

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

No. 221

### *FOOD SAFETY FOR TOUR OPERATORS*

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#### **Food Safety Practices**

All food businesses in Australia, including tour operators are currently required to comply with the Food Safety Standards. These Standards are:

Standard 3.1.1 *Interpretation and Application* sets out the interpretation and application provisions that apply to the other food safety standards, that is Standard 3.2.2 and Standard 3.2.3.

Standard 3.2.2 *Food Safety Practices and General Requirements* sets out the controls for all steps of food handling operations from receipt of food into the business to disposal of unsafe and unsuitable food. This Standard also contains requirements for personal hygiene and for the health of food handlers, cleaning and sanitation, pest control and animals and pests. To comply with this Standard, food handlers and supervisors of food handling operations are required to have the skills and knowledge in food safety needed for their work.

Standard 3.2.3 *Food Premises and Equipment* sets out requirements for food premises, equipment and food transport vehicles that, if complied with, will facilitate compliance with Standard 3.2.2. This Standard also covers the design and construction of the premises, including tour vehicles that you use to prepare food and the services that you need to produce food safely for example, using potable water and having adequate hand washing facilities.

#### **Pre Tour Planning for Food Safety**

As a tour operator, it is important to plan and consider aspects of the tour that may impact on the safety of the food provided as part of the tour. Some of the issues to consider include meals intended to be served, any clients with special dietary needs, the design and construction of the tour vehicle, the equipment and facilities available on tour and at the destinations.

Any food preparation, cooking or storage prior to the tour must be undertaken in a registered kitchen that complies with the Food Standards 3.2.2. and 3.2.3

##### ***Menu selection***

In designing your menu, you need to consider the types of clients who are going on the tour and any special needs of the clients. Vulnerable groups of people such as the elderly, young children (4 years of age or less), immuno-compromised and pregnant women are more susceptible to illness compared with the general population. The menu should be designed to minimise food safety hazards wherever possible.

Potentially hazardous food means food that has to be kept at certain temperatures to minimise the growth of any pathogenic micro-organisms that may be present in the food or to prevent the formation of toxins in the food. Examples are chicken, seafood, dairy products, cooked rice and pasts and processed foods containing eggs, beans, nuts or other protein rich foods.

Some of the points to consider include:

- Replace higher risk foods with low risk foods. For example, use dehydrated meat in place of fresh raw meat on long tours.
- Buy perishable foods in quantities that will reduce the likelihood of leftovers.
- If possible, buy perishable foods along the way instead of at the start of the tour.
- Use foods that can be cooked then eaten straight away or foods that require minimal handling in preparation.

- Ensure there are adequate storage facilities for storing food on the tour vehicle.

### **Special diets**

The tour operator needs to know at the time of booking if anyone on the tour has a specific allergy to any food, is intolerant or sensitive to any particular foods or is unable to eat certain foods due to religious or other reasons. The tour operator and all staff should be aware of any clients with special diets or requirements.

### **Design and construction of vehicle**

The design and construction of the tour vehicle is important to the safety of the food. The design and construction of the vehicle must be appropriate for the activities for which the vehicle is being used. Food transport vehicles and other vehicles used as preparation areas must meet the requirements of the national Food Safety Standard, *Standard 3.2.3 Food Premises and Equipment*.

If potentially hazardous food is to be used on the tour it must be kept at a temperature of 5°C or below. Food can be kept cold using eskies filled with ice or other means, however mechanical refrigeration (i.e. gas or electrical) are preferable as they are more reliable at maintaining a chilled temperature. Frozen foods are to remain frozen solid during transportation, suitable freezer units must be fitted to the vehicle.

All food must be protected from the likelihood of contamination during transport. Food should be transported in clearly labelled separate containers to avoid contamination by chemicals such as cleaning products, petrol, oils or fuels. The vehicle itself should be maintained in a clean condition and a good state of repair.

