health certificate. The replies are covered by professional secrecy and should be kept in each individual's record within the Occupational Health Service. The personal statement of health template is at the back of this guide.

HEALTH CERTIFICATE

New staff shall be issued with a health certificate by the Occupational Health Service as soon as possible on commencement of employment. The health certificate should be based on the personal statement of health. The Occupational Health Service decides, based on the information provided, whether further medical examination is required in connection with issuing the health certificate. The health certificate template is at the back of the guide.

6 TRAINING

TRAINING IN THE FIRST MONTH

It is recommended that new staff work under supervision for the first week.

During their first month, all new staff should receive thorough training in food hygiene and personal hygiene. Provision of this training should be documented.

UPDATING KNOWLEDGE

Information and training in personal hygiene, food hygiene, and the seafood businesses' internal control procedures should be regular themes at the businesses' internal meetings. Updating knowledge should be done at least once a year and should be documented.

DOCUMENTATION OF TRAINING

The company should document training and updates in their process control system.

PERSONAL STATEMENT OF HEALTH FOR NEW STAFF

This statement should be completed by the new member of staff and submitted to the Occupational Health Service. The information provided is subject to professional secrecy and should be kept in each individual's record within the Occupational Health Service.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, first name:	D.O.B.:
Address:	Tel.:
Employed at (company name):	Department:
Position:	Date employed:

INFORMATION ON HEALTH

Yes No

1	Have you had diarrhoea for more than four-five days in the last month, or had looser stools than normal?		
4	Are you undergoing treatment/check-ups for tuberculosis?		
5	Do you have or did you previously suffer from chronic sores or boils on your skin/hands/in your ears?		
6	Are you undergoing treatment/check-ups for other infectious diseases (hepatitis, for example)?		

I feel well and am not, to the best of my knowledge, afflicted with any illness that prohibits me from working in seafood businesses.

I confirm that the information provided is correct, and that I will immediately notify the line manager if I suspect any illness that means that I cannot work with unpackaged food.

Date:

Signature:

HEALTH CERTIFICATE FOR STAFF IN SEAFOOD BUSINESSES

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, first name:	D.O.B.:
Address:	Tel.:
Employed at (company name):	Department:
Position:	Date employed:

I hereby confirm that was examined today.

Based on the personal statement of health and the examination, no reason can be found that would prevent the person in question from working with unpackaged food.

Place:

Date:

Signature and stamp of the Occupational Health Service

Company: The name of the Occupational Health Service