



Retailers Operations Manual

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Please note this is only a guidance to help you run your business and keep good practice.

Most of the information was collated from the following sites:

www.Worksmmt.org.uk

www.directgov.org

www.hse.gov

The law changes all the time and as an employer it is up to you to keep a record of all changes and update your files accordingly.

I hope the information is of help to you and you can get more information if required from the above websites.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Aisles:

As the owner of the premises, it is up to you to ensure that all aisles are kept clear at all times.

Wet Floors:

You must ensure the floor is not wet and slippery, however during autumn and winter months the entrance to the store gets particularly wet, to try and resolve this all stores should have entrance mats to combat this problem.

Other areas within the store that may cause wet floors is freezers and chillers, ensure all steps are taken to reduce this danger and ensure Wet Floor signs are on display to advise the public as well as your staff

Accident Book:

If any accident is reported to you as the owner of the business, you must ensure a full description is recorded in the stores accident book, with times and dates etc. This accident book must be retained for future reference should any claim for compensation arise, by either the public or a member of staff.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Health & Safety Policy Statement.

It is the legal duty of all employers who employ over five staff (including themselves) to provide a company Health & Safety Policy Statement under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. This statement should be displayed in store for all staff and visitors to refer to as and when necessary.

The policy statement should include the following:

- * A statement of general policy regarding health & safety.
- * Detail of specific responsibility within the company in relation to health & safety including:
 1. Who has the overall responsibility for health & safety.
 2. Individual's responsibility for specific areas of health & safety.
 3. Employee's responsibility.

The company's commitment as to how health & safety will be maintained within the business.

The company's commitment to training staff in all relevant areas of health & safety for the business to operate.

A commitment to displaying the Health & Safety at Work poster, for the attention of all staff

A commitment to continuously review the health & safety of the company and its employees.

3.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Health & Safety Poster Regulations 1998:

It is a legal requirement for all employers regardless of the number they employ to display the above poster in a prominent position.

The Regulations also require that all relevant information be filled in the relevant spaces on the poster. Information requires includes:

- * The name and address of the enforcing authority.
- * The address of the Employment Medical Advisory Service.
- * Consultation arrangements in store.

The Health & Safety Law Poster clearly explains both employer and employee duties within the modern framework of health & safety law, including risk assessment & employee consultation.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Manual Handling:

All employers have a duty of care under the Health & Safety at Work Act, to protect their employees.

The most effective way to reduce this risk is through training, and once training is complete it should be recorded

Safe lifting and safe carrying are the two main areas to concentrate on. Employees need to understand the need for safe lifting and carrying, and the implications to their health should they get it wrong

COSHH:

COSHH or the "Control of Substances Hazardous to Health" is the name given to regulations aimed at protecting people in the workplace against risks to their health resulting from substances, which may be harmful to them.

If a business is using such substances they must provide written information regarding substance and the risk involved This information must be displayed, by law, at or near area of storage of the substance in full view of any staff member who may wish to use the substance.

There are four general classifications of risk These are:

- * **Toxic/Very Toxic** -- Can cause death or acute / chronic damage to health.
- * **Corrosive** -- May destroy living tissue on contact.
- * **Harmful** - May cause death or chronic illness if in contact with skin.
- * **Irritant** - May cause inflammation of the skin through repeated contact.

It is an offence to fail to comply with the COSHH regulations under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974.

HEALTH & SAFETY

FIRE REGULATIONS AND SIGNAGE:

The Fire Precautions Act 1971, as amended by the Fire Safety & Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987, applies to all premises which are actually in use -- industrial, commercial or public, and is enforced by all fire authorities.

Fire safety legislation is principally concerned with ensuring the provision of:

- * Means of escape in the event of a fire.
- * The means for fighting a fire.

Where a fire authority is of opinion that an occupier of premises has not fulfilled their duty with regard to the provisions highlighted above, the authority may serve an improvement notice. The improvement notice will detail the steps that should be taken in the way of improvements, alterations and other measures to remedy this breach of the Act. The occupier must normally undertake all such work within 21 days.

Where there is considered to be a serious risk of injury to staff and visitors from fire on the premises, the fire authority can serve a Prohibition Notice on the occupier, requiring that remedial work be carried out in the interests of fire safety or, alternatively have premises closed down.

A Prohibition Notice is most likely to be served where a means of escape is inadequate or non-existent.

You should always ensure that all fire exits are clear at all times i.e. not blocked with rubbish etc, and easily recognisable by approved signage.

In the event of a fire all employees and members of the public should always use the nearest fire exit.

This legislation also states that fire signage should be either rectangular or square and should contain a white pictogram on a green background as well as wording

Fire exits must be clearly signed externally as well as internally.

A fire exit sign with an arrow should be used where the escape route from a building is not conspicuous or where confusion could occur. Where an escape route has changed in direction in corridors, stairways or open spaces, which form part of the escape route these should be marked with additional signage.

Relevant signage should also be displayed by all fire safety equipment, for example fire extinguishers should be highlighted by red signage displaying both pictorial images and wording, this also applies to fire points.

Every business premises should also display fire action signage, which explains to staff and visitors, what to do in the event of a fire and where to assemble upon evacuation etc.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Portable Appliance Testing:

It is the duty of every employer, or self-employed person to comply with the provisions of the Electricity at Work Regulations, in so far as they relate to matters that are within their control.

This typically includes all portable electrical equipment in a convenience store, from kettles to computers, and all other equipment.

All equipment should be checked on a regular basis to ensure it is safe to use.

Local electricians are suitable to carry out these tests on request.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Employers Health & Safety Obligations:

The main duty for employers is set out in the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. The aim of the Act is to raise awareness of health & safety and to involve both employer and employees, in ensuring that the workplace is safe.

The Act applies to everyone involved in employment, whatever their status and also seeks to protect members of the public from work related dangers.

