PrimeSafe eNews
April 2022 edition

PrimeSafe Management Change

PrimeSafe would like to welcome our new Chief Executive Officer, Michael Coffey, who will take up the position at the end of April 2022. We thank Andrew Coghill for his work as Acting CEO over the past few months.

Michael has a 20-year career in leadership roles across safety and regulatory environments, and a commitment to engaging with and supporting industry sectors across Victoria. He has a strong record of growing high performing teams to deliver efficient and effective safety and regulatory outcomes which keep communities and consumers safe, and industry prosperous. Michael has experience that spans both the Victorian Public Service and the private sector having worked for three ASX 100 companies. Michael's most recent role was leading the regulatory approach for Hazardous Industries at WorkSafe Victoria.

PrimeSafe would also like to thank and acknowledge Dr Brendan Tatham who stepped down from the position of CEO in February 2022 after 8 years in the role. Over the years, Brendan developed a rigorous food safety regulatory system, and more recently, embarked on modernising PrimeSafe's operating environment through a new digital licensing and regulatory platform. He led PrimeSafe through a challenging environment, especially given the widespread and continuing impacts of COVID-19 on the industry and community. Brendan worked closely with government and industry stakeholders, and has made a significant contribution to the safety of Victoria's meat, poultry and seafood, ensuring strong consumer confidence in Victoria. PrimeSafe particularly thanks Brendan for his dedication and commitment to delivering the vision, mission and values of PrimeSafe in achieving a public health record that he can be proud of
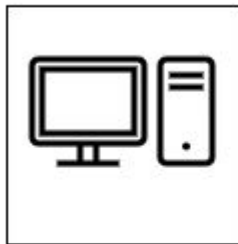
Licensee Portal Access

PrimeSafe has moved on-line to make viewing current licenses, renewing licenses, applying for new licenses and editing existing details quicker and easier. If you have not done so already, please create an account and also request access to your existing PrimeSafe Licence/s via our online portal.
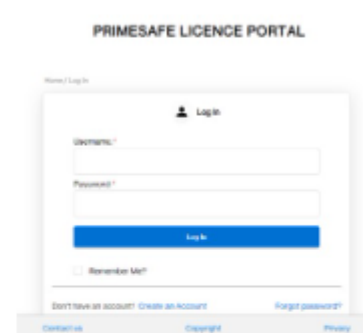
After you have made your portal access request, PrimeSafe will conduct the necessary security checks and then send confirmation of approval. On-line access may take a few days, however, once access is granted you will be able to view your licence/s.

For information about the PrimeSafe online portal please click here or contact us at info@primesafe.vic.gov.au for more information to assist you with the transition.

If you already have portal access, please check all your details to ensure they are current, if any updates are required please submit an amendment via the portal.

Licensee Portal Revamp and Renewals

PrimeSafe is revamping the existing licensee portal to enhance the look and feel in response to the feedback we have received from our licensees. The revamp is due for release in April/May 2022 in readiness for the June renewal season.

Amongst the exciting new features are the ability to update Company and Personal information, renew all registrations/licences in one go, one single BPAY reference for multiple registration/licence renewals and more payment options for new licence applications (including BPAY and Paypal).

We are also streamlining our communications to enhance the way we interact with our licensees. More details to follow in the coming weeks.

What is a Food Safety Program?

All PrimeSafe licensees require a Food Safety Program as a condition of their licence.

A Food Safety Program is a document that describes how a food business will control food safety hazards by assessing each of the steps of food production. Each of the steps must be assessed for risk and have documented procedures to manage the critical hazards.

A meat business's Food Safety Program must be based on HACCP Principles (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points). A useful reference tool can be accessed via this link: A Guide to the Implementation and Auditing of HACCP.

A seafood business can use HACCP-based principles or an alternative risk-based approach demonstrating how the food safety risks will be managed. Guidelines in the Food Standards Code Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) can assist with development of a Food Safety Program.

The Food Safety Program must always remain on site where meat and seafood products are processed and/or stored. A Food Safety Program should be read and understood by every employee at a business who handles food.

