

# Structural standards for domestic food premises

**Responsible directorate:** Health Services

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BOROONDARA

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 About this document

*The Food Act 1984* ('the Act') and The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code require a domestic food premises to meet certain requirements.

This document on the structural standards for domestic food premises aims to assist domestic businesses to ensure compliance with the general legislative provisions of the Act and the Food Standards Code.

This guide also provides reference to requirements contained with the Australian Standards AS 4674 – Design Construction and Fit out of Food Premises.

Good food premises layout will promote good hygiene, which will result in the safe storage and preparation of food.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of these specifications, contact your Environmental Health Officer.

Our Building Services and Planning Services should also be consulted for further requirements. Matters such as lighting, ventilation and toilets are also covered by the Building Code of Australia.

This publication does not intend to be a prescriptive document. Its purpose is to provide guidance to new domestic food premises or when planning construction or alterations to a home kitchen to meet domestic food premises requirements.

It is recognised that alternative techniques or procedures may be available to achieve compliance with the Act and you should familiarise yourself with other legal obligations under the Act and Food Standards Code to ensure your domestic business is compliant.

## 2 Food premises requirements

### 2.1 Floor plans

Although not mandatory, we ask that you submit a copy of floor plans with a scale not less than 1:100 to our Health Services Team to provide an initial assessment of your planned domestic premises, or before any work on the construction, renovation or alteration of your kitchen is carried out.

The plans should include details such as the location and finish of walls, ceilings, floors, fixtures and fittings, and the nature of the work processes to be completed.

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Separate plans should also be provided, outlining the details of any mechanical exhaust system to be installed.

When showing the current layout of your proposed domestic premises, or developing plans for a new business, consider the following:

- adequate space to permit a workflow that will separate food handling areas to prevent cross-contamination between food handled in one area and another
- chilled, hot and dry goods storage space for ingredients, raw materials and final products
- storage space for recalled and other products kept separate from products for use
- the correct number of sinks for the practices to take place at the business, such as a food preparation sink, equipment washing sinks, dishwasher, easily accessible hand washing basins to meet the requirements of the Food Standards Code
- storage of chemicals separate from other business storage
- adequate storage for garbage and recyclable materials
- adequate hot water system to provide enough hot water to the business.

This list is not exhaustive but indicates the scope of what is required.

## **2.2 Water supply, sewage and waste water disposal**

There must be an adequate supply of drinkable quality water for all activities conducted on the food premises.

There must be enough hot and cold water capacity for the food business to carry out all operations even during peak operating times.

Food premises must have a sewage and waste water disposal system that will effectively dispose of all sewage and waste water and be constructed and located so that there is no likelihood of the sewage and waste water polluting the water supply or contaminating food.

The laundry sink may be used for the filling and disposal of mop bucket water.

All dishwashers, sinks and floor waste must be connected to the sewer.

## **2.3 Storage of garbage and recyclable materials**

There should be a storage area suitable for containing the required volume and type of garbage and recyclable material.

This storage area should be:

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- large enough to store and enclose the required number of bins away from pests and animals
- designed and constructed to be easily and effectively cleaned.

## **2.4 Lighting**

Adequate lighting by natural or artificial means is essential to ensure food handlers can see whether equipment and surfaces are clean, and to be able to notice signs of pests.

## **2.5 Ventilation**

Food premises must have sufficient natural or mechanical ventilation to effectively remove fumes, smoke steam and vapours from the food premises.

Mechanical ventilation is recommended to be placed above all cooking equipment such as stoves, ovens, hotplates, grills and deep fryers.

Natural ventilation is only suitable in premises where there is little or no cooking. Equipment such as microwaves, sandwich press and toasters generally don't require mechanical ventilation.

## **2.6 Floors**

The floor surface of each room or area used by the business must be:

- capable of being effectively cleaned
- impervious to grease, food particles or water
- laid so that there is no ponding of water
- resistant to harbouring pests.

Examples of impervious materials are:

- quarry tiles
- ceramic tiles
- epoxy finishes
- laminate and vinyl.

This list is not exhaustive and other materials may also be suitable.

## **2.7 Walls**

Walls in areas where food is manufactured or handled should be smooth, easy to clean and impervious.

Wall surfaces should be light in colour to assist cleaning.

Examples of suitable materials for walls include:

- stainless steel
- ceramic tiles
- vinyl tiles
- painted plaster.

This list is not exhaustive and other materials may also be suitable.

Walls behind cooking equipment should be faced with a smooth and impervious material from floor level to the underside of the mechanical exhaust canopy.

It is recommended that walls behind cooking equipment be finished with a smooth and durable splashback such as stainless steel, glass or tiles.

