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With so many demands placed upon it, how can a small business create a stable health and safety culture?

A Balancing Act

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A Balancing Act

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Making safety a priority is key to any successful business – large or small. However, the distinct culture of a small business can create some unique health and safety challenges and opportunities. In Ontario, over 80% of the service industry is comprised of small businesses. OSSA recently established a team to develop and launch a

small business delivery model for its small business members.

Jan Hill, a health and safety consultant with OSSA, is a member of OSSA's small business team. "The motivation to protect employees is high within small businesses," notes Hill. "However, the responsibility for providing a safe work environment sometimes gets lost because owners think that a health and safety system does not apply to small business."

The OSSA delivery model divides the development of an integrated health and safety system into four steps to accommodate the needs of this diverse group:

1. Creating Risk Perception and Awareness

"For many businesses, learning that they have responsibilities is a big eye-opener."

By virtue of their size, small businesses experience few lost time injuries. This can create the perception among employers that the risk of injury is low. For example, a workplace with 20 employees may experience only two lost-time injuries per year. At first glance, the injury rate may seem low. Upon closer inspection, however, that rate translates into a startling statistic – 10% of the workforce is being injured each year.

Research shows that risk perception and awareness is usually at its lowest point during the start-up phase of a small business when the owner/operator is preoccupied with the tasks associated with running a new business. Hill notes, "Risk perception and awareness usually become more important for the owner/operator after the first accident."

In many cases, that first accident may occur in a business that has been accident-free for years. "By the time many small businesses have an accident, they have gotten use to the hazard and no longer see it as a risk," notes Hill. "That's why it's important to recognize situations that can become hazardous – before they become a loss."

2. Responsibility to Provide a Safe Work Environment

"For many businesses, learning that they have responsibilities is a big eye-opener," notes Hill. "They don't realize that the responsibility applies to them. They feel it is something that is aimed at larger, more sophisticated and more hazardous workplaces."

In its research, OSSA's small business team found that many small business owners believed they couldn't do anything about an accident or felt it was out of their control or too difficult or expensive to prevent. "Owners may feel that workers' compensation will cover the incident or they might convince themselves that it won't happen again," says Hill. "Some feel that occupational health and safety is cost-prohibitive. Often, they don't know how to assess risk and what things can be done."

Moving up to the creation of a viable health and safety culture requires that small business owners and operators learn about the components of an occupational health and safety system. An important part of that process involves accepting responsibility and communicating safety information to employees.

In a small company, that awareness can start with something as simple as sending a letter to all employees outlining its plans to make safety as important as quality. At the same time, all employees should receive basic information about occupational health and safety, their legal obligations and responsibilities.

3. Complying with Legislative Requirements

Complying with legislative requirements will often take a small business owner one step closer to a functional health and safety system. Still, many small business owners feel overwhelmed by the laws and codes that make up provincial legislation. "Complying with legislative requirements shouldn't be a complicated and arduous process," notes Hill. "There are lots of things an employer can do that don't take a lot of time – but make a big impact."

Simple easy-to-follow guidelines and check sheets can often increase the level of knowledge in a new business. To get started, OSSA offers downloadable material on its website.

"Occupational health and safety compliance is an on-going responsibility, and must be followed-up at routine intervals during the life cycle of the business."

Once legislative requirements have been determined, it is up to the owner to keep them up-to-date. "Occupational health and safety compliance must be reviewed regularly during the life cycle of the business," notes Hill.

4. Integrating a Health and Safety System into ALL Business Practices

A functional health and safety system for the small business owner reflects the workplace culture and its unique business practices. Of course, improving health and safety in this environment requires more than a simple change in behaviour. "Many owner/operators understand health and safety not as a bureaucratic function of management but as a personal moral responsibility," notes Hill.

Health and safety of workers should start in the recruitment and hiring process. More and more, an employer's health and safety awareness level is becoming a 'selling point' for young people looking for safer environments in which to work. Hill notes, "With so much health and safety awareness in high schools today, it is increasingly becoming a factor in the young worker's decision-making process."

In the interview process, employers should get a sense of how prospective employees feel about a total commitment to safety. Have they worked in other organizations where safety is a top priority? Always make the candidate aware of the physical demands of the job.

Throughout the organization, small business owners should look at their strengths and daily practices. Then they should build health and safety into those normal practices. "Health and safety should never become an item on a to-do list," notes Hill. "It must be an important part of a business culture and it must be integrated into everything the business does – every day."