The act simply requires that the employer should assess the risks and take sensible measures to tackle them

Liability Insurance:

The Employers Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969 requires employers to insure against claims by employees suffering personal injury, damage or loss.

The following points must be noted:

- * The certificate of insurance must be displayed in the workplace.
- * The employer must disclose all information to an insurer for the policy to be valid
- * The policy must be available to an enforcement officer as and when required

You must comply with the Certificate of Insurance, if for any reason you fail to take reasonable care to protect your employees, this policy will be deemed void

RISK MANAGEMENT

Food Risk Management:

This is very important, as you will have to look at your business and identify things that can potentially cause harm to the consumers and yourself if you have not put in sufficient controls in place.

Such controls could be:

- * Buying from reputable suppliers
- * Checks on raw materials
- * Stock rotation
- * Separating foods to prevent cross contamination
- * Temperature controls display/storage
- * Staff Hygiene
- * Cleaning
- * Storage of Cooked/Raw foods

It is also very important for you to keep a record of the temperature in all fridge/freezer and display units that you may have.

It would be advisable to keep a record of the following:

- * Temperature control form
- * Date code check form

Remember it is your responsibility to carry out risk assessments.

FOOD HYGIENE

Personal Hygiene:

Everyone in the food trade has a legal and moral obligation to make sure they do not contaminate food by failing to follow good personal hygiene practice.

Hands:

Hands should always be washed:

- * On entering the food preparation area
- * Before handling food or equipment
- * After using the toilet
- * After touching face or hair
- * After handling cook food
- * After handling Waste food
- * After handling raw meat

Hot water and a bacterial soap should always be used for the washing of your hands. Hands should be washed thoroughly and any jewellery should be removed. Hands should be dried using disposable towels or warm air dryer.

Smoking:

It is illegal to smoke within the work place.

Most workplaces have a smoke area outside for their employees and visitors.

Hair & Beards:

Hair and beards must be kept clean - it is recommended that hairnets are worn under hats to prevent contamination.

Protective Clothing:

All food handlers must wear clean washable over clothing by law. Protective clothing for use in food preparation areas should also:

- * Be light coloured
- * Have press stud fasteners rather than buttons
- * Cover all outdoor clothing

Bad Practices:

Bad habits are not easy to break, however we all have them, they can be in some form of the following:

- * Wetting fingers before picking up a bag or paper.
- * Scratching your head
- * Tasting food with an unwashed spoon
- * Washing hands in the equipment sink
- * Handling the inner part of a pot, pan container etc
- * Rubbing your eyes or nose
- * Scratching your hands

We could even have a skin infection such as eczema, this may cause a rash and terrible itch gloves must be worn at all times, when handling food products.

It is very important that any food handler takes great care when handling food to prevent food contamination.

Legislation:

The Food Safety Act 1990 is the most important Act relating to the sale of food for human consumption. It contains comprehensive provisions for securing food safety and empowers ministers to make extensive hygiene regulations.

The provisions of the Act are applicable to all food businesses in England, Scotland and Wales.

It is an offence to sell food, which fails to comply with the food safety requirements as to being unfit for human consumption.

It is also an offence to sell food which has the wrong description or label.

Legal action can and will be taken against you if food is falsely described or unfit for human consumption.

If found guilty of the above offence the owner could receive a fine up to £20,000 or imprisonment.

Improvement Notice:

Failure to comply with food hygiene regulations may result in the service of an improvement notice specifying the problems, the required actions to ensure compliance and time allowed to do so. Failure to comply with an improvement notice is an offence. Prior to serving an improvement notice a "ded to notice" must be served giving at least 14 days notice of the intentions to serve an improvement notice.

Prohibition Notices:

When an Environmental Health Officer is satisfied that there is an imminent risk of injury to health they may issue an emergency prohibition notice which requires the immediate closure of all or part of the food premises or the immediate discontinuation use of a piece of equipment. An application must be made to the court for an emergency prohibition order within 3 days of serving the notice. The court may also impose a prohibition on the owner or manager participating in the management of any food business.

Due Diligence:

This means to take reasonable precautions/care.
Setting up a system of procedure and controls and taking due diligence to ensure the systems to be operated properly.

Regulations:

The food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995 control the hygiene standards of food premises other than those covered by their own regulations such as dairies. These regulations require that owners of food business's must operate hygienically and :

- * Analyse food hazards which may arise in the food operation.
- * Control and monitor procedures set to prevent any hazards.
- * Review safety procedures and amend when necessary.

The regulation also requires the following:

Food premises must be kept clean and maintained in good condition.

Adequate standards of lighting and ventilation must be provided

Must have adequate washbasins, flush lavatories and facilities for cleaning and disinfecting

Food equipment must be kept clean and in good condition.

All food preparation areas must be kept clean and in good condition.

Food waste and refuse must not be allowed to accumulate in the food preparation area.

Food waste and refuse should be stores in sealed containers and be protected against any possible pest infestation.

Food handlers must keep themselves clean and tidy and wear suitable protective clothing

All food handlers must be trained in food hygiene.

The Food Safety (Temperature Control) Regulations 1995:

Food which needs to be kept chilled because it is likely to support of pathogens or the formation of toxins must be kept at or below 8°C.

Raw foods intended for cooking are exempt, however no food must be kept at a temperature, which would result in a risk to health.

Limited periods outside temperature control, consistent with food safety, are permitted for preparation transport, display and service.

Cooked food, which needs to be kept hot to prevent the growth of pathogens or the formation of toxins, must be kept at or above 63°C.

Where food is cooled it must be done quickly as possible.

The Food Premises (Registration) Regulation 1991:

Require food premises to register with their local authority before opening. There is a fine of up to £1,000 for failing to register or 5,000 for providing false information.

