

Guide dogs in restaurants

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association has recently updated the card it gives to guide dog owners to show when visiting food premises. The new card has been endorsed by Environmental Health Officers and the Food Standards Agency.

The wording on the card, which can be used by owners of guide dogs and other recognised assistance dogs, reads as follows:

“Guide dogs and other assistance dogs should be allowed entry to restaurants, food shops and other food premises. Their very special training means that they are unlikely to be a risk to hygiene in these premises.”

On the back of the card is information about the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) which places duties on all service providers, including owners and operators of cafés and restaurants, not to discriminate against disabled people and to make reasonable adjustments to their services and premises to enable disabled people to access them. Entry to disabled people and their assistance dogs would be deemed a reasonable adjustment under this legislation.

Despite the existence of the Disability Discrimination



Act, the Guide Dogs Association says it regularly receives complaints that people have been refused access to restaurants and food shops, with staff often citing hygiene as the reason.

Further information about access rights for guide dogs can be found on the Association's website at www.guidedogs.org.uk/whatwedo/access/

Asbestos – the hidden killer

The fight to raise awareness of the hazards from asbestos is ongoing.

A message from a colleague recently highlighted the need to manage asbestos, not just for you and your employees, but also for contractors. The message read:

“I can't believe that it is six years ago that my Dad lost his life to mesothelioma. He was 67. He had been a fit and healthy man, but he was exposed to the hidden killer whilst working as an electrician for the Merchant Navy 30 years earlier. On National Mesothelioma Day (2nd July 2010), the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) launched its latest booklet – ‘Asbestos: The Hidden Killer’. This has been produced with the continued efforts of a lady called Pauline Bonney who runs the South East Asbestos Victims Support Group. She lost her husband seven years ago – he was 51. He was also an electrician.”

Each year, approx 4,000 deaths make asbestos a bigger killer than road accidents. Approx 20 tradesmen a week die from this hidden killer. Asbestos can be hidden in anything built or refurbished before the year 2000. Some common hiding places for asbestos include: ceiling tiles, pipe insulation, boilers, soffit boards, textured coatings, inside fire doors, etc. Asbestos needs to be fully respected whether it be white, brown or blue. If you are looking to have asbestos removed from your property, or you are using a tradesman in the building, electrical, plumbing or carpentry trades then please take a look at the HSE website for further information:
www.hse.gov.uk/hiddenkiller

For information on your responsibilities and how to manage asbestos go to www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/detail.htm, email foodandsafety@wealden.gov.uk or call 01323 443302.

FOCUS ON... Training

Businesses often ask our officers what training they need to do . . . particularly relating to food hygiene and health and safety.

Why is food hygiene training important?

You can only be confident that the food you prepare, or offer for sale, is safe, if you know that you and your staff have the right knowledge to make it safe.

Food business operators must make sure that they, and any staff that handle food, are supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene in a way that is appropriate to the work they are involved in.

Although there is no legal requirement to attend a formal training course or get a qualification, the majority of businesses see this as a necessary means of ensuring safety in their business. Skills are also obtained through on the job training and often self study or just many years of experience.

Our officers will want to check the knowledge and understanding of food hygiene when they speak to you or your staff. Having training certificates is an easy indication to us and the public, of the level of knowledge gained. We will then be checking that good practices are taking place.

Discussions have also taken place about the value of

on-line training. There are good and bad points regarding this. The good being: the ease at which you can access training; the timing can suit your business; and not forgetting the often reduced cost.

However one of our officers summed up comments on the down side as:

“If questions are raised there is no-one to answer them straight away and then the opportunity is lost; how do on-line training companies ensure that the person undertaking the course and answering the on-line test, to obtain the certificate, is the person they claim to be; and can you keep going until you get the answers right by a process of elimination, not knowledge.”

Businesses using on-line training need to be sure that the information covered is at least on a level with recognised training bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) or Royal Society of Public Health (RSPH).

Whichever training method is used, business operators will need to be sure that they and their staff have fully understood the training and are putting it into practice.

The national food business rating scheme ‘Scores on the Doors’, which is due to commence later this year, will also take account of how well trained the food handlers are when the businesses are scored.



Why is health and safety training important?