From creating awareness to health and safety to ensuring the tools, practices and attitudes are in place to make a program successful, small business owners have the ability to make their workplaces safer and healthier. It's a goal that OSSA consultants like Jan Hill work toward every day with clients around the province. "I truly have a passion for working with small business," she says. "The relationships we develop are often lasting ones. We consider it a partnership. It is also our opportunity to demonstrate just how much caring pays."

CLIENT SERVICES LINE

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) is Canada's national resource for occupational health and safety information. We asked Roger Cockerline, Manager of the CCOHS Inquiries Service, about the benefits of the Client Services Line to OSSA members.

What is the Client Services Line?

The Client Services Line is a person-to-person telephone service that OSSA members can use to get answers to questions on the many health or safety concerns people have about the work they do. CCOHS provides OSSA members with up-to-the-minute, knowledgeable and quality information, research and service from an extensive database maintained by CCOHS.

Is the Client Services Line new?

CCOHS has operated an Inquiries Service as a person-to-person information service available to all Canadians for almost 20 years. The Client Services Line was formed in partnership with OSSA in 2000.

What kind of information can be accessed from the Client Services Line?

Many OSSA members think of the Client Services line as a product ordering system. While you can order all of OSSA's products, the Service also answers questions about virtually any topic dealing with health and safety in the workplace. A caller may be looking for information on the health hazards related to working with computers. He may be wondering how to work safely with the chemicals he handles at work. Callers may also request information about getting in touch with their local OSSA consultant.

CCOHS personnel are qualified to answer a diverse range of questions. All inquiries are answered and peer-reviewed by a team of specialists in occupational health and safety and information retrieval who have access to an extensive library of products and publications from across Ontario, Canada, and the world.

Who can ask for information?

The Client Services Line is available in English and French to all members of the service industry. It is accessible by telephone, fax, mail and e-mail. The information is provided free-of-charge and the service is confidential - we do not reveal the names of our inquirers to anyone or any agency. This service is primarily for Canadians, however, since it is funded by government agencies across Canada.

Who answers the inquiries?

Inquiries are answered by a team of CCOHS specialists with expertise in occupational health and safety and information retrieval. This team has access to all of the CCOHS technical expertise, publications and computerized information sources in addition to an extensive

library containing specialized journals, books and microfiche collections.

We answer questions with information at an appropriate level that meets the needs of the inquirer. All responses are reviewed by subject specialists before they are sent to the person who has requested a response.

Is the Client Services Line an Emergency Response service?

No, while we try to provide the information in a timely fashion, the Client Services Line is not an emergency response service. Inquirers will be referred to other, more appropriate agencies or organizations if the Line cannot provide the immediate response requested.

How long does it take to get an answer?

To be fair to all inquirers, all requests, whether received by telephone, e-mail or fax, are put in the same queue and are generally answered in the order of receipt. We say "generally" because many questions may have pre-prepared responses that we can process quickly whereas other questions require individualized research before they can be answered.

We try to answer questions within two weeks. Some answers go out the same day they are received but others can take longer to answer. The response times vary depending on the complexity of the questions, the availability of pre-prepared answers, the amount of customized literature research required, and so on. Our responses are usually sent by postal mail since much of the information is not in a form that can be e-mailed.

What is the benefit of the Client Services Line for OSSA members?

We help people gather information on health and safety so that they can make informed decisions about specific issues in the workplace. This information can help people to identify hazards, take action to prevent injuries, or control conditions that may affect their health and that of other workers.

With one call, OSSA members can tap into the CCOHS and OSSA's expertise in health and safety information, and access valuable information, training and consulting products, services and contacts. Fully trained Client Services Line representatives are able to answer health and safety questions, provide safety resources, capture and fax research information and direct callers to OSSA's products, services and consultants.



GROUND BREAKERS

In our consulting approach, OSSA seeks a long-term, wholly integrated commitment to health and safety from our members. Groundbreakers are member firms who have come to realize the value of this approach through working with OSSA. Groundbreakers strive to make health and safety part of the workplace culture. They recognize the link between healthy, safe employees and customer service excellence, and they're willing to do what it takes to create a genuinely caring environment.