Temperature Control:

The Food Safety Act 1990, suggests a three stage approach to determining compliance with statutory food temperatures:

- I. An examination of daily records of air temperature monitoring at the premises.
2. If records are unsatisfactory then non-destructive testing between packs should be carried out.
3. If still concerned then probing the food is required.

Every refrigeration unit, freezer & hot cabinet in store must be temperature checked by law on a daily basis. There is no legal requirement to record the operating temperature of such appliances, however it is strongly advised to do so for due diligence purposes.

High risk & perishable foods must be kept out of the danger zone temperatures as much as possible. Foods likely to be at danger zone

- * Left standing in a room
- * Left in sunlight
- * Heated slowly
- * Cooled slowly

Food is also likely to be in the danger zone when hot and cooler foods are combined

By storing and displaying foods at the statutory required temperatures you are not only complying with the law you are also:

- * Reducing the risk of food poisoning
- * Reducing losses due to food spoilage i.e. mould etc
- * Reducing risk of pest infestation.

Temperature control involves restricting the time that high-risk foods are left at temperatures, in the danger zone and using high temperatures to kill food poisoning bacteria It is therefore essential to:

Ensure that food is at safe temperature when it is delivered to your premises.

Refrigerate raw, highly perishable & high-risk foods immediately after delivery.

Keep refrigerated food in storage until it is required for preparation.

Cook food thoroughly and serve at 63°C or above.

Cool hot food as quickly as possible.

Thaw food in a refrigerator so that the outside of the food cannot reach danger zone temperatures while the inside is still frozen.

Re-heat food quickly to prevent food poisoning bacteria

Recommended safe temperatures are shown below:

Stage of Food Handling:	When to check Temperature:	Recommended Safe Temperature:
Delivery	Every time perishable food is delivered	0°C to 5°C is ideal for Refrigerated food -22°C to -18°C is ideal for frozen food
Storage Refrigerated or Cold Store Refrigerated Storage counter or display Deep Freezer	Daily Daily Daily	0°C to 5°C 0°C to 5°C -18°C or below
Thawing Frozen meat & Poultry	Whenever food is thawed	0°C to 5°C
Cooking	Whenever food is cooked	Minimum core temperature of 70°C for 2 mins
Cooling	Whenever food is cooled	10°C or cooler (Ideally 5°C or below) ideally within 90 mins
Re-heating	Whenever food is re-heated	Minimum core temperature of 70°C for 2 minutes
Hot food on display	Frequently throughout the display period	Minimum core temperature of 63°C
Cold food on display	Frequently throughout the display period	0°C to 5°C is recommended

Use By I Best Before:

Under the Food Labelling Regulations 1996, subject to certain exemptions food must be date marked to indicate its shelf life. Two types of date marking are allowed:

Best Before or Best Before End followed by the date up to and including which the food should remain at its optimum condition if properly stored (e.g it will not be stale). This type of date marking applies to most foods.

Use By followed by the date in term of either the day and the month or the day, month and year after which time it is likely to be unfit for consumption. This form of date marking applies to highly perishable foods with a short shelf life. Correct storage of such foods is essential and any storage conditions specified need to be adhered to ensure the stated shelf life.

The following foods are exempt from date marking:

- * Fresh fruit & vegetables (which have not been peeled or cut into pieces).
- * Wine
- * Alcoholic drinks with 10% or more alcoholic strength i.e. spirits.
- * Vinegar
- * Salt
- * Sugar
- * Chewing Gum

It is an offence to sell foods bearing an expired "use by" date and for anyone other than the person originally responsible for applying the date marks to change it.

Date codes should be checked on perishable products on a daily basis and all other products should be checked on a monthly cycle to ensure no out of date products are sold to customers unintentionally. Date codes checks should also be recorded for due diligence purposes.

Food marked with a use by date of 4th July must be removed at the close of business on the 4th July for example and food marked "best before" must also be removed from sale by the close of business.

Cleaning and Cleaning Schedules:

Customers expect food premises to be clean and tidy, this creates a good impression as well as a safe and pleasant environment for everyone.

Cleaning is required to make food premises free from dirt and possible contamination of food ideally you should clean as you go.

Surface that comes into contact with raw or high-risk foods and anything that is frequently touched by hands and other items that create a serious risk of contamination should be regularly disinfected

Disinfection is the reduction of bacteria to a low, safe level. It can be achieved by:

- * The use of very hot water (82°C or above)
- * Steam
- * Chemical disinfectants

Other equipment can be cleaned at less frequent intervals, however floors and bins should be cleaned daily.

A cleaning schedule is essential to ensure that all areas of the premises as well as the equipment are cleaned and to ensure that nothing is inadvertently missed

The cleaning schedule sets out the following:

- * Items or areas to be cleaned
- * Frequency of cleaning required
- * Method including which chemicals to be used, safety precautions and if any protective clothing is required
- * Staff involved, including the name of the person responsible for checking that the cleaning has been completed effectively.

Pest Control:

Pests are attracted to places where food is stored, prepared, served, sold or even thrown away and also where there is warmth and shelter.

Pests can enter building in numerous ways, through open doors & windows or through the smallest crack in a wall.

A food pest is any creature that lives on or in human food causing damage or contamination or both. The main pests are:

- * Insects - flies, moths, cockroaches, ants, wasps etc
- * Stored product pests - beetles, mites, weevils etc
- * Rodents - rats and mice
- * Birds --- mainly pigeons, sparrows, seagulls etc

Many pests inhabit unhealthy places where they can pick up bacteria on their bodies and legs. Some pests also have such bacteria living inside their bodies already, which can be spread to food through their droppings and saliva as they eat.

Pest infestation can cause a business a lot of problems such as their reputation and therefore loss in profit. They can also cause damage to buildings, equipment and electrical cables.

