



ALPINE SHIRE

Environmental Health – Cleaning and Sanitising

Cleaning is an ongoing task in any food premises. In fact, it probably feels like you have just finished cleaning that piece of equipment and you have to turn around and do it again.

As you are aware, most businesses are required to have in place a Food Safety Program. All Food Safety Programs include some process, steps or instructions on how to clean and how to develop a cleaning schedule. The instructions may vary between plans, but the end result is that you have clean equipment and surfaces.

It is important that you thoroughly read the cleaning and sanitising section of your food safety program to ensure that you are meeting the cleaning and sanitising requirements of your plan. Please note the sanitising methods vary between Food Safety Programs, so it is important that you comply with the requirements of your own program.

Cleaning

Have you ever tried to clean the kitchen before you have tidied it? If the kitchen is tidy, you will be able to see the dirt and clean it more quickly. Cleaning removes all dirt, grease and waste that could attract and provide food for pests. Cleaning also maintains a safe working environment by removing grease from floors, thus reducing the risk of people slipping or falling.

There are many items to clean in a kitchen – so it makes sense to have a list so that no job is missed. Some jobs need to be done all the time, others once a day, week, month or quarter. A cleaning schedule will assist in ensuring that items that need cleaning are cleaned. It will also be useful if you use contract cleaners. A schedule helps them know their job and you are able to check that they have done what you have asked. Don't forget to let all food handlers know where cleaning equipment is stored and how to use it correctly.

Little and often is the way to go with cleaning. Why spend five hours cleaning something once a month, if it is easier to spend half an hour cleaning it once a week.

Make sure that there is no build up of rubbish, food waste, dirt, grease or other visible matter in the kitchen or on equipment, fixtures and fittings. Use a cobweb brush to dust high places or arrange for a contract cleaner to give the place a detailed clean every so often.

Sanitising

Sanitising is an additional step in cleaning. In Food Safety Standards sanitise means applying health and / or chemicals or other processes to reduce the number of micro-organisms on the surface.

At this level, the safety of the food in contact with the surface is not compromised. It is also unlikely to transmit any disease organisms.

Sanitisers reduce the number of bacteria on a surface to a safe level. Sanitisers do not work on a dirty surface as they cannot get through the grease and dirt that surround the bacteria.

Sanitising methods

Hot water sanitising – Soaking dishes in water that is over 77°C for 30 seconds will kill most bacteria. However, most hot water systems do not get that hot and there are occupational health and safety issues with using hot water at these temperatures.

Soaking dishes in hot water out of the tap for a couple of minutes may reduce the number of bacteria to a satisfactory level. However, the water should be hot enough that you need to wear rubber gloves when putting your hands in it. The combination of time and temperature will help reduce the number of bacteria on the dishes. The hot water will make the dishes hot, so when they are drained they will air dry very quickly.

Chemical sanitising – Chemical sanitisers include QACs (quaternary ammonium compounds), chlorine agents (hypochlorites including bleach), and iodophors (iodine based compounds).

These chemicals must be rinsed off a surface with clean water before it is used to prepare food. Some chemicals such as chlorine dioxide do not require rinsing off.

When used correctly, all sanitisers are safe, so it is important to read the label to know how to use them.

The label will tell you:

- **If the chemical is suitable for use in the kitchen**
- **How to store the chemical – some need to be kept in the dark**
- **How to dilute the chemical – some need to be made up fresh each day or they do not work**
- **How long the chemical needs to be in contact with the surface – this “contact” time may be a few seconds or a few minutes**

Dishwashers

Dishwashers are great for cleaning and sanitising crockery, utensils and small pieces of equipment. Larger items will still need to be washed in the sink.

Purchasing chemical sanitising solutions

If you wish to use a chemical sanitising solution, the first step would be to discuss your requirements with your chemical supplier. If you don't have a chemical supplier (ie someone that supplies chemicals for a commercial dishwasher) look up 'Cleaning Products and / or Supplies' in the Yellow Pages.

When discussing your requirements, remember that some sanitisers need to be washed off and some are left on. You need to decide what is the best option for you.