

Food Consulting Services Newsletter



“New” Hygiene Survey Reports

By now, our clients should be familiar with the new Hygiene Survey (audit) Report, which has formed the basis of our service improvement programme.

The new web-based audit was initially designed to improve the attention to detail in the reports and to be able to help our clients to pin-point areas of concern. With the development of the Minor, Major and Critical Non-conformance Sections, we have been able to highlight the areas that needed immediate attention and identify those critical concerns that relate directly to potential food poisoning (or wastage), in an effort to help our clients understand the risks involved with food preparation.

The goal of the hygiene audit has always been to strive for the absolute ideal food preparation environment. And we believe that in order to achieve the ideal, a good active management system must be in place. In order to encourage our clients to follow this principle, we have introduced the “Corrective Action Report” as an additional document, which is sent with both the preliminary and final reports.

Corrective Action Report

This Excel C.A.R. is a concept designed around HACCP principles, where any concerns found in the hygiene survey report can rapidly be addressed and follow-up procedures implemented, in order to prove that action has been taken to correct the concerns.

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Corrective Action

In most kitchens, this is a process that is already a standard. We at FCS have taken the opportunity to minimise the additional administrative work for you, and have listed all the findings with the report in order of urgency, with the necessary information, in order to complete the report.

We are looking forward to 2016, where we will be assessing for a completed Corrective Action Report in the follow-up audit. Thus, we would highly recommend that 2015 be the year in which you become familiar with the corrective action report and use this as a tool to improve the general hygiene and food safety in your facility.

We are looking forward to 2016, where we will be assessing for a completed Corrective Action Report in the follow-up audit.

Corrective Steps

Below is a description of how to use the FCS corrective action report:

1. Start by addressing the critical concerns first. These are the areas that are directly related to food poisoning and can have an immediate effect in your facility. The recommended time to address these is with 48 hours of receiving the preliminary report.
2. The major non-conformances should be addressed once the critical concerns have been corrected, but can happen simultaneously. The recommended time to address these is within four days of receiving the preliminary report.
3. The minor non-conformances should be actioned last, and should ideally be addressed within the next 30 days.

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4. Describe what action was taken to rectify the concern, in the column marked as "corrective action needed".
5. Decide who will be responsible for performing the required corrective action, and fill in the person's name, in the "responsible person column".
6. Decide on the date by which the action will need to be addressed and fill in the date in the "completion date" column.
7. Once all the necessary information has been filled in, print out the report, and make sure that the responsible person, or member of management, checks and signs it off, once the corrective action has been completed.
8. The corrective action report, should then be filed for proof of completed actions.
9. Note that some corrective actions need ongoing attention (like filling the hand soap dispenser).



Legionella Risk Evaluation

This month has seen the introduction of the updated *Legionella* Risk Evaluation, in which we have included the same improvements in the reports as the with the Hygiene Survey Report, allowing us to give immediate feedback on the risk evaluation and highlight the critical, major and minor non-conformances for each of the *Legionella* checkpoints.

The report will also include embedded photographs, in order to further identify the areas of concern in which the hygiene consultants have seen at your facility.

The *Legionella* microbiological report has also seen an update, in which the FCS team will include the initial water temperature readings of 1 minute, as well as and second reading of 3 minutes. This will help identify whether out-of-line readings are as a result of reticulation concerns (such as sluggish flow) or a general low boiler temperature setting or insufficient lagging (insulation) of the pipes.



Risk Indices

In order to help identify specific areas to address we have also separated the risk index into:

- A: Cleaning/Procedures
- B: Documentation
- C: Facilities
- D: Composite (Overall)

Staphylococcus aureus

Staphylococcus aureus is a bacteria that produces a heat-stable toxin that is therefore resistant to cooking and can persist and cause food poisoning after despite normal cooking procedures. This species of bacteria occurs naturally on the skin and nasal passages of about 15% of the world's population, but can also be picked up from cross-contamination of raw foods (especially meat and poultry).

In line with our SANAS ISO 17025 accreditation requirements for continuous improvement, we are pleased to announce that we have enhanced our testing method for *S.aureus*. As a result we are now able to detect far lower numbers of such colonies using this method, making the method far more sensitive.

This is especially relevant for the hand swab tests that we perform for your facility.

At the same time, those select clients who have traditionally had *Staphylococcus aureus* testing on ready-to-eat foods will no longer be routinely offered this test. We have managed to absorb the added cost of the improved method for hand swabs but cannot do so for the food samples. However, rather than simply passing on the costs to our clients, we have omitted the test because our extensive microbiological records show that there has almost never been a positive result (unlike the with the hand swabs).



Furthermore, since the actual risk is the toxin and the organism can grow without producing it, or be killed off after producing it, the correlation between the presence of these microbes and the risk is not that clear, especially in foods. A food could have the microbe (hence a positive microbiological result) and no toxin. Equally, a food (even a cooked food) could have the toxin but no microbes (a negative microbiological result). Testing directly for the toxin is not an economically feasible prospect.

In contrast, there is a clear potential risk for a positive result when these live organisms are present on hands because they may get into high risk foods, grow and produce the toxin.

We therefore strongly urge you to focus on proper hand washing practices and ensure that your staff adhere to the correct frequency of hand washing. For the next cycle of audits we will not be penalise any *S.aureus* contamination we detect, due to the increased sensitivity of the tests. However, following the "grace period", we will continue as per the norm.

Again, we strongly urge you to approach the hand washing practices as critical to the food safety for your kitchen!

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Insurance*

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The FCS Hygiene Audit is designed to evaluate the hygiene, sanitation, food safety and facilities in kitchens in the food service industry.

Our audits are performed for clients in the hotel, gaming, restaurant, and catering industries, and are tailor made to the unique needs of each client.

Risk Based Reporting

The actual Hygiene Audit standards are based on SANS 10049, R962, international best practices, as well as FCS's 30+ years of experience conducting hygiene audits. The FCS Hygiene Audit is a risk-based audit, and is designed to evaluate the risks in the kitchen.

Microbiological Evaluation

A microbiological evaluation of surface swabs, hand swabs, food samples and water samples forms part of the audit, and provides scientific evidence as to the food safety, hygiene and sanitation standards in the kitchen.