

## Food Safety Programs

This fact sheet provides general information on food safety programs for food businesses licensed under the *Food Act 2006* (the Act).

### What is a food safety program?

A food safety program is a documented program that identifies and controls food safety hazards in the handling of food in a food business.

### Why develop a food safety program?

The introduction of food safety programs for certain sectors of the food industry is part of the national food reform process, which aims to reduce the incidence of food borne illness and reduce the regulatory burden on the food industry.

### What are the benefits of a food safety program?

A food safety program is a proven system for managing food safety. If developed and followed properly, a food safety program will help ensure the food you sell is safe. A food safety program can also help to manage your business better through improved record keeping and cost control. An appropriate and well implemented food safety program can also help a food business demonstrate that all due diligence was exercised to prevent a breach of the Act.

### Do I need a food safety program?

Under the Act, certain licensable food businesses in Queensland must have a food safety program accredited by their local government. There are significant penalties for not having a food safety program.

Licensed food businesses are required to have an accredited food safety program if:

1. The food business involves off-site catering.

Off-site catering means serving potentially hazardous food at a place other than the principal place of business.

Off-site catering does not include:

- merely delivering food under an arrangement with, or on the order of a customer such as delivering pizzas from a takeaway pizza shop, or
- the sale of food from mobile food premises or temporary premises.

Therefore, some examples of food businesses that could be considered off-site catering include:

- spit-roast catering businesses,
- businesses who cater for functions such as weddings in parks and on beaches,
- tour businesses who serve potentially hazardous food during the tour, or
- charter boats that provide potentially hazardous food on the boat that has been prepared at a location other than on the charter boat.

2. The primary activity of the food business is on-site catering at the premises stated in the licence.

On-site catering means preparing and serving potentially hazardous food, to all consumers of the food at the premises from which the business is carried on, under an agreement under which the food is:

- of a predetermined type, and
- for a predetermined number of persons, and

- served at a predetermined time, and
- for a predetermined cost.

On-site catering does not include:

- preparing and serving food at a restaurant, café or similar food business on the order of a person for immediate consumption by the person, or
- preparing and displaying food for self service by consumers such as buffets.

Examples of food businesses that could be considered to be undertaking on-site catering as the primary activity at the premises stated in the licence and therefore require a food safety program, may include:

- dedicated wedding reception venues, or
- function halls

3. The primary activity of the food business is on-site catering at **part** of the premises stated in the licence.

On-site catering has the same meaning as noted above, however in the situation where on-site catering is the primary activity at **part** of the premises only. Those businesses using a section of their food business for catering to 200 or more people on 12 or more occasions per year are required to have a food safety program.

Examples of food businesses that would be considered to be undertaking on-site catering at part of the premises and therefore require a food safety program may include:

- large hotels or clubs with a function room who cater to 200 or more persons on 12 or more occasions per year, or
- restaurants, cafes or similar who provide a predetermined type of food, at a predetermined time and cost for a predetermined number of persons of 200 or more people on 12 or more occasions per year.

4. The food business is carried on as part of the operations of a private hospital or otherwise processes or serves potentially hazardous food for six or more vulnerable persons.

A vulnerable person is a person who receives care from one of the facilities listed below or is a client of a delivered meals organisation.

- hospital facilities including acute care, psychiatric, hospice, chemotherapy and renal dialysis facilities,
- aged care facilities including nursing homes, respite care, same day aged care and low care aged care facilities, or
- child care facilities, including long day care, occasional day care and employer sponsored child care (does not include family day care).

Other food businesses that are not required to have a food safety program may apply for accreditation of their food safety program. If they do so, they must have the program regularly audited and must comply with the food safety program.

## What must a food safety program contain?

A food safety program must:

- systematically identify the food safety hazards that are reasonably likely to occur in food handling operations of the food business, and
- identify where, in a food handling operation of the food business, each hazard identified can be controlled and the means of control, and
- provide for the systematic monitoring of the means of control, and
- provide for appropriate corrective action to be taken when a hazard identified is not under control, and
- provide for the regular review of the program to ensure it is appropriate for the food business, and
- provide for the keeping of appropriate records for the food business, including records about action taken to ensure the business is carried on in compliance with the program, and
- contain other information, relating to the control of food safety hazards, prescribed under a regulation.

### How do I develop a food safety program?

There are various food safety program templates available to help you develop a food safety program that is tailored to your food business. Food safety programs do not have to be developed by external consultants or contractors.

Queensland Health has released a number of food safety program templates that are available free of charge at [www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety). However, you are able to use any food safety program template to develop your food safety program provided the completed program meets the necessary criteria outlined above.

### How do I get my food safety program accredited?

The local government that issues your food business licence is responsible for accrediting the food safety program for your food business. Contact details for your local government can be found in the White Pages.

### What happens after my food safety program is accredited?

After your food safety program is accredited, you must have the first compliance audit conducted by an approved auditor within 6 months of the accreditation.

You must then continue to have audits undertaken at a frequency specified by the local government who accredited the food safety program.

A copy of the accredited food safety program must be retained at the premises of the food business and be kept available for inspection by employees in the food business.

### How do I find an approved auditor?

Queensland Health keeps a register of auditors approved under the Act at [www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety).

The register contains the name and contact details of approved auditors, the conditions of the auditor's approval and the term of approval.

For further information on finding and selecting an approved auditor, refer to Food Industry Fact Sheet 25 – How to choose an approved auditor.

If you have any questions or concerns about an approved auditor, contact Queensland Health's Environmental Health Branch on 3328 9310 or email [foodsafety@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:foodsafety@health.qld.gov.au).

### What happens after an audit?

There is no pass or fail mark for an audit. Within 14 days after completing an audit, an auditor is required to provide a copy of the audit report to the food business and to the local government that accredited it. The auditor will identify any non-conformances or instances where the food business does not comply with the accredited food safety program. If non-conformances are very serious and could result in unsafe food, the auditor will refer the issue to the local government within 24 hours, who may take further action.

### Further information

If you have any questions regarding food safety programs, contact the local government who issues your food business licence.

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