



AIPC MEMBERS SPEAK SAFE FOOD PRODUCTION AND DELIVERY INTRODUCING NEW STANDARDS IN A MULTI-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

TEXT PETER BROKENSHERE - GENERAL MANAGER OF THE KUALA LUMPUR CONVENTION CENTRE



Peter Brokenshere

A meal in Malaysia does not just offer a chance to refuel the body; it is a social event and a means of communication. In fact, the universal question to a visitor in Malaysia, as in much of Asia, is 'have you eaten?' Unfortunately, the bacteria and pathogens which cause food poisoning multiply rapidly in high ambient temperatures, and in tropical climates, a poorly ventilated kitchen can fairly easily approach these temperatures providing ideal conditions for their growth. Malaysia is not alone in facing this kind of problem in the kitchen but it is significant that steps are now being formally taken to address the safety of food production, preparation and delivery to the consumer.

The Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre recognised from the start that formal food safety certification would be necessary in order to re-assure foreign and domestic clients that their health and well being was being taken seriously. To achieve this, the Centre initially elected to adopt the US-based Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) method of managing food safety while awaiting publication of the newer International Standards Organisation (ISO) 22000 Food Safety Management System standard.

The most important aspect of HACCP is that it is a preventative, rather than an inspection based,

system of controlling food safety hazards. Since preventing hazards cannot be accomplished by end product inspection, controlling processes during production offers the most effective approach. HACCP focuses on three types of hazards: physical, chemical and biological. Physical hazards may include plastic, metal, glass and clothing material that can get into a product during production. Biological hazards typically receive the most scrutiny in an effective HACCP programme in a tropical environment because they also present the greatest risk in terms of the likelihood of occurrence and the consequences that may follow.

The implementation of HACCP is preceded by a 'prerequisite programme' for food handlers that includes basic standards of cleanliness. However, a clean facility does not necessarily mean a sanitary one as the term 'clean' typically implies visible cleanliness whilst sanitation addresses levels of invisible cleanliness. Food-borne illnesses can be caused by micro-organisms that are not visible to the naked eye, and it is therefore vital for all food handling departments to be involved in implementing such a programme.

Implementing HACCP involves a seven step process, which must be continuously updated to ensure an organisation has a preventive system of hazard control in place to maintain food safety. The steps involve identifying the hazards present in the workplace, determining the controls necessary at each critical control point to prevent the hazards becoming a risk to food safety, setting critical limits for each control point, monitoring and recording the limits and taking corrective action where these are not met and continually verifying processes and procedures.

The Centre went on to upgrade and become certified to the newly published ISO 22000:2005

Food Safety Management System of which HACCP forms a core component. Both programmes required the chefs to review their methods of food preparation to ensure that not only were the processes correct but their staff understood why these processes were necessary. Menu and recipe cards were produced to ensure safe food products of high and consistent quality; the Asset Department worked tirelessly to ensure that the building and equipment met the required standards and maintenance; the Purchasing Department trained their receivers to be vigilant and food suppliers were inspected to ensure that the raw materials and products they provided were produced under controlled conditions.

When the Centre first started the journey towards assuring food safety, people did not always understand the value of having a structured management system within which to work; however, its value became evident at all levels within the organisation and even the most skeptical became converts. Along with our staff, a number of our suppliers are now working towards certification in order to demonstrate the professionalism with which they supply their products and services to the Centre.

And the overall result is the customer confidence we set out to achieve!

The Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre is a long standing member of the International Association of Congress Centres (AIPC)

AIPC CONTACT DETAILS

marianne.de.raay@aipc.org
or www.aipc.org