Paving and S

ESAM CONSTRUCTION

(Standing)
Harvey Katz,
Owner, ESAM Construction

(Sitting)
Anne Brown,
Health & Safety Coordinator

Howard Katz,
Owner, ESAM Construction

g the Way to Health afety Success

by Suzan Butyn

As a health and safety professional hired by ESAM Construction, Anne Brown hit the ground running. At the time, ESAM had just failed a surprise Workwell audit – a shock that supported their decision to hire their first full-time health and safety coordinator.

Based in London, Ontario, ESAM has been in business since 1957. Although its name implies that it is strictly in construction, the business is two-fold: building residential and commercial properties and managing them. Their first project involved transforming swampland in the city's Cherryhill district into residential high-rise apartment buildings, which they own and manage today. ESAM has also been responsible for the construction of Cherryhill Village Mall and a 52-lane bowling centre called Fleetway.

Having worked for a construction company as a health and safety coordinator for 13 years, Anne Brown was just who owners Howard and Harvey Katz were looking for. ESAM had always been committed to health and safety. A joint health and safety committee was created in 1994 with representation for the different divisions. The company's Operations Manager conducted regular 15-minute health and safety talks. However, a number of small loss-time claims earned them the attention of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) and the subsequent surprise audit.

Says Harvey Katz, "We knew we had to make our health and safety program more efficient and formalized. We wanted a better paper trail and Anne helped us achieve that."

Brown's immediate priority was to build a responsive health and safety program that would ensure the next Workwell audit would be passed. "Normally," Brown explains, "a good health and safety program takes two years to get up and running and to see results but I didn't have that luxury."

The health and safety challenges that ESAM Construction faced included providing comprehensive and systematic training for a diverse work force covering several divisions: the main office (including the post office in the mall), building managers, the health club, exterior maintenance, interior maintenance, mall cleaning, landscaping, the bowling centre and security. Within these areas there were 100 full-time and 30 part-time employees.

From the beginning, Anne's ace in the hole was the commitment of the owners. Howard and

Harvey Katz gave her carte blanche to do whatever needed to be done to implement a specialized health and safety program. Says Brown, "I've never seen support like this from the top. They were ready and willing to do whatever was required and they even let me educate them along with the workers. They made my job a lot easier."

To get ready for the audit, training was given the top priority. All employees received a 30-page handbook outlining the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the law, supported by OSHA videos. Everyone also received Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System training and supervisors and building managers began conducting "Tool Talks."

Since ESAM has such a diverse workforce, Anne and the Katzes decided to empower each department to offer job-specific training to their employees. "Now," Brown says, "no one operates any equipment before they are fully trained." ESAM's hard work paid off handsomely. The company passed the next Workwell audit with flying colours – within months of the first one.

Today, ESAM Construction receives rebates instead of surcharges. Howard Katz conducts workplace inspections and both owners participate on the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) that meets four times a year. "Normally," Brown concedes, "having CEOs participate on the committee is not recommended because it can inhibit frank employee participation, but it was a gamble we were willing to take." It paid off. Their direct interaction is one of the reasons health and safety action items happen quickly. "Howard wanted to see first-hand the ability of people on the committee to deal with the questions right then and there. When there is an action item that arises from a meeting, he wants to be notified when it has been done. As far as employee reluctance goes, we haven't found any hesitation from our worker reps about bringing issues forward."

With the immediacy of the second audit over, Brown has had two years to implement the other pillars of their health and safety program. One of them has been to have ESAM participate in the Safe Communities Incentive Program (SCIP). SCIP is an incentive program developed by the WSIB that is offered to participating small businesses within Ontario's Safe Community network. Local small

businesses work together as a group to reduce their claim costs while receiving invaluable health and safety training. London is one of 22 Safe Communities in Ontario.

Performance appraisals drum home the importance and accountability essential for continued success in health and safety. ESAM recently implemented a new hazard reporting system and everyone has been trained in fall protection training. Company representatives continue to work on their Certification Part Two training.

Even with the best health and safety program in place, employers face occasional resistance from workers. At ESAM, Brown found workers who were reluctant to wear safety glasses. "They just weren't taking the safety issue seriously," explains Brown. "That's why we implemented a punitive system for safety violations." Each infraction increased the penalties from a verbal warning with a written ticket and training, to a written warning in the worker's performance record and finally, a possible suspension. "Once we had these warnings in place, the few that hadn't followed the rules started taking safety a lot more seriously," says Brown. "I think employees understand now that we are committed to health and safety not because we have to be but because we genuinely care about them."

