



# Food Safety Risk Management in Outdoor Community Events



**Food safety at outdoor community events must never be compromised. Whether these events are small outdoor barbeques or large-scale catering events, steps must be taken to ensure the food prepared, or sold to the public is safe.**

Organisers of such outdoor events must give due consideration to the safe storage, production, or preparation of food, and must ensure they comply with the requirements of relevant food hygiene legislations.

As a general principle, it is always advisable for event organisers and planners to contact the Environmental Health (EH) departments within the relevant local authority for the event. If possible, a plan showing the intended location of marquees, position of services and access/egress points, together with the arrangement of refuse/recycling, emergency planning and crowd management should be shared with EH.

Event organisers will need to undertake a risk assessment (including fire prevention measures) of the event, including the activities involved. They must also have appropriate insurance in place.

A list of all food vendors, including food exhibitors (those giving away food as part of a demonstration), must be shared with the EH. This will help facilitate any investigation in the event of any food disease outbreak that may arise.

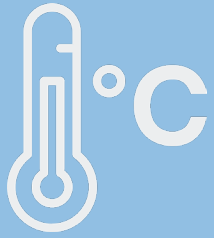


## Food Safety Risk Factors

Organisers of outdoor community events should always consider food safety risk factors and take reasonable precautions to ensure they are being mitigated. The following are common risk factors in outdoor settings:

1. Temperature Control
2. Design and Structure
3. Personal Hygiene
4. Cross-contamination
5. Allergens
6. Pests
7. Training and Competency
8. Environmental Factors
9. Other Factors





## 1. Temperature control

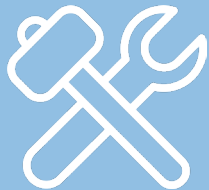
If you are preparing food outdoors, it is essential that the food is always stored at the correct temperature. This is of particular importance with respect to frozen/chilled food, which must adhere to strict temperature controls and be subject to regular monitoring. Failure to adhere to these controls will increase the risk of food spoilage through bacterial contamination.



### Precautions

- Food that needs to be chilled has to be kept at the correct temperature at all times. For example, sandwiches should be left out of the fridge for the minimum possible time, and never for more than four hours.
- After this time, any remaining food should be thrown away or put back in the fridge. If you put food back in the fridge, don't let it stand around at room temperature when you serve it again. It should be eaten as soon as possible. This will prevent any food spoilage bacteria compromising the food, which may lead to food poisoning.





## 2. Design and Structure

All stalls/vehicles or structures designed for the preparation or handling of food must be constructed to protect food from the risk of contamination. This is challenging in outdoor settings where other environmental factors are in play.

### Precautions

- All fittings and equipment (including mobile units) should be of good quality materials capable of being readily cleaned. Bare woods should not be used as they are unsuitable. Stainless steel or laminate surfaces are more suitable and can easily be cleaned.
- Floors in mobile units should be of smooth, impervious, and non-slip material, preferably vaulted to the wall fixtures.
- Stalls should be screened at the sides and back to prevent risk of contamination and deny access to pests.
- Tents/marquees should be of cleanable materials, without which the preparation and cooking areas should be provided with washable wall linings.
- Frequently used walkways should be effectively weatherproofed.
- Lighting levels within the marquee/tent must be adequate.
- Food vendors should allow adequate space for storage, preparation, cooking, and wash-up. This should include ensuring refrigerated storage vehicles and trailers are easily accessible.





### 3. Personal Hygiene

This can also be an issue in outdoor settings where hand-washing facilities aren't always easily accessible. As a result, there is an increased risk of food contamination and possibly the spread of food-borne illnesses such as gastrointestinal infections or other diarrhoeal diseases.

#### Precautions



- High standards of personal hygiene are essential. Dirty crockery and dirty laundry should not be carried through food handling areas.
- Regular hand washing before and after handling food to prevent cross contamination. This is also required after using the toilet, sneezing, coughing etc.
- Where possible, tongs should be used when handling food. All cuts and boils should be covered with waterproof plaster preferably coloured.
- Jewellery and nail varnish should not be worn. Hair should be covered and tied back.
- Also consider using disposal gloves to reduce contact with food.
- Any food handler who suspects or has been made aware they are suffering from any symptoms of food-borne illness (notably diarrhoea and vomiting) must tell their employer or manager without delay. They must also refrain from working or handling food. It's the food vendor's responsibility to ensure any unwell staff are prevented from handling food. This is to help prevent any food contamination.
- Clean washable over-clothing must be worn when handling food.
- Outdoor clothing must be stored away from any food area.