Effective pest control involves protecting premises so that pests cannot gain entry, protecting food from contamination and ensuring that rapid, safe measures are taken to deal with any infestation that occurs.

To assist in preventing pest problems you should:

- * Maintain a clean workplace
- * Keep doors and windows closed
- * Keep food covered at all times
- * Check stored goods regularly and rotate stock
- * Store food waste in bins with securely fitted lids
- * Always store food off the ground

The main signs of pest infestation are:

- * Dead bodies (mainly insects, rodents or birds)
- * Droppings
- * Unusual smells
- * Torn or damaged packaging, sometimes surrounded by spilled food

For your own safety it is not advisable for you to attempt to deal with a pest problem yourself. There are many competent specialist contractors nationwide who will not only deal with the infestation but also advise you in preventing them too.

Most responsible food retailers have a contract with such a company to ensure peace of mind and prevent any infestation.

PRICING

Trading Standards Requirements:

The trading standards officer will require that you clearly display a price for all products on display. This can be a computerised shelf edge label or by using a pricing gun.

The label must display the correct up to date price for that product. You may from time to time reduce stock to clear, on this occasion you must place the sticker over the barcode of the product.

Over charging a customer is illegal, and could lead to prosecution.

Fruit & Vegetables:

All fruit and vegetables displayed loose in the store must be priced and display the following information:

- * Price of product per kilo or single price.
- * Description of product must be displayed
- * The class of the product, in most cases this will be class 2 by the time it reaches the store. If you however buy directly from the farm then this is usually class 1.
- * The Country of origin must also be displayed

Approved fruit and vegetable price lists should be used for pricing the product. This will ensure you comply fully with the law.

AGE RESTRICTED SALES

Alcohol:

It is illegal to sell alcohol to any one under the age of 18. Some licences however have restrictions that state that alcohol cannot be sold to anyone aged under 21.

It is illegal to sell liquor chocolates to anyone under the age of 16.

Staff under the age of 18 must not sell alcohol without the knowledge of the sale by the licensee or other responsible person over the age of 18.

If you are unsure if the customer is of the legal age, you must ask for proof of age.

If you are still unsure --- Refuse the sale.

All premises, which sell alcohol, must have a licence.

Alcohol may be sold during licensing hours. It is illegal to sell alcohol out with these hours.

The Licensee must display his/her licence, which states their name, and the word "Licensed" followed by what the premises are licensed for.

It is illegal for any person under the age of 18 to attempt to purchase alcohol.

Cigarette & Tobacco Products:

It is illegal to sell cigarettes or any other tobacco products to anyone under 18.

If you not sure the customer is over 18 you must ask for proof of age.

If you are still not sure - Refuse the sale.

It is illegal for someone to buy tobacco products for anyone under the age of 18.

You must make sure that the warning on the packets is in English.

You must always display the warning notice "It is illegal to sell tobacco products to any one under the age of 18"

This warning notice must be clearly visible at all times.

Solvents & Lighter Refills:

It is an offence to sell lighter gas or refills to anyone under 18.

If you are not sure whether the person is over the age of 18, then ask for proof.

If you are still not sure -- Refuse the sale.

Video Tapes & DVD's:

It is illegal to supply (Rent or Buy) a Video recording to person who has not attained the age specified in the classification.

It is illegal to rent or buy a video recording without the required labelling on it or its case.

If you are not sure if the customers age, you must ask for proof of age.

If you are still not sure -- Refuse the sale.

Categories of "Video" recording certificates are as follows:

- * U -- Universal: Suitable for all
- * De - Universal: Particularly suitable for young children
- * PG - Parental Guidance: General viewing; however some scenes may be unsuitable for young children.
- * 12 - Suitable for person aged 12 and over
- * 15 -- Suitable for person aged 15 and over
- * 18 --- Suitable for person aged 18 and over

Lottery Tickets & Scratch cards:

It is illegal to sell lottery tickets to anyone under the age of 16.

It is illegal to sell scratch cards to anyone under the age of 16.

If you are unsure of the customer's age, ask for proof of age.

If you are still unsure - Refuse the sale.

It is illegal for a member of staff under the age of 16 to sell lottery tickets and scratch cards.

Knives:

It is an offence to sell to any person under 16 any knife or a similar item which is made or adapted for the use for causing injury to a person.

If you are not sure of the customer's age, ask for proof of age.

If you are still not sure -- Refuse the sale.

It is an offence to sell any flick knife.

Fireworks:

It is an offence to sell fireworks to any person under the age of 18

It is an offence to sell party poppers, novelty matches etc to any one under the age of 18.

If you are not sure of the customer's age, ask for proof of age.

If you are still not sure -- Refuse the sale.

You must be register with Trading Standards to keep fireworks in your shop.

All fireworks must be stored and displayed for sale in a safe and secure area.

Petrol:

You must obtain a licence from the local authority to enable you to sell petrol.

Licence conditions stipulate that persons under the age of 16 must not access petrol.

If you are not sure of the customer's age, ask for proof of age.

If you are still not sure -- Refuse the sale.

Proof of Age:

If you are in doubt of the person age, which is purchasing a restricted product, you must ask them for proof of age.

Listed below are photographic items that can be used as proof of age:

- * New style Driving Licence, this also displays date of birth.
- * Passport
- * Of Age Card/ Prove it Card --- these are some id cards that will display a photograph and the person's date of birth.

Listed below are items that do not have photographic proof.

- * Birth Certificate
- * Old style Driving Licence

Asking for Proof of Age:

If you are in doubt what so ever of the customers eligibility to purchase an age restricted product, you should ask them for proof of age.

Explain to the customer what identification you can accept as proof of age, if the customer does not have any identification politely refuse the sale and explain that you will be more than happy to serve them if they return with some acceptable proof of age.