Today, ESAM Construction provides long-term disability that covers employees at home as well as work and the company offers a modified return-to-work program. They insert literature on various health and safety topics like the Healthy Guide to Fitness, camping safety, Canada's Food Guide, and offer a reduced fitness membership at their health club.

Brown says ESAM's success with the second audit was due in large part to the cooperation of its employees and supervisors. "I couldn't do it all. You need people to work with you and luckily we had a great team to get the immediate results we needed." Their initial success has been maintained. Since the integration of their customized health and safety program, Brown proudly acknowledges, "We haven't had a loss-time injury in two years."

"The best part about a good health and safety program," insists Brown, "is that it isn't just an ESAM thing to do. Every employee should work for a company that cares enough about them to ensure a good health and safety program is there to protect them."

Proper shoe wear can make all the difference for foodservice employees.

Slip Sliding Away

From grease left on a kitchen floor to a box left in an aisle way, the potential for slip, trip and fall injuries exists almost everywhere within the foodservice industry. While the cause of slips, trips and falls may be unique, the effect is anything but – concussions, broken bones, sprains, strains, cuts and bruises are some of the most common results.

In Canada, over sixty thousand workers get injured annually due to fall accidents alone. This number represents about fifteen percent of the lost-time injuries experienced by workers across Canada. Understanding ‘why’ slips, trips and falls happen starts with a look at ‘how’ they happen. For every incident, there are three physical forces at work – friction, momentum and gravity. Those forces come together under any number of conditions including wet or slippery surfaces, spills and weather hazards like ice and snow. However, they are more likely to happen when an employee is hurrying, wearing the wrong type of shoe, or lacks education on ways of preventing slip, trip and fall injuries.

At Craig Enterprises, employee safety has always been a top priority. As owner/operator of four Tim Hortons franchises in the Welland, Ontario area, General Manager, Jim Horrocks, remembers a time when slips and falls were a common occurrence. “We used to see one or two slip and fall incidents a month. Today, that rate has come down to one or two incidents a year.”

Horrocks credits the dramatic reduction in injuries to awareness, education and the requirement that employees wear slip-resistant shoes – a must for all employees who work at the front of the restaurant. Upon hiring, employees are given six weeks to purchase their shoes. “We allow the grace period because we understand that it is a big investment for our employees,” notes Horrocks. “We try to stress that it is a valuable investment in their safety.”

Wearing the proper footwear can help to prevent injuries such as aching backs, broken toes, cuts, burns from hot grease and sprained ankles. All protective footwear should have a closed toe, with rubber or slip-resistant soles, low heel and cushioned support.

At prizm brandz, a franchisee of over 700 Pizza Huts, KFCs and Taco Bells across the country, emphasis is placed on wearing the proper footwear. Lena Velluso, Manager, Health and Safety notes, “Speed of service is an a big part of our business. That’s why we place so much emphasis on slip-resistant shoes. It’s an important part of our team member handbook and our uniform criteria.”

While slip-resistant shoes are key to a successful slip, trip and fall program, all products are not created equal. Velluso and her team spent considerable time matching the shoe manufacturer to the requirements of their workplace. “At the time, there were no clear standards for slip-resistant shoes,” says Velluso. “We quickly found that shoes could call themselves ‘slip resistant’ when they really provided very little protection. It took a lot of

research to get a sophisticated product at a reasonable price.”

prizm brandz offers a payroll deduction program with one of their shoe suppliers that allows employees to stretch their payment of shoes over three pay periods. This helps to ease the financial load. For employees who require orthopedic shoes, the company encourages the use of shoe guards that can be slipped over a regular pair of shoes. These guards can also be used for new employees who haven't bought their shoes yet but need protection.

When determining footwear needs, the conditions and hazards that a business faces most often should be determined. For example, consideration should be given to the amount of traction a sole provides on various work surfaces. Horrocks notes that the slip-resistant shoes his front counter staff wears can actually create slipping hazards for bakers if flour gets into the ‘waffle-like’ soles of the shoes. “We recommend high top shoes for our bakers because they provide greater traction in the kitchen,” says Horrocks. “They also protect our bakers’ ankles and feet from grease splashes.”

