

Protective Clothing for the Food Industry Personal Hygiene/Training

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important ways to protect both your self and the end customer is to wear protective clothing. This clothing has a number of functions within the Food Industry.

- Regulatory/ Legal - There are many different forms of legislation and regulations that prescribe what type of clothing should be worn by those working in the Food Industry.
- Personal Safety - Some of the products used in the preparation or storage of food can potentially cause harm to yourself or others, when this is the case adequate personal protection (PPE) must be provided and used
- Food Production Protection- In addition to any regulatory or legal requirements placed on the producer some manufacturer's will have their own specifications and requirements when choosing their garments as may the retail partners.
- Hierarchical/ chain of command - In some organisations within the Food Industry, garments and clothing may be used to show the "Chain of Command". This could be through the use of colours, stripes or hats. It could be as simple as stars on a badge.
- Area of work - Having a recognisably different uniform that distinguish the different parts of the food process roles this help prevent cross contamination. If one area of the business only handled raw meat and another only handled cooked meat it would be imperative that these workers had clothing that was instantly easy to tell apart. The safety of the food product is too important not have this in place. This is purely to prevent the workers crossing into other areas.
- Personal Hygiene - Keeping ones self and ones clothes clean within the Food Industry is extremely important. It helps stop the spread of infection and keeps the food product safe for the consumers. As shown in a recent spike in Covid 19 cases in meat processing factories, workers are in condition where they will come in to close contact with other people. It is important they manage their own personal hygiene and keep themselves clean. By providing comfortable clothing that fits well they employer would be able to signal to their workers the standards that are expected.

What is unique about the food processing industry as opposed to other industries. PPE is work for the safety of the food and consumer atherosclerosis than the protection of the worker. It is therefore important for their protection and safety that it is worn and procedures followed. Food safety regulators do carry out inspection and enforcement action on those not following the rules.

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WHAT IS THE LAW?

The Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations state that “Every person working in a food handling area shall maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and shall wear suitable, clean, and where appropriate, protective clothing.” it continues “adequate changing facilities for personnel must be provided where necessary”.

For food industries (or any employer) a consideration for the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSAW) is required. The HSAW puts a duty of care to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees. The act states, Imposing requirements with respect to the provision and use in specified circumstances of protective clothing - including clothing affording protection against the weather”.

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) stipulate that where the use of such substances cannot be controlled by other means, “The employer shall provide those employees with such personal protective equipment as will adequately control their exposure to substances hazardous to health”. Within Food Production there are many substances that can be used that might be harmful to the consumer. These could be fertiliser, pesticides or preservatives and it is the responsibility of the producer to ensure that all food they make is safe for human consumption. The employer would also need to ensure anything used in the production of food where harm could happen to their workers they are required to ensure all staff are given the correct safety equipment that is fit for purpose and fits accordingly.

HEAD COVERINGS

In any business where food is produced it is important that a head covering is worn either in the form of a hat or hair net. This is to ensure that both contamination or bacterial contaminants have no possibility to enter the product and the food market.

Any head covering should fully enclose the hair to offer 360 protection. This will reduce the risk of foreign bodies contaminating the food.

Hairnets, when used, should be brightly coloured to ensure they are identifiable. (usually blue) to be easily seen.

All the head hair should be covered including beards and moustaches. Beard snoods in net and disposable fabric are available, and should be worn to minimise contamination. This also includes the site engineers, all contracted staff and any visitors to the site.

The ears, eyes and nose of a worker may require protection. For someone

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handling dusty ingredients, such as flour, a face mask will protect the lungs from inhaled dust.

Other headcovering to be considered should it be necessary are, glasses and ear defenders depending on the environment.



FOOTWEAR

Ideally, footwear should be dedicated to the work area. Operatives should ensure that the shoes that they choose are comfortable and well fitting. The shoes should be readily cleanable. They should be stored on cleanable racks in the changing room.

It is good practice as well as for health and safety reasons that the wearing of safety shoes should be compulsory. Shoes should be chosen which have a reinforced toecap and a non-slip sole. Visitors must also comply with footwear requirements. Accordingly, a range of sizes of spare footwear should be kept available for them. Otherwise, plastic overshoes should be available to cover the visitors' shoes when they reach the changing room.

Wellington boots will be required where wet processing or cleaning is carried out, or where a footbath is installed at a doorway to prevent cross-contamination. Footwear should be colour coded where ever possible as a reminder of the hygiene requirements of the production area.



GLOVES

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Gloves should be worn in two main situations, as a covering when preparing food and therefore to protect the consumer from any poor hygienics of the worker, or for the safety of the worker when handling hot products

When a worker is using gloves to handle food they need to wash their hands before putting gloves on and after taking them off

The gloves need to be a surgical style glove that are disposable after each use, however, as many gloves that are commonly available are made from Latex, this may be an issue for people who are latex sensitive.

For those handling products an over glove would be needed to prevent harm or injury to the worker.