If the customer produces satisfactory identification proving his proof of age, then accept the sale and thank them for their co-operation

You are within your rights to ask anyone attempting to buy an age-restricted product for proof of age.

All age-restricted refusals should be recorded for due diligence purposes.

- * Date the refusal was made
- * Time of the refusal
- * Brief description of the customer
- * Purchase item
- * Signature of the staff member who made the refusal
- * Comments field e.g. the customer's manner etc

The refusal log should be used for the refusal of the following items:

Alcohol
Chocolate Liquors
Cigarettes
Tobacco Products
Video & DVD's
Lottery Tickets & Scratch Cards
Knives
Solvents & Lighter Refills
Fireworks
Petrol

RETAIL OPERATIONS

Overview:

Apart from staff, the stock in your store is the most important asset your business owns. It is the only tangible asset you have that makes you money therefore controlling it is very important to your business.

Too much stock, and you run into cash flow problems, as you have paid for stock that is gathering dust in your stock room and not sales in your till.

Too little stock, and you may lose sales, and ultimately the loyalty of that customer.

To control this part of the business can be very time consuming and difficult, if no computerised system is used, stores with epos system can and should use the sales information available on their back office system to assist on how much stock to order.

Stock Holding Ratio:

In theory you should aim to carry around two weeks stockholding in store. Therefore if your average weekly sales are fl 3,000, then aim to carry 26,000 of stock.

By keeping to this figure your store remains well stocked, you can be confident you do not have dead stock in your store.

It also has cash flow advantages, as you are only purchasing the stock that sells through reasonably quickly.

Standards Required:

The overall appearance of your store will, and does have an effect on how the customer views your business, and ultimately how much they spend

It is important that you set and maintain high standards of merchandising in your store.

In order to do this it is advisable to ensure that one of the last things at night, your staff are tasked with making sure that they fully face up the store. This allows you to start the new day "ahead of the game" by ensuring that you open the store to high standards in the morning This way it becomes a manageable task to keep these high standards throughout the day.

If you are provided with planograms from your wholesaler or suppliers, it is advisable to adhere to these, as they provide a detailed "map" for you in respect of where the stock is to be merchandised, and ensures you do not forget to re-order a line that has sold out.

All lines on sale should have a price label i.e. shelf edge label or priced by the way of a pricing gun.

Promotional lines should be displayed separately from the main body of stock, and should be supported with the relevant point of sale. This will highlight the promotion and ensure a higher sell through of these products.

Good housekeeping standards are also relevant in merchandising, all helping promote a clean and professional image to the customer, which will want them to return again and again to your store. Therefore a clean floor, clean dairy cabinets, clean shelves are all important when you consider merchandising standards for a convenience store.

WASTAGE

Control:

Recording of wastage, especially fresh products, is crucial to help you control your stock, as well understanding your business.

The following points should be considered:

- * Analyse your wastage records - reduce quantities of stock on lines with a high wastage.
- * Reduce short dated stock early to increase the chance of selling that line.
- * Markdowns are a positive way of reducing wastage.
- * Establish a procedure to ensure that all lines that are date coded are checked at least once a month.
- * This will also enable you to take action on short dated stock and minimise wastage.

All wastage must be recorded on designated wastage control sheets. Remember every line that is thrown away is a loss to the business.

The key to controlling wastage is to order the correct stock in the first place, however this is impossible to judge correctly at all times, therefore effective management of wastage is crucial to ensuring the loss is kept to a minimum.

It is recommended that the owner of the business or a senior member of the business is the only ones authorised to dispose of waste stock.

Sale or Return:

Any stock purchased on a sale or return basis should be identified as such and separated from the normal stock in the storeroom awaiting collection from the supplier. Apart from news returns, this stock should be stored in a designated "Not for Resale" area, and labelled as such.

Pests:

Using a reputable pest control company, you will also eliminate the risk of losing stock through pest infestation.

Shrinkage and Shrinkage Control:

All retail businesses suffer shrinkage or leakage, depending on your terminology, product stock takes are a way of physically counting sections of your store on regular basis to ensure ongoing shrinkage is controlled and managed.

Method

- * Physically count the stock in question remembering to count all stock in the storeroom and shelf stock.
- * Keep an accurate record of your opening and closing stock, the difference between both should be your sales.
- * This will allow you to establish a loss over a short period of time.

The most expensive product that you may have in your shop will be Wines, Beer, Spirits and Cigarette/Tobacco products, it is advised to keep a regular stock count of these items.

Security:

This is a very important to your business in regards to loss of goods / cash and also for protecting your staff

The aim of security is to prevent and be aware and alert at all times.

There are certain ways to prevent lack of security:

- * Never leave the Boor unattended
- * Never count cash and the till
- * Never allow delivery staff unattended
- * Always keep the door to the stock room locked
- * People loitering for an unusual period of time in the store

These are just some examples of prevention.

It is important that you train your staff to be diligent at all times.

It is also important that your high value products such as spirits, tobacco etc is kept in a secure place i.e. behind the till or in a locked display cabinet.

It is up to the proprietor and staff to ensure that there is no lack in security.

Customers Complaints:

If a customer makes a complaint, they will want you to sort out the problem for them quickly.

When a customer complains always listen to the complaint and make sure that this is dealt with quickly and that the customer is satisfied with the way that you handled the situation.

If the complaint is dealt with in an efficient manner the customer will be loyal to you.

If the customer makes a complaint to the Environmental Health Department regarding food that is unfit or contaminated food for sale, an immediate investigation will be undertaken.

The complainant will be asked to put in writing where and when she/he purchased the food and what happened to it after purchase. The Environmental Health Officer will then visit the shop where the food was purchased

He will investigate and establish if the person being investigated has committed an offence.

An advisory or warning letter will be sent to the person responsible. However if the Environmental Health Officer is not satisfied with the answers received, they will recommend legal procedure.

