



Feedback

Welcome to the first issue of Feedback for 2016.

The focus for this issue is hand washing, an activity that only takes about 30 seconds, but if done correctly can help reduce the spread of bacteria and illness.



What happens if you don't pay your annual food business service fee?

In a first for the City, four notices were served to food businesses that had not paid their annual food safety service charge on time. Despite repeated reminders and a warning that notices would be served being sent to the businesses, payment had still not been forthcoming.

The notice, which cancelled the certificate of registration of the business, meant that if the business were to continue to trade, they would be committing an offence under the *Food Act*. This could result in a penalty of \$10,000 for an individual and \$50,000 for a body corporate. Interestingly, we learnt we weren't the only ones doing this, with other local governments also issuing notices to cancel registration to encourage businesses to pay up.

Being issued with the notice meant that the business was not allowed to trade until they re-registered with the City. In order to re-register, the business had to pay the outstanding annual service fee plus an additional registration fee of \$162.

We appreciate the majority of businesses do pay on time. However, every year a number of businesses are either slow at paying or require repeated reminders. The extra phone calls, emails and reminder letters all have an impact on cost and time to the City. Allowing a business to continue trading without paying the annual fee is not an option and would be unfair to all those businesses that have paid.

The decision to take this action was not made lightly—however, it was considered to be the most effective method of obtaining outstanding payments. The City is mindful of cost to business and strives to keep the annual fee as low as possible, which can only be achieved by keeping our costs down. In fact, the City of Swan's fees are a lot less than some other Councils (see table of some other Council fees).

For the 2016/2017 financial year, it has been recommended that the City introduce a late fee of \$48 to those businesses that do not pay on time. This will help ensure the additional administrative costs are upon those food businesses that do not pay on time and businesses which do are not unfairly penalised with rising fees. Other local governments have taken a similar approach and have already introduced late fees.

Local Government 2015/16

Annual Food Safety Service Charge Comparison Table

Local Government	Low Risk Premises	Medium Risk Premises
Swan	\$97	\$289
Gosnells	\$220	\$380
Wanneroo	\$136	\$270
Stirling	\$100	\$200
Kwinana	\$141	\$562
Mandurah	\$150	\$300
Cockburn	\$230	\$461
Mundaring	\$150	\$250

The health of the public is in your hands

Food poisoning is often caused by dirty hands coming in to contact with food. Hand washing should be a priority in your business to stop the spread of bacteria and illness to your customers. Even though most of us know the basics of good hand washing we hope you will learn something new from the following information.



Hand washing steps: There are five steps that should be followed when washing hands.



STEP
1

Wet hands under warm running water.



STEP
2

Soap hands for about **20 seconds**, lathering well



STEP
3

Rub thoroughly, including the wrists and between the fingers



STEP
4

Rinse in clean water



STEP
5

Dry thoroughly on paper towel, leaving no moisture on the hands

When should you wash your hands?

You should wash your hands thoroughly and frequently, especially:

- after using the toilet or changing nappies (child care centres);
- before, during and after preparing food;
- between handling raw and cooked or ready-to-eat food;
- before eating;
- after using a tissue;
- after smoking;
- after handling rubbish; and
- after cleaning.

Handy Tip

You can time 20 seconds of hand washing by humming the tune of 'Happy Birthday' in your head. This is a great trick to teach the kiddies too!



Get into the habit

A perspective from an Environmental Health Officer

Over my years as an Environmental Health Officer I have picked up many tricks to help make my inspections more productive and to set an example to the business that I am visiting. After making my introductions, I now make my way over to the hand wash basin **straight away**, before doing anything else. Not only does this mean that my hands are clean, but I can check that your hand washing facilities are up to scratch.

I am sharing this information as I believe it is a routine we should all get into prior to starting our work preparing food in our kitchens (and from my perspective, before I step into your premises). I can make sure there are no items in your hand wash basin or around the basin that might prevent you from using it. I check that the water to your hand wash basin is running warm, that you have soap available and your paper towels are stocked or hand dryer is functioning.

We all should be washing our hands prior to starting our work in a kitchen and we can use this activity as an easy way to ensure adequate hand washing facilities are provided for the day.

Stell Hoffman

Environmental Health Officer



No bare hands

You should not be touching food that is ready to eat with your bare hands. We find that food handlers think it is okay to make sandwiches with bare hands or to mix a salad with bare hands. But it is not okay—and it is actually against the law.

The Food Safety Standards state that a food handler must, when engaging in any food handling operation, take all practicable measures to prevent unnecessary contact with ready to eat food.

Hand washing does not actually kill the bacteria on your hands, it just removes it. Hand washing does not remove **all** bacteria either. You also do a lot with your hands without even realising, like scratching your body, playing with your hair and touching surfaces. So no matter how hard we try, our hands will never be 100% free from bacteria. Touching food with our bare hands can transfer bacteria to the food. If that food is ready to eat, the bacteria will be consumed by the customer and the customer may get sick.

Safe and effective food handling should be a combination of frequent hand washing, wearing gloves and using utensils where appropriate. The key term is 'unnecessary contact' so if the task can be performed either by wearing gloves or using utensils then it should be undertaken using such.



Drying is an important step

You might not realise this but drying your hands is just as important as washing your hands. It's a step that can often get missed because you are in a rush or the paper towels haven't been replaced or the plug to the hand dryer has been pulled out.

Bacteria like moisture, and drying your hands with a paper towel will reduce the moisture on your hand. This means that any bacteria that are left behind will have less of a chance to multiply and your hands have less of a chance to transfer bacteria if they are dry.

It really doesn't take too much longer to dry your hands. Another 10 seconds is probably all it takes. So take the time and make sure your hands are dry.



Gloves

Gloves should be changed as often as you wash your hands. This is often!

Some food handlers put a glove on and go on to do a number of tasks without thinking to wash their hands or change the glove. With wearing a glove you also lose the sensation of your hands being dirty because it is on the outside of the glove and not directly on your hand. This can result in reduced hand washing and gloves not being changed often.

A glove should never be used, taken off and used again. It should be thrown straight into the bin. And you should always wash your hands before putting on gloves.

If you are trying to save money in your business by not using many gloves, see if you can use a utensil instead for that task.



Hand washing stickers

The City of Swan has developed a great resource which is available to you free of charge to help with reminding your staff to wash their hands. The 'wash your hands' stickers can be placed right near your designated hand wash basin so your staff know where to wash their hands. Place one in the toilet as well.

Contact the Health Services team on 9267 9153 or by email at health.mail@swan.wa.gov.au to request your hand washing stickers.

Cover up

Cuts and sores on your hands can be a source of bacteria and contamination. When handling food, wounds should be covered with a waterproof coloured band aid. A glove should also be worn over the top as an extra precaution.

Encourage your staff to wash their hands

Be the example in your business.

If your staff see you washing your hands often, then they will learn what is expected. If you are asking your staff to do a job try saying, "After you wash your hands, can you please go do...". Regular training and reminding will help too.



Should I be using antibacterial soap or alcohol gel?

There is no advantage to using antibacterial soap over regular soap.

Regular soap is just as effective at removing bacteria from your hands. The use of an alcohol-based sanitiser should not replace proper hand washing and is unnecessary for food operations.

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COS02633