Over 200 people are killed each year in accidents at work and over one million people are injured. Over two million suffer illnesses caused by, or made worse by, their work.

Preventing accidents and ill health caused by work is a key priority for everyone at work. As the owner or manager of a business you know that competent employees are valuable.

Providing training in health and safety will help you to:

- ensure your employees are not injured or made ill by the work they do;
- develop a positive health and safety culture, where safe and healthy working becomes second nature to everyone;
- help you to manage health and safety better;
- meet your legal duty to protect the health and safety of your employees.

Effective training:

- will contribute towards making your employees competent in health and safety;
- can help your business avoid the distress that accidents and ill health cause;
- can help you avoid the financial costs of accidents and occupational ill health. Don't forget that your insurance doesn't cover all these costs. Damaged products, lost production and demotivated staff can all result.

The law on health and safety training

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires you to provide whatever information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of your employees.

This is expanded by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, which identify situations where health and safety training is particularly important, e.g. when people start work, on exposure to new or increased risks and where existing skills may have become rusty or need updating.



Training to suit your business

Wealden Council offer training at all different levels in Food Hygiene; Health and Safety; Healthier Food and Special Diets; and even a Professional Trainers Certificate to help businesses to train their own staff.

Information on courses that are currently available, can be found on our business support pages on www.wealdenbusinesshelp.org.uk or ring 01323 443302 or email foodandsafety@wealden.gov.uk You can also download or request a brochure.

These courses can fill up very quickly so don't hesitate to contact us to discuss your needs. Discounts are available for small businesses and those in the Wealden area.

We can also provide training for you, on your premises, if you have a number of people to train. There are also links to other training providers offering similar and other specialist training on www.wealdenbusinesshelp.org.uk

Improved Pre-Application Service

Wealden District Council has recently enhanced and improved its Planning pre-application advice service, with a full set of options now available to all our prospective applicants. These range from use of the website and a duty officer service, through to a 2-tier surgery system and a full Development Team Approach for major schemes. All are in accordance with the Council's aim of encouraging dialogue, ensuring a good quality of customer care and making the best use of resources. If you wish to discuss any business or other development before submission of an application, then you are strongly encouraged to use this service at whichever level suits you best.

Although the Council does now charge for discussing developments above 100m² floorspace, the charges have been set as fairly as possible, and are considered

to be more cost-effective for applicants in the longer term, ensuring a greater degree of thoroughness and clarity and potentially reducing the need for repeat applications. The Council is always willing to fully discuss any reasonable scheme, prior to submission, with meetings formally registered and notes recorded of any agreements made. Full details are available by logging onto the Council's website at www.wealden.gov.uk and following the links through 'Planning/Building Control' to 'Pre-application Advice'.

If you think that your business or other proposal could benefit from a pre-application discussion, then please contact our Development Manager, Patrick Coffey, (who manages the pre-application service), on 01892 602476, or email patrick.coffey@wealden.gov.uk and he will be happy to assist you.

Food Standards Agency consults on *E.coli* prevention



The Food Standards Agency has started a UK-wide consultation on the best way to help businesses better protect against *E.coli* O157 contamination.

A public inquiry into the *E.coli* O157 outbreak in Wales in 2005, in which one child died, recommended that the Agency should review its guidance to food businesses. It said more clarity should be offered to food businesses

and inspectors on the best methods of preventing cross-contamination between raw and ready-to-eat foods.

The Agency has published proposals for guidance clarifying the need for businesses to implement tougher measures for preventing cross contamination. These include: ensuring physical separation between raw and ready-to-eat foods; new equipment and surface cleaning processes; and effective hand-washing for food workers.

£1,000 grants for local businesses

Through their Leadership & Management programme, Skills South East are investing up to £1,000 in local businesses. Owner managers and company directors have a great opportunity to apply for funding to help develop business leadership skills.

This offer is available to companies in the South East with 5-250 staff.

Call the Leadership & Management Advisory Service on 0845 026 4298 or e-mail info@skillssoutheast to arrange an appointment.



A newsletter from the Public Protection Team of Wealden District Council

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Don't forget to check what's happening to support our businesses on www.wealdenbusinesshelp.org.uk and in the Wealden Business Focus Magazine also on the site.



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www.wealdenbusinesshelp.org.uk



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