Customer Service:

This is a very important part of your business.

If a customer leaves your premises with a good experience, they are more likely to shop there again.

It is this kind of customer that you are striving for, one that will continue to shop with you on a regular basis.

To make sure that your shop is welcoming the following should be considered:

- * The front of the shop is clean and tidy.
- * The entrance is brightly lit.
- * The store is well stocked
- * The store is clean and tidy
- * All products are priced
- * Staff are clean & tidy and wearing the uniform provided.

Also ensure that the customer is served quickly, efficiently and with professionalism

It is only a small part of your business, however a very important part.

RECRUITMENT

Advertising:

When a vacancy becomes available, you can advertise the position in various ways:

- * On the premises
- Internal Advert
- Trade press advertising
- Job Centre

When you advertise the position you must include the following:

- * Name and brief details of the employer.
- Position and duties required
- Salary or rate of pay
- t to do next - In writing enclosing CV

When advertising you must take care that the advert is both ethical and legal.

Anti-discrimination and equal opportunities law covers the conduct of recruitment and must be adhered to.

The relevant legislation is contained in the following Acts of Parliament:

- * The Sex Discrimination Act (1975)
- * The Race Relations Act (1976)
- * The Disability Discrimination Act (1996)

Please see the enclosed documents for your reference to the above Acts

Recruiting & Interviewing:

Application Process:

- * Provide an application form
- * Requesting the applicant encloses a CV

Advantages of application forms:

- * You can decide exactly what information you need to know.
- * It is easy to compare the skills and experience of different applicants.
- * You can keep the form on file for future vacancies.

What to include in an application form:

- * Name and address of the organisation.
- * Job applied for.
- * Name, address, telephone number of candidate.
- * Work experience
- * Skills, clean driving license etc
- * Names and addresses of referees

Preparing for the Interview:

Plan the questions:

- * Use the information from the applicant's form or CV to prepare a set of questions.
- * Prepare some open-ended questions- ones that need more than a yes or no answer.

Making arrangements for the interview:

- * Brief other staff such as receptionist, to expect the candidate/s.
- * Hold each interview with an open mind
- * Allow enough time for the interview so you do not have to rush.
- * Ensure that you do not get disturbed

Always ensure that you tell the candidate when they are likely to know the outcome of the process.

Making the Job Offer:

Once you have chosen the successful candidate, the next stage is to notify the person and the most common way of doing this is by letter, however you may wish to telephone instead

When offering the position ensure that you use the following information:

- * The position
- * Rate of pay
- * Method of pay and frequency of payment
- * Start date and time
- * Hours of work

Induction

This should be done when a new person is employed They should be taken around the premises and introduce them

Also you must answer any questions they may have.

A simple induction procedure and routine for your store should be sufficient.

The following should be included into your induction:

- * Details of terms and conditions of employment.
- * Details of conduct and dress code etc.
- * Introduction of the task and what is expected from them
- * Details of break entitlements etc.
- * Fire procedure etc

A simple induction, however it allows the person to understand your business and to meet the rest of your employees.

HOLIDAYS & PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Basics of holiday rights:

- * Every employee is entitled to 4.8 weeks (from 1 October 2007).
- * The entitlement will increase to 5.6 weeks from 1 April 2009.
- * Those working part-time are entitled to the same level of holiday pro-rate.
- * Employees start to build their holiday entitlement from the 1st day of employment.
- * Employees get paid their normal pay for holidays.
- * When an employee leaves a job, he/she must get paid for any holidays they have not taken.

As the employer you must decide the holiday year i.e. from the 1st January to 31st December.

All employees must take their holiday entitlements within the holiday year. It is up to you the employer, whether or not they can carry over holidays into the next holiday year.

Holidays are a legal right and must be adhered to.

Disciplinary Procedure

A disciplinary procedure is something that the employer uses to tell an employee when something is wrong. It allows them to explain clearly what improvements are needed and should give the employee an opportunity to put their side of the situation.

Disciplinary procedure can assist in encouraging an employee to maintain standards of behaviour and performance.

As an employer you should clearly list disciplinary rules, they will set standards of conduct and work and make clear to employees what is expected of them.

Disciplinary rules should cover matters such as:

- * Timekeeping
- * Health and Safety
- * Theft and fraud
- * Performance
- * Behaviour
- * Discrimination i.e. sex, race etc
- * Use of business equipment i.e. telephones/computers etc

The rules should also specify the kind of offence, which will be regarded as gross misconduct, which could lead to dismissal without notice.

How to raise a grievance:

Sometimes it is better to speak to your employee informally, this is often a good way of resolving a problem quickly.

Formal Grievance Procedure:

If you have to take matters further, you must follow the statutory grievance procedure, which has 3 steps.

The 3 steps are:

- * The written statement
- * The meeting
- * The appeal meeting

Sick Pay:

All employees do have the right to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). This is a flat rate paid by the employer in accordance with national rules.

When do you get Statutory Sick Pay?

You must have been sick and unable to work for at least four days in a row (including weekends and bank holidays).

They must earn above the level, this however this level changes each April. The level is before any deductions such as tax and national insurance.

It can be paid for up to 28 weeks in one sickness episode. A sickness episode may not be continuous time off work. If you have two or more short periods of sickness within an eight week period, the time off is added together to count towards the 28 weeks.

What proof of sickness do I need?

- * All employees must notify you when they are unable to work do to sickness, you must also accept notification if someone else makes it on your employees behalf.
- * They must also provide you with a self-certificate, this cover the employee for seven days or less.
- * They must provide you with a doctor's sick note after seven days of sickness.

Who cannot get Statutory Sick Pay?