Components of a Food Safety Program

There are four components of a Food Safety Program required by PrimeSafe:

1. Quality Policy
2. HACCP Plan (Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points)
3. Standard Operating Procedures and Work Instructions
4. Pre-requisite Programs

1. Quality Policy
A business's declaration and commitment to produce safe wholesome food for human consumption at their premises.

2. HACCP Plan

HACCP Plan is a written plan to control food safety hazards at all stages of food processing and must include:

- A HACCP team
- The scope of the plan
- Product description and distribution methods
- Intended use of the product
- A detailed process flow diagram showing each processing step
- Verification on-site of the process flow diagram
- A list of all potential hazards and any control measures to control the identified hazards
- Determination of Critical Control Points (CCPs)
- Establishing the Critical Limits (CLs) for each CCP
- Establishing a monitoring system for each CCP
- Establishing corrective action plans for CCP deviations that may occur
- Establishing verification procedures
- Establishing record keeping and documentation

3. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Work Instructions (WIs)

SOPs and WIs are documented practices and procedures that are critical to producing safe food. These are generally part of food handling controls and related to receival, storage, processing, display, packaging, transportation, disposal and recall of food.

4. Pre-requisite Programs (PRPs)

PRPs are procedures that are necessary in a Food Safety Program to maintain a hygienic environment throughout the food supply chain. These procedures control the operational conditions within a food business but are not product or process specific. They promote environmental conditions that are favourable to the production of safe food.

Businesses must review the pre-requisite programs periodically to ensure they are being implemented and are effective. There should be records to verify that a business is following the pre-requisite programs procedures.

Pre-requisite Programs include:

- Good Manufacturing Practices
- Cleaning and sanitation
- Pest control
- Personnel hygiene
- Maintenance program
- Staff training
- Control and prevention of physical and chemical contamination

Free Food Safety Program

PrimeSafe offers free Food Safety Programs to retail meat and seafood businesses on request. Other free food safety programs/booklets can be obtained by licence holders of a meat transport vehicle, a game harvest vehicle, or a wildcatch seafood business.

Food safety programs can also be tailored to include more complex processing activities and these types of programs can be created under a fee for service arrangement with PrimeSafe.

To obtain a free PrimeSafe Food Safety Program or for more information, contact PrimeSafe on (03) 9685 7333 or info@primesafe.vic.gov.au

Seafood safety, traceability and labelling

Australia has a global reputation for high quality seafood which allows exporters to access premium international markets. The commercial harvesting of seafood from Commonwealth waters is managed by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), or by the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) when harvesting from Victorian waters. When seafood is landed in Victoria, PrimeSafe has regulatory responsibility for managing food safety and any further processing activities conducted by seafood businesses.

Seafood in Victoria can come from either a wild caught or aquaculture source which both carry inherent food safety risks that need to be managed. Seafood businesses that process and sell seafood in Victoria must be licensed with PrimeSafe and comply with the requirements of the Food Standards Code Australia New Zealand (the Code). The Code contains the Primary Production and Processing Standards, which prescribe requirements for food safety and hygiene practices, and construction of equipment and premises.

Seafood safety

To keep seafood free from contamination and prevent food borne illness, the following requirements apply for all seafood businesses:

- Ensuring that the temperature of freshly caught seafood (non-live) is reduced quickly to 5°C or immediately frozen, and maintained under these conditions until sold;
- Checking that the receival temperature of fresh chilled seafood is 5°C (or less), or is frozen;
- On receipt, recording the quantity of seafood and supplier details and/or harvester of the seafood to ensure traceability;
- Segregating raw seafood from cooked and ready-to-eat (RTE) seafood during processing, storage and display;
- Ensuring that RTE seafood served hot is maintained at a temperature above 60°C;
- Ensuring frozen seafood is not thawed in water;
- Ensuring that thawed seafood is not re-frozen;
- Ensuring that unpackaged seafood is displayed so it cannot be handled by customers;
- Maintaining equipment and identifying premises construction defects to prevent contamination and pathogen growth on seafood;
- Removing pooling water from floors and any other surfaces regularly; and
- Labelling seafood accurately, noting that Country of Origin labelling is no longer a PrimeSafe requirement, but which is now a requirement regulated by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