## 4. Cross-contamination

This is the transfer of organisms or other materials (e.g., allergens in food residues) from contaminated surfaces (including raw foods) to other surfaces and foods. This is a higher risk in outdoor settings due to other environmental factors including dust, rain, insects, that may come in contact with food.

### Precautions

- As earlier highlighted as a risk factor, one of the main challenges facing food vendors in community settings is to protect food from any form of contamination. It is an essential legal requirement in many countries, including the United Kingdom.
- Food preparation areas should be cleaned/disinfected after use. All equipment, including knives and containers, should be cleaned, and disinfected after use.
- Raw and cooked food should be always kept separate, raw food being stored below cooked, ideally in a separate refrigerator.
- The use of disposable cloths and paper towels is ideal for outdoor settings.
- Food and equipment (including utensils and crockery) must not be stored on the ground; it should be kept at a minimum height of 45cm above and protected from weather, elements, and pests. This will ensure it is free from contamination.





## 5. Allergens

Cooking for someone with a food allergy or intolerance can be worrying if you're not used to doing it. Their safety can't always be guaranteed in outdoor community settings with multiple food vendors and many sources of food contamination. As a food vendor, if you do not ask about any allergy requirements, this may put someone's life at risk by serving them food that may trigger an allergic reaction. The consequences can lead to asphyxiation and possibly death.

### Precautions

- It's no longer enough for food vendors to say they do not know whether food contains an allergen and nor is it enough to say that all their foods may contain allergens. Allergen information must be specific to the food, complete and accurate.
- As a food vendor, you cannot refuse to provide specific allergen information on foods served. You also cannot give incorrect or misleading information on a menu or through verbal communication. This is a criminal offence under the Food Information Regulations 2014, punishable by an unlimited fine.
- If you serve customers with known allergies, you must do more than simply identify what allergens are present in the food, you must have appropriate hygiene controls in place to ensure the food served to them is safe. This includes ensuring the food is not cross-contaminated by other non-allergen foods during storage, preparation, cooking and service.





## 6. Pests

Pests are disease vectors capable of cross-contaminating food, making it unfit for consumption. It is more challenging to control pests in outdoor settings but controlling them is an essential component of food safety management.

### Precautions

- Controlling pests is applicable in all food settings, including outdoor events. As highlighted earlier, pests are disease vectors capable of cross-contaminating food.
- Outdoor food installations must be pest proof to prevent easy access to rodents and other crawling pests.
- Event organisers and food vendors must take steps to prevent pest infestation including using suitable pest control services.







## 7. Training and Competency

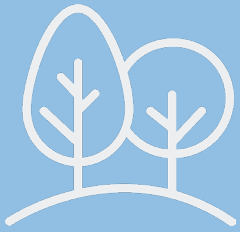
Event catering is considered a high-risk activity with potential for food poisoning and death in the case of severe allergic reactions. There is, therefore, an increased risk if the food handler is not trained to the relevant food safety standard.



### Precautions

- It is recommended that any person who handles food, prepares, or cooks high-risk food has a qualification in food hygiene equivalent to CIEH Level 2 certificate. Zurich can provide an allergen awareness training if required.





## 8. Environmental Factors

Event organisers and food vendors should consider weather conditions during the planning phase of an event. For example, the risk of cross-contamination and food spoilage is high in very hot conditions in the summer. Vendors must ensure they have the correct storage capacity for chilled/frozen foods.



### Precautions

- Weather forecasts should be an important consideration for organisers when planning outdoor events.
- The site selection process should also consider wind and any surrounding sources of possible pollutants. For example, it might not be suitable to locate an event in an area with poor sanitary conditions like the presence of a nearby waste recycling plant. This is because it is most likely that pest activities will be high in such environments.