Of course, no shoe can make a workplace completely slip-proof. Proper floor maintenance plays an important role in preventing slips, trips and falls. Employees should be educated on the correct way to mop up all spills immediately. Cleaners should be provided with written standards regarding the polishes and cleaning agents to use that will not produce a slippery floor. All employees should post ‘Caution: Slippery Floor’ signs whenever floors are being washed.

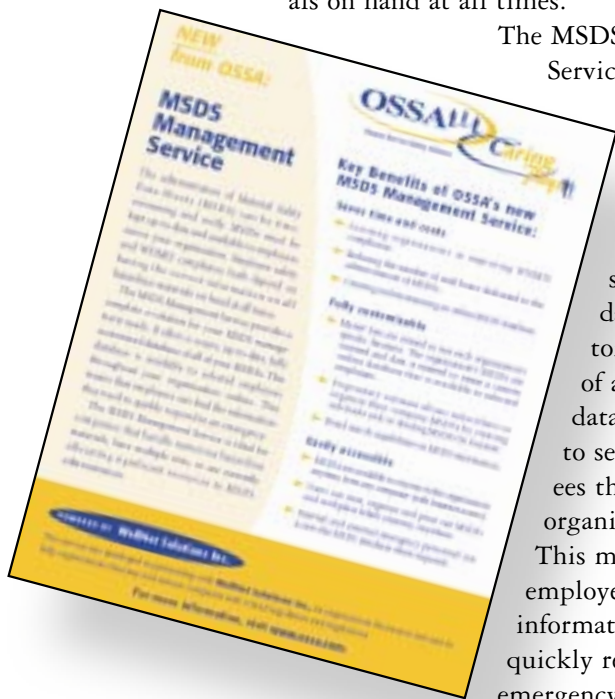
prizm brandz backs up its shoe policy with a commitment to avoiding clutter and organizing tight quarters. Staff is encouraged to constantly clear out empty boxes and garbage, and to get creative by making use of space off the floor. “Sometimes a nail in the wall is all that is needed to get a ladder or a broom off the floor and out of the way,” she notes. “It’s a small thing but it can make a big difference.”

At its Tim Hortons stores, Horrocks stresses the importance of employee education. “Taking the extra step – moving clutter, wearing non-slip shoes, cleaning up spills – requires employee commitment. Our joint health and safety committee has been pivotal to our success. They bring forth great ideas and really set the standard for our staff.”

For both prizm brandz and Craig Enterprises, everyone’s efforts have paid off with safer employees and fewer accidents. “When we first put the slip-resistant shoe policy into place, we got some resistance from a few employees who felt the shoes were expensive and not very attractive,” remembers Horrocks. “With some education, most employees understood what we were trying to accomplish. These days, people tell me that they’ve noticed that their fellow employees don’t fall as much. They appreciate that we’re making the effort to keep them safe.”

MSDS Management Service

The administration of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) can be time-consuming and costly. MSDS must be kept up-to-date and available to employees across your organization. Employee safety and WHMIS compliance both depend on having the correct information on all hazardous materials on hand at all times.



The MSDS Management Service provides a complete e-solution for your MSDS management needs. It offers a secure, up-to-date, fully customized database of all MSDSs. This database is available to selected employees throughout your organization online. This means that employees can find the information they need to quickly respond in an emergency.

The MSDS Management Service is ideal for companies that handle numerous hazardous materials, have multiple sites or are currently allocating significant resources to MSDS administration.

Key Benefits of Ossa's new MSDS Management Service:

Saves time and money

- Assists organizations in improving WHMIS compliance
- Reduces the number of staff hours dedicated to the administration of MSDSs
- Creates and maintains an online MSDS database.

Fully customizable

- Master lists are created to suit each organization's specific business. The organization's MSDSs are scanned and data is entered to create a custom online database that is available to selected employees
- Proprietary software allows subscribers to organize MSDSs by creating sub-books and/or dividing MSDS by location
- Broad search capabilities on MSDS information.

Easily accessible

- MSDS database is available to anyone in the organization anytime, from any computer (with Internet access)
- Users can view, organize and print out MSDS and workplace leads anytime, anywhere
- Internal and external emergency personnel can access the MSDS database when required.

This service was developed in partnership with WellNet Solutions Inc., an organization that uses e-services to help organizations become and remain compliant with OH&S legislation and regulations. Please note that this product is only available through the Ossa website. For further information, please click on the "MSDS Management Service" hot link on the Ossa website (www.ossa.com).