Temperature Control
Temperature control of potentially hazardous foods such as seafood prevents bacteria that cause food borne illness from multiplying in the food or from producing toxins. The Code requires seafood to be kept either 5°C or colder, or 60°C or hotter during receival, storage, display and transport. Any seafood that is frozen must remain hard frozen when delivered and kept frozen during storage, display and transportation. If seafood is thawed for sale, then it must be labelled accordingly and not refrozen.

Cooking and Cooling
Processing steps involving a heat treatment can eliminate *Listeria monocytogenes* and other pathogenic microorganisms from seafood. Refrigerated seafood products with a shelf life of less than 10 days must be heated to at least 70°C for 2 minutes or heated to 75°C to the core. Cooked seafood that is intended to be cooled and used later, must be cooled to 5°C or below as quickly as possible to reduce the opportunity for bacteria to multiply. The Code requires food to be cooled from 60°C to 21°C within 2 hours, and from 21°C to 5°C within a further four hours. All packaged ready-to-eat seafood must be tested for *Listeria monocytogenes* as described in the Code.

RTE Bivalve Molluscs

Bivalve molluscs are filter feeders which means their food consist of particles filtered from the seawater. These particles may include pathogenic bacteria, viruses, algal biotoxins and environmental contaminants that can cause food borne illness when molluscs are consumed by people. As bivalve molluscs are commonly eaten raw, and toxins are not destroyed by cooking, compliance with the Victorian Shellfish Quality Assurance Program (VSQAP) is required to manage these risks. This includes compliance elements from the nationally recognised Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Program (ASQAP) that ensures licensees meet the requirements of the bacteriological monitoring program for water and shellfish. There are additional testing requirements for biotoxins in bivalve molluscs which are described in Standard 1.4.1 of the Food Standards Code and in Schedule 19 of the Food Standards Code. The microbiological requirements of cooked and raw crustacea, bivalve molluscs and RTE seafood can be found in Schedule 27 of the Code. It is also important for licensed seafood businesses that receive live shellfish to ensure it is stored in a cool, dry environment and below 5°C after being shucked. Businesses require approval from PrimeSafe before wet storing or de-sanding bivalve molluscs. The requirements of wet storage can be found in ASQAP. All water used for wet storage must be potable to prevent stored bivalve molluscs from becoming contaminated.

Traceability

A seafood business must maintain sufficient written records to identify the immediate supplier and immediate recipient of seafood for the purposes of ensuring the safety of the seafood.

Seafood products manufactured by the business must be identified with a batch number. The batch number may consist of production date and the batch number for the day or another identifier format. For example:

3112-01

[date, month, batch number for the day]

Rework and work in progress (WIP) products are to be clearly labelled with the following information:

- name of product;
- date when placed for rework; and
- batch number.

All packaged seafood and seafood products are required to have traceability through labelling. The label shall conform to the Code Standard 1.2 – Labelling.

Labelling

Packaged seafood product labels must have:

- description of the product and the species;
- batch number;
- name of business and its address;
- date of packaging and use by/best before date;
- storage conditions; and
- country of origin (ACCC requirement).

Packaged seafood product that contains added ingredients labels must have:

- description of the product and the species;
- batch number;
- name of business and its address;
- date of packaging and use by/best before date;
- storage conditions and direction of use;
- country of origin (ACCC requirement);
- Nutritional Information Panel;
- Ingredient listing;
- nutritional and health claims; and
- advisory statement, warning statement and declarations.

How do I contact PrimeSafe?

For licensing, information and support or compliance enquiries, you can contact PrimeSafe by:

- **Phone** (03) 9685 7333
- **Email** info@primesafe.vic.gov.au
- **Online** About the PrimeSafe Licence Portal

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