## 9. Other Factors

Due consideration must be given to water supplies for food preparation, electricity for refrigeration and lighting, hand-washing stations, and waste management. Food vendors must have access to clean water regardless of setting. This can be a risk in outdoor settings where water supply is not always readily available. The overflow of wastes can attract pests, which in turn increases the risk of cross-contamination of food. Lack of hand-washing stations may also promote cross-contamination and the spread of food-borne illnesses.

### Precautions

Outdoor events take place in a wide variety of sites and locations. At some sites it may be possible to provide essential services such as water, drainage, and electricity, but at others it may not. You need to find out the service arrangements before arriving on site. There must be an adequate supply of clean and wholesome water provided.

- **Water supply** - There must be an adequate supply of clean and wholesome water provided (ideally from the mains). If water containers are used, they must be cleaned and sanitised on a regular basis.
- **Drainage** - Wastewater from sinks and hand basins should be discharged into a foul water system or into suitable containers, and not directly onto the ground.
- **Electrical supply** - Mains electricity should be provided for

lighting/power supply where practicable. Electrical appliances must be protected from the weather, physical damage and interference. Appliances must be protected by residual current circuit breakers. Cables and flexes must be positioned so as not to cause a trip hazard. If generators are to be used, steps should be taken to place them safely, protect from interference and to reduce noise and fume nuisance. A competent electrician should carry out all installation electrical work.

- **Washing facilities** - Suitable sinks must be provided for food preparation/kitchen areas and for equipment washing. The use of plastic bowls as sinks, or wash hand basins is not recommended. A constant supply of hot water should be provided at the sink(s) and wash hand basin/station.
- **Staff toilets** - Separate toilets for the exclusive use of food handlers should be provided on site where possible. The toilet facilities should have suitable and sufficient washing provision with hot and cold water, soap, and paper towels or some other means of drying hands. The provision of antibacterial alcohol gels is not a substitute for hand-washing, but a supplement.
- **Cleaning** - Adequate supplies of suitable food grade disinfectants or sanitising agents should be used for the regular disinfection of equipment and work surfaces. Hazardous





## 9. Other Factors (continued)



substances such as cleaning materials must be used and stored in a safe manner.

- **Transporting food** - Vehicles and storage areas should be of sound construction, kept in good repair and able to be cleaned. Ensure that appropriate containers are used. The use of refrigerated vehicles is recommended.
- **Waste management** - There must be an adequate supply of suitable refuse containers provided. Plastic sacks must be tied securely and stored to prevent attraction of pests.
- **Cooking appliances** - All gas appliances must be fitted with a flame failure device and adequately ventilated. All fryers should be fitted with an automatic high temperature-limiting device (operates at a fat temperature of 250°C or lower). Suitable signs indicating “Caution – LPG” and “Highly Flammable” should be displayed.
- **Smoking** - You are not allowed to smoke inside any catering vehicle, tent, or stall.

### References

- General food law | Food Standards Agency
- Key regulations | Food Standards Agency
- The Food Information Regulations 2014 ([legislation.gov.uk](http://legislation.gov.uk))





## Food Hygiene Checklist

A simple food hygiene requirement checklist (see below) that can guide organiser and food vendors when setting up during an outdoor event. An example checklist is provided below. Should food inspectors attend an event, it would be expected that all high-risk food vendors will comply with every aspect of the checklist at a minimum.

### Outdoor Events Caterers - Food Hygiene Requirements Checklist

	Yes	No
Have you registered your business with your local Environmental Health Department?		
Have you got a copy of your written food safety document available?		
Is your vehicle / stall in a condition which ensures food is not exposed to contamination?		
Have you got enough sinks? Are you supplied with hot & cold water?		
Have you got cleaning materials and cloths?		
Have you got enough water basins? Are they supplied with hot & cold water, soap and paper towels?		
Have you got enough clean, water containers?		
Can you dispose of water correctly?		
Have you got bins / refuse sacks for rubbish?		
Have you got adequate chilled and frozen food storage?		
Is the equipment capable of keeping food at the correct temperatures?		
Are raw and cooked / ready-to-eat foods kept separately?		
Have you got a probe thermometer? Can it be properly cleaned?		
Is food cooked to at least 75 ° C (and kept hot above 63 ° C )?		
Do you and staff have washable, clean overalls?		
Are you and your staff properly trained?		
Do you have a first aid kit?		