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Guidance Document No 30 r2
Decommissioning a Commercial
Kitchen

Introduction

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic many kitchens will be closed down or mothballed and the following is advice on the actions and precautions that should be taken.

Refrigerators

Remove any remaining foodstuff and dispose or reallocate as appropriate.
Isolate from electrical supply and remove plug from socket
Clean internal surfaces with sanitiser solution
Ensure that any sanitiser is subsequently washed off with clean fresh water
Dry down interior as much as practically possible
Leave the door ajar to allow air to circulate within the interior – tea towel or similar can be used to maintain air gap

Freezers

Remove any remaining foodstuff and dispose as appropriate.
Isolate from electrical supply
Open the door to defrost and allow to return to room temperature, approx. 1 hour.
Clean internal surfaces with sanitiser solution
Ensure that any sanitiser is subsequently washed off with clean fresh water
Dry down interior as much as practically possible
Leave the door ajar to allow air to circulate within the interior – tea towel or similar can be used to maintain air gap

Cooking and Heating Equipment

All cooking appliances should be thoroughly cleaned and, where fitted, doors should be left slightly open to allow air circulation.



Gas fired equipment

Assuming that the kitchen has a gas interlock system meaning that if the extraction is off the electric solenoid valve closes and isolates the kitchen gas supply it should be safe to leave. If in doubt, there should be a manual isolation valve where the gas pipe enters the kitchen that should be turned to off/closed.

When the kitchen is re-opened, recommend having the gas appliances all checked at start up to ensure there are no gas leaks. As appliances sit unused and at atmospheric pressure, joints and seals can settle and may weep gas.

Electrically powered equipment

All electrically powered equipment should be isolated either by unplugging or at the isolator. Items that are connected by a 13amp plug and socket should be unplugged with the exception of fly killers which should be left on.

Fryers

Oil should be drained from fryers and the pans thoroughly cleaned. If the pan is mild steel it should be coated with a very thin layer of vegetable oil to prevent rusting. The pan cover should be fitted to prevent dust settling in the pan. Oil should be disposed of responsibly and any oil drain buckets should be thoroughly cleaned and dried.

Dishwashers

The process is the same for the range of machines from Undercounter, Passthrough, Rack and Flight.

Drain the machine

Clear any debris

Remove and clean filters

Replace filters

Refill machine

Complete one full wash and rinse cycle (this will leave clean water in the wash pump if it doesn't drain i.e. undercounter machines)

Drain the machine

Leave the doors open as this will reduce the likelihood of bacteria growth.

Other equipment using water

Water softeners

If practical to do so, clean the salt out of the brine box.

If the machine has an electrical supply, switch off to avoid unnecessary re-generation cycles.

Turn the water supply off at the nearest point to the system.

Combi ovens and Steaming ovens

Combi ovens and Steaming ovens should be cleaned down as normal and drained and the doors left open and then treated as suggested for Gas or Electrically powered equipment. If it is fitted with a wash down hose and spray, this should be drained if possible and if not should be treated in the same way as a Prewash spray (see below).



Water boilers

Should be drained down and isolated

Prewash sprays

If it is feasible (i.e. that staff are able to access the kitchen) the prewash spray should be operated once a week for at least 10 minutes to minimise the possibility of bacteria building up.

Water systems generally

In general, systems should normally be left filled with water for mothballing and not be drained down as moisture will remain within the system enabling biofilm to develop where there are pockets of water or high humidity. The water in the system also helps to avoid other problems associated with systems drying out, including failure of tank joints and corrosion in metal pipework.

Where a building, part of a building or a water system is taken out of use, sometimes (mothballed), it should be managed so that microbial growth including legionella in the water is appropriately controlled. The systems should be recommissioned as though they were new (i.e. thoroughly flushed, cleaned and disinfected) before returned to use.

Legionella

The Legionella bacteria can only exist in water between temperatures of 20°C and 60°C and is transmitted in water droplets. This means that any equipment that heats water above 60°C will automatically kill off any possible bacteria when next used.

If dishwashers have steam to cold water heat exchangers used to preheat the incoming cold water, there is always a possibility of bacteria surviving when the machine is in use, however, if it is left unused for a period, any water remaining on the Steam side of the heat exchanger will quickly dry out and this will kill the bacteria.