Upcoming Events

The following is a listing of upcoming trade shows, conferences and events of interest to Ontario's service sector.

VENUE	DATE	LOCATION
JUNE		
Retail Council of Canada 38th Annual Conference Retail Council of Canada	June 3 – 5	Metro Toronto Convention Centre Toronto, Ontario
JULY		
12th World Conference on Disaster Management Canadian Centre for Emergency Preparedness	July 9 – 12	International Plaza Hotel Mississauga, Ontario
SEPTEMBER		
Safety in Motion Ontario Service Safety Alliance	September 23 – 24	Hilton Suites Toronto/Markham Conference Centre and Spa Markham, Ontario
OCTOBER		
HostEx 2002 Canadian Restaurant & Foodservice Association	October 20 – 22	International Centre Mississauga, Ontario
2002 Grocery Innovations Canada Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers	October 27 – 29	Metro Toronto Convention Centre Toronto, Ontario
The Eastern Ontario Health and Safety Conference & Trade Show Industrial Accident Prevention Association	October 30	Centurion Center Ottawa, Ontario

The Invisible Enemy

Foodborne illness is the largest class of emerging infectious diseases. What can you do to prevent it?

Foodborne illness is often called “food poisoning.” It occurs when a person gets sick by eating food that has been contaminated with bacteria, parasites or viruses, also known as ‘microbes’ and ‘pathogens’.

Each year, approximately 1 million Canadians fall ill from foodborne illness. However, as many as 96 to 99 per cent of these illnesses and deaths are not reported. People often mistake foodborne illness for the flu since many symptoms – stomach pain, diarrhea, nausea, chills, fever, and headache – are similar.

Symptoms of foodborne illness can appear anywhere from 30 minutes to two weeks after coming in contact with foodborne bacteria, although it usually happens in the first 4-48 hours. In approximately 2-3% of the cases, foodborne illnesses can result in chronic health problems.

So what causes foodborne illness? Changing population demographics, patterns of food production and consumption and new or drug-resistant disease agents have made foodborne illness the largest class of emerging infectious diseases.

Everyone involved in the food chain, from the primary producer to the consumer, has a role to play in ensuring the safety of the food we eat. The food industry and government work together to deliver food that is safe to consumers. As consumers, we can maintain the safety of the food we eat by using safe food handling practices.

Reducing the risk of foodborne illness comes down to four simple steps:

CLEAN — Cross contamination – or mixing foods – is a leading cause of food poisoning. Always wash your hands, utensils and surfaces with hot soapy water before, during and after preparing foods. Sanitize countertops, cutting boards and utensils with a mild bleach and water solution. Produce should be thoroughly washed before eating or cooking it. Consider using paper towels to wipe kitchen surfaces or change dishcloths daily to avoid the possibility of cross-contamination and the spread of bacteria. Avoid using sponges because they are harder to keep bacteria-free.

SEPARATE — Keep raw meats and poultry away from other foods during storage and preparation. Keep separate cutting boards for raw meats and vegetables. Always keep foods covered and never place cooked food back on the same plate or cutting board that previously held raw food.

COOK — Cooking food thoroughly can kill harmful bacteria and greatly reduce the possibility of foodborne illness. Prepare foods quickly and keep them out of the danger zone of 40°F to 140°F. Always follow the correct cooking times and temperatures for meats and poultry as they can vary. It’s a good idea to use a clean thermometer to test the internal temperature of cooked foods, to make sure meat, poultry, egg dishes, casseroles and other foods are cooked all the way through. Try to serve food immediately so it doesn’t linger at room temperatures where bacteria can grow.

CHILL — Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers within two hours. Your refrigerator should be set at a temperature of 4°C (40°F), and keep the freezer at – 18°C (0°F) to slow bacteria growth. Separate large amounts of leftovers into small, shallow containers for quicker cooling. Never thaw food at room temperature – instead, thaw it in the refrigerator, in cold water or in the microwave if you will be cooking it immediately.

A prime spot for bacteria growth is a buffet, picnic or barbecue. When serving food, make sure cold food is kept at 4°C. (40°F) or colder. Perishable foods should be chilled right up to serving time. Bring containers of ice to keep cold foods cold. Finally, stay away from custards, cream pies, cakes with whipped cream or cream cheese frostings if refrigeration is not possible.

Information provided by the Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education.



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