## **2.8 Ceiling**

The ceiling in areas where food is manufactured, prepared, packed or stored (excluding unopened packages) should be of a rigid, dustproof, non-absorbent material and free from cracks, crevices or openings.

The use of flush-jointed plasterboard painted with washable gloss paint is recommended, but other materials may also be suitable. Discuss this with your Environmental Health Officer.

## **2.9 Premises protection from infestation**

All parts of the domestic food premises should be designed and constructed to prevent access for rodents, birds, animals and insects. This includes making sure there are no gaps or holes in walls, ceilings and floors that could provide pathways for mice and rats, or harbourage for crawling insects like cockroaches.

Every window and ventilation opening to the outside should be covered with a fly-wire screen or other suitable method to prevent pest entry.

It is recommended you consult a professional pest controller to eradicate insects and pests such as flies, cockroaches, rats and mice and to investigate problems every 6

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months. The pest controller can also provide advice and assistance to protect the premises from the entry and harbourage of pests.

## **2.10 Pets**

Animals and pets including dogs, cats and birds are not permitted where food is prepared and stored, or in a vehicle where food is transported. It is important to prevent their access as they can spread bacteria onto food and food contact surfaces.

## **3 Fixtures, fittings and equipment**

Fixtures, fittings and equipment must be designed, constructed, located and installed so that:

- there is no likelihood that they will cause food contamination
- they are able to be easily and effectively cleaned
- they do not provide harbourage for pests.

The surface of shelving, including edges, should be smooth, durable, non-absorbent, free of cracks and crevices and suitable to the nature of work processes to be carried out. Examples of suitable surface materials include glass, metal, plastic and laminate.

The surface of all tables, benches, trays, counters, appliances, equipment and fittings should be constructed of rigid, non-toxic, durable impervious material and be free of cracks and crevices.

There must be adequate bench space for food preparation activities and to prevent cross-contamination.

To protect all food, utensils and equipment from contamination, consider the following:

- Do not store food, utensils or equipment on the floor.
- Provide adequate drawers for storage of utensils.

### **3.1 Hand washing facilities**

Domestic premises are required to have a dedicated and permanent hand washing facility in the immediate food preparation area. A double-bowl sink may comply if one bowl is used exclusively for hand washing when food is being prepared, and separate taps are provided with suitable processes to prevent cross-contamination from hand washing activities into adjacent sinks.

Food handlers should not have to travel more than 5 metres to the nearest basin, and a toilet hand washing basin cannot be used as a kitchen hand washing basin.

We will conduct a risk assessment of available facilities on a case-by-case basis.

You must always provide liquid hand soap and paper towels at the hand washing facility during food preparation.

### **3.2 Sinks and food preparation areas**

You must provide an adequate number of sinks to prepare food, and to clean and sanitise utensils.

You must have a double-bowl sink with hot and cold running water supplied through a single outlet. The sink must be able to fully immerse the largest piece of equipment in the bowl.

In kitchens where there is a double-bowl sink and a dishwasher, one of the sinks may be used for hand washing.

The dishwasher must be capable of effectively sanitising equipment at 82°C. We recommend you set a domestic dishwasher to the 'heavy duty' or 'pots and pans' cycle to sanitise equipment.

In addition to appropriate cleaning and sanitising sinks and equipment, you may need a separate sink for food processing.

### **3.3 Cleaning and sanitising**

Equipment and surfaces in your premises must be cleaned and sanitised correctly to minimise the transmission of infectious diseases and to protect food from contamination.

You must use a food grade sanitiser in all commercial and home-based food premises. You may purchase a quarternary ammonium-based food grade sanitiser from a chemical or catering supply company, or you may wish to make this up using household bleach (4% available chlorine) by mixing half a teaspoon of bleach to one litre of water in a spray bottle. (Note: this needs to be made fresh each day of operation.)

### **3.4 Storage facilities**

All storage areas must be located so there can be no likelihood of non-food items contaminating food or food contact surfaces. They must have sufficient shelving so that food is not stored on the floor.

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We recommend that shelving is on legs at least 150mm in height to enable access for cleaning.

All storage areas must be adequately pest-proofed to prevent contamination by animals, vermin or flying insects.

Storage allocated for business use must be clearly separated and labelled as 'business use only'.

### **3.5 Refrigeration and freezer units**

Adequate refrigerated or freezer space must be provided for the storage of all perishable foods on the premises.

The Food Standards Code requires that all high-risk food must be stored below 5°C and food that is intended to be stored frozen must be stored in a freezer that can keep food frozen.

All freezers should maintain a temperature of less than minus 15°C.

### **3.6 Chemical storage**

Cleaning materials, equipment and detergents need to be stored separately from food to avoid the risk of contamination.