- * If they are aged over 65 or under 16.
- * Are involved in, or affected by, a trade dispute at work
- * Have already 28 weeks of SSP, gone back to work, but have gone sick again within eight weeks.
- * Are getting Maternity Allowance or Statutory Maternity Pay.

SSP is usually paid on the same day you would normally get your wages or salary paid

SSP is a taxable income, and subject to National Insurance Contributions.

Maternity:

All pregnant employees are entitled to reasonable paid time off for anti-natal care. This includes travelling to and from the appointment, parent craft and relaxation classes. You may however ask your employee to see the proof of appointment from the midwife or GP.

All pregnant employees are entitled to 52 weeks maternity leave. They are entitled to take it regardless of how long they have worked for you as long as they give you proper notice.

Notice of Maternity Leave:

They must notify you of their maternity leave no later than the end of the fifteenth week before the child is due.

They must give you the information in writing

You may request a copy of your employees MAT Bi certificate which is given to them by their GP or midwife when they are around 20 weeks pregnant.

Once your employee has given you notice of maternity leave, they may change their mind and vary the date, they must give you at least 28 days notice before the new date begins.

The earliest time they can start maternity leave is 11 weeks before the child is due.

If your employee has a pregnancy illness in the last four weeks of their pregnancy, you can insist that they start their maternity leave even if they have only been off for 1-day sick.

Maternity Pay:

The rules on maternity pay are complicated

You need to be aware of the term "qualifying week".

This is the 15th week before the birth of the baby.

To qualify for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)

They must have worked for at least 26 weeks by the end of the qualifying week and must be still in the job in the qualifying week even if they are on holiday or on sick.

The average gross earnings per week must be at, or above the lower earnings limit in the 8 weeks if you are paid weekly or the two months if paid monthly.

They are entitled to receive maternity pay for 39 weeks.

The first 6 weeks they are entitled to 90% of their average pay. 33 weeks at a flat rate, or 90% of the average earnings if those are less than the flat rate.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF TERMS & CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT.

Legal Requirements:

The Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, as amended by the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993, requires employers to provide employees within a two calendar months of starting work, a written statement of the main terms and conditions of employment. The only exception to this ruling is for employees who are employed for less than one month.

Required Sections:

The statement should contain the following information:

The employer's name.

The place of work and the address of the employer.

The employee's name.

Date employment began.

Date on which the employees period of continuous employment began (taking into account any employment with a previous employer which counts towards that period)

Where the employment is not permanent, the period it is expected to continue.

Where the employment is for a fixed term the date when it is to end

The job title.

The amount of pay and the intervals between payments.

Hours of work.

Holiday pay and entitlements.

Sickness & sick pay arrangements.

Pensions.

Notice period for both parties.

Notes on specifying any disciplinary rules and to whom employees can apply if they are dissatisfied with a disciplinary decision.

Notes on grievance procedures specifying to whom employees can apply to seek redress of any grievance.

Any collective agreements, which directly affect the term & conditions.

Employees with fewer than 20 employees are currently exempt from the requirement to provide employees with a note setting out disciplinary rules, however they should provide details of whom they can express a grievance.

Contract of Employment:

All employees have a contract of employment. A contract exists as soon as an employee accepts an employer's terms & conditions of employment. Except for apprenticeships, employee's contracts need not be in writing. However, as highlighted in the previous page, the law requires employers to provide nearly all employees with a written statement of the main terms and conditions of employment.

The terms of a contract of employment can be divided into 4 main categories:

Express terms --- those spelled out either in writing or by oral agreement.

Implied terms - those spelled out, for instance, those that are too obvious to mention or are custom or practice.

Incorporated terms - those incorporated into individual contracts from other documents such as collective agreements with trade unions, staff handbooks etc.

Statutory terms - those imposed by law, for example the right not to be discriminated against on the ground of race, sex or disability. Agreements to contract out of statutory terms are void under law.

Time off for Public Duties:

All employees are legally entitled to time off for the purpose of performing his or her public duties.

A full list of such duties are shown below:

- As a justice of the peace.
- As a member of local authority.
- As a member of Broads Authority.
- As a member of any statutory tribunal.
- As a member of a board of visitors or visiting committee.
- As a member of a National Health Service Trust, Health Board etc.
- As a member of the managing or governing body of an educational council etc.
- As a member of the governing body of a grant maintained school.
- As a member of the governing body of a further education corporation or higher education corporation.
- As a member of a school board or of the board of management of a self-governing school.
- As a member of the board of management of a college or further education.
- As a member of the National Rivers Authority or a river purification board

Time off is unpaid and the amount of time off depends upon employers business and the effect of the employee's absence.

There is no statutory right to have time off for jury service or attending court as a witness. However an employer who prevents such attendance would be in contempt of court.

Although there is no legal obligation on employers to pay staff whilst they are on jury service, doing so is conducive to good employee relations. Jurors however may claim an allowance for unweaving subsistence and financial loss.

The Working Time Regulations.

Because of Europe's working time directive, most people now have basic rights to proper time off rest breaks and paid holiday under the Working Time Regulations 1998. As an employer it is your duty that the provisions laid down in the regulations are adhered to. There are seven basic rights:

- * Four weeks paid holiday a year.
- * A break when the working day is more than six hours.
- * A rest period of 11 hours every working day.
- * A rest period of 24 hours once every seven days.
- * A ceiling of 48 hours on a maximum average working week
- * A ceiling of an average eight hours night work in every 24.
- * Free health assessment for night workers.

The maximum working week of 48 hours is an average, not a limit each week. The average is calculated by looking at the employees working time over a 17-week period. The period is known as the "reference period". The employees can opt out of this part of the regulation. This has to be done in writing and an employee can opt out for a defined period of time or indefinitely. This regulation applies to all staff and commences from the first day of employment.