### **Equipment selection**

The type of food served and prepared on the tour will determine the equipment required. Additional equipment or spare parts may be required in case of equipment failure. For example, to maintain temperature control separate refrigeration units may be needed for ready-to-eat foods and raw foods.

The following considerations need to be taken:

- Providing thermometers: The Food Safety Standards require that food businesses, including tour operators, have a thermometer that can accurately measure the temperature of potentially hazardous food.
- Cooking equipment and utensils. For example, tongs and other utensils used for handling food should be provided. Cooking equipment and gas bottles should be checked prior to the tour to ensure they're in good working order.
- Check to ensure that there is sufficient hot display equipment if you're likely to cooking and displaying foods hot.
- Eating and Drinking Utensils: Plastic disposable or reusable utensils are safer on tours than glassware.
- Storage Containers: Suitable storage containers for storing food and utensils.
- Cleaning and sanitising: facilities required to wash and sanitise crockery, cutlery, utensils and equipment.

### **Facilities available on tour and at destinations**

At each destination, the following facilities must be available as a minimum for food safety:

- Access to potable water to use for food preparation and cooking, hand washing and cleaning and sanitising purposes.
- A clean area to prepare, handle and serve the food.
- Handwashing facilities.

- Utensil washing and sanitising facilities.
- Suitable containers for storing and dispensing potable water.
- Waste disposal facilities.
- Toilet facilities.

Facilities must be provided where and when they are not available at the campsite.

### ***Water Supply***

A food business needs to have enough water available for the tour, not only for drinking, but also for washing hands, equipment and utensils. This water may be bought along on the tour, or may be provided as designated campsites. This water must be potable (safe to drink and use). Natural water courses may be considered to be non-potable due to various factors. Do not use the water for drinking, washing hands or cleaning from these sources unless you have advice from the local authority that it is safe; or boil before use. Some chemical treatments may also prove effective for example chlorine tablets.

### ***Handwashing facilities***

Handwashing facilities must be provided. If there are no facilities available alternative methods of handwashing are required. For example, a plastic container filled with potable water and fitted with a tap could be used. Also, soap and disposable paper towels and a catchment bucket to collect the waste water should be provided.

Warm running water, as required by the Food Safety Standards, may be difficult to provide on a tour. If warming running water is not available or supplies of water are limited, you will need to obtain a written exemption from the Environmental Health Officer to use sanitising gels or other hand washing agents.

### ***Toilet facilities***

Toilets should be away from any likely food preparation area, and clean and properly constructed. Environmental Health Officers must be consulted if temporary toilet facilities are required. This area should be lower than the campsite and well away from watercourses and water storage areas. Please contact relevant national parks services for further information.

## **Food preparation on tour**

The two main practices that need to be followed to maintain food safety while on tour

- Preventing contamination of ready to eat food
- Controlling the temperature of food.

### ***Preventing contamination of ready to eat food***

- Cross contamination between foods that are raw or require further preparation and ready-to-eat foods is a major concern in the preparation of foods. Cross contamination can occur via surfaces such as cutting boards, trays or storage equipment, tubs, knives, tongs and preparation utensils and from the hands or clothing of staff.
- To minimise the risk of cross contamination, all preparation should take place on surfaces that have been cleaned and sanitised. Preparation surfaces should be used for preparing only the one type of food (all ready-to-eat on a separate board to raw, unprepared food). If this is not possible, then each food preparation surface must be cleaned and sanitised between each use.
- All chopping boards and other equipment must be in good condition with no cracks or splits on the surfaces. Equipment in poor condition is difficult to clean or sanitise effectively.
- When chilling or thawing food, ensure that ice stored in the same ice chests for use in drinks, or otherwise to be eaten, is not contaminated by raw foods.