### **3.7 Toilet facilities**

You must provide adequate toilet and hand washing facilities for food handlers to use during food operations. This should include:

- hand washing facilities with warm water through a single outlet
- liquid hand soap
- paper hand towels.

## **4 Labelling**

When you prepare food in your home that you intend to sell to another business (such as a grocery store) to on-sell, or you plan to package food at home before selling it at another location (such as a farmers' market), you are responsible for ensuring that the food you prepare is safe to eat and suitably labelled.

All packaged food prepared and sold must be labelled correctly to ensure customers can make informed choices when purchasing food including persons with allergies.

Requirements include:

- Name and/or description of food
- List of ingredients, with allergen-containing ingredients in bold font
- Date marked as 'best before' or 'use by' as appropriate to the product
- Nutrition Information Panel
- Country of origin of food
- Warning and advisory statements (for example contains tree nuts, gluten)
- Precautionary allergen statement (for example may contain traces of shellfish)
- Batch numbering (food recall information)
- Name and street address of the producer of food (food recall information)
- Contact details of the producer of food.

Unless exempt, all packaged food for retail sale is required to display a Nutritional Information Panel (NIP). You can calculate the average nutrient content of food products to prepare a NIP using [Food Standards Australia New Zealand's online Nutrition Panel Calculator](#).

For more details and to find out about exemptions, visit the [National Food Standards website](#) or call our Health Services team on [\(03\) 9278 4710](#).

## **5 Food safety standards**

A food business is any business or activity involving the handling of any type of food for sale, or the sale of food in Australia.

Food safety standards place obligations on Australian food businesses to produce food that is safe and suitable to eat.

The standards, which also contain health and hygiene obligations for food handlers, aim to lower the incidence of food-borne illness.

Charity and community groups, temporary events and home-based businesses are exempt from some of the requirements in the food safety standards. Contact your Environmental Health Officer for more information.

Food Safety Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has developed separate standards for food businesses in the primary production and processing sectors. You can find these

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online in Chapter 3 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (Australia only):

- [Standard 3.1.1 – Interpretation and application](#)
- [Standard 3.2.2 – Food safety practices and general requirements](#)
- [Standard 3.2.3 – Food premises and equipment.](#)

See also the Safe Food Australia guide, listed in the More resources at section at the bottom of this document.

## **5.1 Temperature control**

Temperature control is important for ensuring the safety and suitability of food. Ensure that you use a food grade probe thermometer that can accurately measure internal temperature of food to plus and minus 1°C.

- Cook food to an internal temperature of 75°C without overloading the oven.
- Cool food as quickly as possible.
- Keep hot food at 60°C or above.
- Keep cold food at 5°C or less.
- Control temperatures during transportation to and from your home.

### **What to look for when buying a thermometer**

All food businesses where potentially hazardous food is handled must have a temperature measuring device that is readily accessible and can accurately measure the temperature of potentially hazardous hot and cold food to plus and minus 1°C.

The thermometer must not be constructed of mercury and glass, due to the danger of it breaking into food.

The thermometer must be able to measure the temperature of your freezers, which should be less than minus 18°C but also be able to measure the temperature of foods you are cooking or re-heating to ensure that bacteria is being killed.

Thermometers with a probe measure the internal temperature of the food. Non-contact thermometers such as infrared thermometers measure the surface temperature of the food and are not suitable for use. Care must be taken when measuring the temperature of food to ensure the probe is sanitised. This should be done with a solution of 70% alcohol or contact with hot water at or above 77°C for at least 30 seconds.

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This information may be used as a guide to assist you when selecting a thermometer to use in a food premises.

## 5.2 Food transport vehicles

Vehicles used to transport food must be designed and constructed to protect food during transport.

Potentially hazardous foods are required to be transported under temperature control either:

- at or below 5°C, or
- at or above 60°C.

The food to be transported must be packaged, wrapped or enclosed in food grade containers or sealed bags so that the food is protected from any contamination during transportation.

## 6 Trading at temporary events

If you are planning on selling your produce at a market stall or temporary or mobile premises, you must also be registered on the state-wide registration system FoodTrader.

Once you are registered with FoodTrader, you are required to lodge a statement of trade each time you operate your business at an event or market.

Find more information at the [FoodTrader website](#).

## 7 Further resources

- [The Food Act 1984](#) on the Victorian Legislation website.
- [Safe Food Australia guide to food safety standards](#) on the Food Standards Australia and New Zealand website.
- Australian Standard AS4674 – Design, construction and fit out of food premises.
- Australian Standard 1668: Part 1 and 2 – The use of mechanical ventilation and air conditioning in buildings.
- Building Code of Australia.
- Watch the Victorian Department of Health's [YouTube animation on how to start a home-based kitchen](#).

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