Recording of hours:

Employers have an obligation under Regulation 9 of the Working Time Regulation 1998 to keep a record in respect of the ~ um hours worked

These records must be adequate to show the relevant time limits are being complied with in the case of each worker employed

These records must be retained for a period of two years.

Holiday Entitlement:

As of 25th October 2001 the requirement for an employee to work a 13-week qualifying period before entitlement of paid leave was abolished. Therefore all employees are now entitled to paid leave from the day that their employment commences.

Young People:

Those employees over the age of 16 but younger than 18 are covered by a different set of European regulations known as the Young Workers Directive. These were brought into UK law in the Working Time Regulations. Although holiday rights are the same as for those over 18, there are different and better rights to breaks:

- * A continuous break of 12 hours everyday.
- * A 48 hour continuous break every week.

Failure to adhere to the working Time Regulations could result in action being taken out on you by an Employment Tribunal.

Employing Children and Young Persons:

A child is defined as anyone younger than the minimum school leaving age.

Young persons are defined as anyone over school leaving age but under 18.

Young persons are protected by the terms of a European Directive on the Protection of Young People at Work, which were implemented into the UK legislation within the Working Time Regulations, which came into force on 1 October 1998.

No child may be employed:

- * If under the age of 13
- * During school hours
- * Before 7am or after 7pm
- * For more than 2 hours on any day that she/he is required to attend school.
- * For more than 2 hours on a Sunday
- * In any industrial undertaking
- * Where they are likely to suffer injury from lifting, carrying or moving heavy items.

A local education authority has powers to supervise the employment of school children in its area and may require particulars about a child's employment.

A person who wishes to employ a child must obtain a permit from the local education authority.

The National Minimum Wage:

The vast majority of workers are entitled to the National Minimum Wage as laid out in the National Minimum Wage Act 1998. Individuals are covered whether they have a written contract or terms & conditions of employment even casual workers.

Employers are required to keep sufficient records to establish that they are paying employees at least the National Minimum National Wage and employees have the right to see and copy their records. If an employee wishes to see their record, they must put it in writing and you must produce these records within 14 days.

Under the National Minimum Wage legislation, employees have the right:

- * To be paid at least the National Minimum Wage rate.
- * To see records in relation to these rates.

The Inland Revenue are responsible for enforcing the National Minimum Wage.

If an enforcement officer believes that an employer is not paying the National Minimum Wage, he/she can serve an enforcement notice that requires the employer to start paying the National Minimum Wage and pay back all employees back pay.

If the enforcement notice is ignored, the enforcement officer can serve a penalty notice that levies fines of twice the National Minimum Wage for each day since the enforcement notice was served for each employee that is owed money.

The Enforcement Officers can also assist employees in taking their employer to an Employment Tribunal, or take a case on their behalf.

Deliberate refusal to pay the national Minimum Wage is a criminal offence.

Equal Opportunities Policy:

The company aim is to ensure that all its employees and job applicants are treated equally irrespective of race, colour, religion disability, age or sex etc.

There shall be no discrimination on the account of the above. All persons the company appoints shall train develop and promote on the basis of ability and merit for that particular position within the company.

Grievance procedure is available to any employee who believes that he/she may have been fairly discriminated against.

Disciplinary action under the Disciplinary procedure shall be taken against any employee who is found to have committed an act of unlawful discrimination this will be regarded as gross misconduct.

The Data Protection Act:

The Data Protection Act 1998 gives employees the right to know any information held on them by their employer. The employer also has a duty to ensure that all information is kept confidential. Only those people with legitimate reason to see data can do so, unless the person to whom the data relates to has given their permission.

The employers are not allowed to hold information about employees that is not relevant to their employment with them for example:

- * Union Membership
- * Political opinion or religious beliefs

The legislation allows employees to see references from a previous employer, however not from your current employer to a prospective employer.

If an employer refuses to tell them what data they are keeping on them or passes information onto someone else without your permission the employee can make a complaint to the Data Protection Registrar who could take legal action against the employer.

Principles:

The Data Protection Act lays down Data Protection Principles that controllers of personal data are obliged by law to follow, personal data must:

- * Be processed fairly & lawfully.
- Be obtained for specific & lawful purposes.
- * Be accurate & kept up to date.
- * Not held for longer than necessary for its original purpose.
- * Be processed in accordance with the data subject's rights under the Act.

The Act also states that appropriate technological & organisational measures must be taken against unauthorised or unlawful processing of personal data & against accidental loss or destruction of or change to personal data

Data Subjects Rights:

Under the Act, data subjects have certain rights:

Right of access

Right to prevent processing likely to cause damage or distress.

Right of prevent processing for the purpose of direct marketing.

Right to take action for compensation if they suffer damage by any contravention of the Act by the data controller.

Right to take action to rectify, block, erase or destroy inaccurate data.

Right to make a request to the Data Commissioner for an assessment to be made as to whether any provision of the Act has been contravened

There are some exceptions to these rights. In relation to employers, as data controllers, employers do not have to disclose data where there would be a breach of confidence in relation to:

- * References, report, appraisals where another could be identified
- * References given or to be given by the employer for the purpose of education training, employment and appointment of the data subject.
- * Assessing suitability for Crown employment.
- * Management forecasting or management planning when disclosure would prejudice the conduct of the business.

CCTV:

All stores who use a CCTV system should register with the Data Protection Information Commissioner. The reason for this is that by recording the general public in your store you are storing data on them. If you are not registered it is unlikely that you will be able to use your CCTV footage as evidence, should you need to.

It is not law for you to register with the Data Protection Information Commissioner, however it is advisable.

Registration with the Data Protection Commissioner:

You can register with the data protection commissioner in the following ways:

1. By phone ` 01625 545700
2. By Post - Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Wycliffe Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
3. By email - notification@ico.gsi.gov.uk

The cost for this application is £35.00 per annum and is payable direct to the Data Protection Commissioner.