- If carving cooked meat or chicken then ensure that this is carried out using clean utensils and clean preparation area. Do not handle the food with bare hands.
- When displaying food for serving protect it with covers. All food covers must be clean and must not contaminate the food. Appropriate covers may include plastic food grade containers and plastic wraps.
- Each dish requires its own serving utensil to avoid cross contamination.
- If cleaning and sanitising are a problem use disposable items such as disposable plastic plates. All disposable items must be disposed of after use and not reused including plates, cutlery, bowls, straws, cups etc.
- If any client helps prepare food, then they must also follow the same rules as your staff.
- If any client or staff member becomes ill on tour, they must be excluded from food handling. Depending on the severity of the illness, the tour may need to be cancelled to prevent others from becoming ill.

## Controlling the temperature of food

### *Thawing*

- Note: It is a requirement to have a thermometer to be able to check food temperatures while on tour.
- It is important that the temperature of ready to eat potentially hazardous food that is thawing is kept at 5°C or lower to prevent the growth of pathogenic bacteria.
- When thawing food, ensure that it is covered to protect juices from contaminating other ready-to-eat foods.

### *Cooking*

- All rissoles, sausages, hamburgers and chicken should be cooked thoroughly until the juices run clear to destroy and bacteria.
- Check that foods are thoroughly cooked by inserting a thermometer to check the internal temperature has reached at least **74°C**.
- For whole pieces of red meat such as steaks, it is important that the surface temperature reaches 74°C to destroy any surface bacteria.

### *Portioning prior to serving or cooling*

- If the cooked food is not intended for immediate service it must be portioned to cool soon after cooking is completed. This practice applies to portioning cooked foods such as roasts, lasagnes, stews, gravies, soups, large portions of barbecue meats, rice, pies, quiches etc.

### *Cooling / Chilling*

- The Food Safety Standards give the maximum times for cooling foods. Potentially hazardous foods must be cooled from **60°C to 21°C within two hours** and **to 5°C within a further four hours**. Many large cuts of meat and large pots of stews will not cool down quickly enough unless portioned or decanted into smaller portions. Use a thermometer to establish whether your cooling process meets the legal requirements.
- Maintain a temperature log for this purpose
- Refrigerated units and freezers on board trailers and vehicles on a tour are designed to store product that is already chilled or frozen and may not be suitable for cooling food within the times specified in the Food Safety Standards. If your units cannot cool food in the times listed in the next paragraph you should not plan menus that involve precooking and cooling food.

**Reheating**

- On a tour, reheated food may be consumed immediately, or may be kept hot after reheating for consumption later. If potentially hazardous food is being reheated make sure it is rapidly reheated to at least 74°C – the time to do this should not exceed two hours. If food is to be held hot for consumption at a later time it should be held at a temperature of **60°C or above**
- If there are insufficient facilities to reheat foods, to **74°C or above**, reheating food should be avoided.
- Do **not** reheat food more than once.

**Displaying ready to eat food**

- All potentially hazardous foods not kept under temperature control must follow the 2hour/4hour Rule as specified below
- The times that food is out of temperature control during preparation, storage, display and transport must be added together to give a total period when it has been out of temperature control.
- Food containers should never be “topped up” by adding food to that already on display

<b>2 hour / 4 hour rule</b>	
<b>Total time out of Temperature Control (5°C-60°C)</b>	<b>Action Required</b>
Less than 2 hours	Refrigerate or use immediately
Between 2 hours and 4 hours	Use immediately
More than 4 hours	Throw out

**Packaging Food**

If you are packing food or re-packing food during the tour for further use, the following potential hazards need to be considered:

- Only use suitable food grade materials to package food.
- Keep packaging free from contamination during transport
- All packaging materials must be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition and good repair at all times.
- Do not re-use packaging materials to avoid potential cross contamination.
- All food should be appropriately labelled. Including information such as the name of the food, date food was packaged and any potential allergenic ingredients the food may contain.

**Food Disposal**

**Any food that is found to be unsafe through means such as contamination, prolonged times out of temperature control or by a notified food recall must be clearly identified and kept isolated from safe food.**

- Where dedicated garbage or rubbish bins are available for food disposal these should be utilised, if facilities for disposal of unsafe food and packaging materials are not immediately available then it should be placed in sealed clearly identifiable containers and kept separate from food, equipment and utensils being used during the tour.