health

Victoria's Food Act changes

Guide to food safety regulation for community groups

Community food premises classes at a glance

There is no better feeling than knowing you've made a positive impact on other people's lives. Community service strengthens communities and connects people. Most community groups also raise much needed funds for a wide variety of causes.

This leaflet explains 'food premises classification' under Victoria's *Food Act 1984* for community groups organising fundraising activities that involve the sale of food.

It covers your group if it sells food solely for the purposes of raising funds for charity, or is a not for profit body - where those handling the food are mostly volunteers.

Safe food handling

Certain foods (known as high-risk, or potentially hazardous foods) need to be handled carefully to keep them safe.

If something goes wrong during the food handling process, harmful bacteria grow and multiply and food can quickly become unsafe to eat.

That's where Victoria's food legislation comes in. Its main purpose is to control the sale of food in Victoria and protect people from food borne illnesses.

How the Food Act works

All food premises must ensure that the food they sell is safe to eat.

The Act covers what is done at a food premises - whether it is a market stall, a community hall with kitchen facilities, a food van, or a permanent site.

The Act groups food premises into separate 'classes', and sets out different food safety

requirements for each class based on its food safety risks. There are four classes – from highest risk (class 1) to lowest risk (class 4).

As you'd expect, premises carrying out only low-risk food handling activities must follow simpler safety rules than those handling foods that are more likely to make people sick.

Community food premises classes

Community food events can include holding fairs, dinners, cake stalls, sausage sizzles, chocolate drives and a range of other activities to raise funds.

At these events, the risk of food becoming unsafe depends on both the type of food, and how it is stored, prepared, handled and transported by volunteers and staff members. Because these activities involve different levels of risk, community food activities may fall within class 2, 3 or 4 under the Food Act.

Your group's classification will depend on the food safety risks involved in handling the type of foods you plan to sell. For example, selling pre-packaged foods that don't need refrigeration, such as

packaged biscuits (class 4), is less risky than selling packaged cakes with cream fillings which need refrigeration (class 3), or preparing and serving casseroles or chicken salad (class 2) which need correct temperature control at all times to keep them safe.

Of course, your group is free to run any kind of food activity, as long as you meet the food safety requirements that apply to that food premises class.

Under the Food Act, you must let your local council Environmental Health Officer know about the food activities your group plans to run.

Local council responsibilities

Council will classify your food premises after considering the following questions:

- who is the food being served to?
- is the food packaged or unpackaged?
- is the food high-risk (potentially hazardous)?
- will the food be cooked on site and served immediately?
- are the majority involved in handling the food volunteers?

Your council will advise your group of its food premises classification.

In the meantime, see overleaf for an idea of the types of food handling activities that each class of food premises may run.

A note about raw eggs

Some eggs can be contaminated with Salmonella bacteria. The department recommends that community groups do not serve desserts or any other foods that contain raw/uncooked eggs in the finished product, such as tiramisu and mousse, at community events. There is a higher risk of such foods causing food poisoning. For further information, go to: www.health.vic.gov.au/eggs/downloads/eggs_serviceindustry.pdf

This advice does not apply to cakes which - as is usually the case - contain *cooked* eggs, as thorough cooking will kill the bacteria.

For more help contact

Your council Environmental Health Officer is your best source of advice on running a safe community food event.

Local Council Health Department

www.dvc.vic.gov.au

Department of Health

www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety

email foodsafety@health.vic.gov.au

phone 1300 364 352

Free food safety resources

dofoodsafely - free online learning program for food handlers

http://dofoodsafely.health.vic.gov.au

Community group food event notification form - class 4

Available on your council website or by phoning council

Food safety supervisor requirements

www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety/bus/skills_knowledge/fss.htm

Community food premises classes

Under Victoria's *Food Act 1984*, local councils are responsible for classifying every food premises according to their food safety risks. Your council will notify your community group of its classification.

This table gives an idea of the types of food handling activities that each class of food premises may run. As the arrows show, class 3 food premises may also run class 4 activities, as these are lower risk. Class 2 premises may also run class 3 and 4 activities.

Food premises classes under the Food Act		
Class 4 *Low-risk activities*		
Food premises type	Market stalls, food vans, community halls, sporting group kiosks, some sessional kindergartens, or permanent food premises	
Food handling activities	May conduct all class 4 activities	
• handling and selling ***low-risk*** foods	✓ biscuits, tea or coffee, including with milk or soymilk ✓ bottled jams or honey ✓ bottled water, soft drinks or alcohol ✓ packaged chocolates and sugar confectionery	✓ packaged cooked cakes, excluding cream fillings ✓ uncut fruit and vegetables ✓ wine tastings, including with cheese or crackers
• ***simple sausage sizzles***	✓ sausages, onions, sauce and bread only, cooked and served straight away	
• ***low-risk snacks***	✓ sessional kindergartens supplying cut fruit, milk, breads, or cereals	
Class 3 *Unpackaged low-risk foods, or pre-packaged high-risk foods, or 'cook and serve' foods*		
Food premises type	Market stalls, food vans, community halls, sporting group kiosks, or permanent premises	
Food handling activities	May conduct all class 3 activities below (and all class 4 activities above)	
• handling and selling ***unpackaged low-risk*** foods - including removed from package/bottle	✓ carbonated beverages (if poured) ✓ biscuits ✓ dried fruits	✓ fruit and vegetables, whole or cut ✓ cereals and grains ✓ ice creams, most kinds ✓ jams
• certain ***other low-risk activities***	✓ eggs in the shell	✓ food tastings *(a sample of high-risk food offered for up to 4 hours)*
• selling ***pre-packaged high-risk*** foods	✓ cakes with cream fillings ✓ desserts, such as cheesecakes and custard tarts ✓ fruit salads ✓ meats, raw and cooked, including poultry and game	✓ meats, and foods containing raw or cooked meats such as casseroles, curries and lasagne ✓ meals, such as fresh pasta ✓ sandwiches ✓ smallgoods, such as Strasbourg, ham and chicken loaf
• selling ***re-heated*** packaged foods	✓ pies heated in original packaging	✓ sausage rolls heated in original packaging
• selling ***high-risk foods cooked and served*** for immediate consumption	Selling high-risk foods at an event of **no more than 2 days** *at any one time*: ✓ barbeques including hamburgers, sausages, other meats, or eggs - all cooked and served immediately	
Class 2 *High-risk foods which need correct temperature control at all times to keep them safe*		
Food premises type	Market stalls, food vans, community halls, sporting group kiosks, or permanent premises	
Food handling activities	May conduct all class 2 activities below (and all class 3 class 4 activities above)	
• selling ***unpackaged high-risk*** foods	✓ fruit juice ✓ pickles, relishes, chutneys and condiments ✓ salads	✓ small goods ✓ sandwiches
• handling and selling ***cooked, refrigerated and reheated*** foods	✓ burgers ✓ casseroles and rice dishes	✓ chicken ✓ pizza
• making, handling and selling ***high-risk foods containing raw ingredients***	✓ homemade mayonnaise	

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