




A Zep Company 

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AFCO's Food Safety, Sanitation, and Pest Control Audits

One of the functions of the Quality Action Team (QAT) in the AFCO/Zep F & B division is to perform Food Safety, Sanitation, and Pest Control audits for our customers. These are done to alert the customer of discrepancies in their program so that they can be corrected prior to the 3rd party audits by AIB, BRC, and SQF.

Although the audit covers Food Safety, Sanitation, and Pest Control, personnel and chemical-use safety is always the number one priority during our observations. The auditor is always aware of employee actions on and with equipment, on ladders, wearing goggles and safety glasses, with equipment safety supports and their condition, wearing hearing protection, wearing appropriate PPE (in particular gloves), applying detergents, and handling and use of chemicals.

The audit begins with documentation verification. Evaluation of documents include those of employee training, which is performed once or twice per year depending on the topic. Documents include training on food safety, sanitation process and procedures, especially for complex cleaning instructions, job and chemical safety, GMPs, Safe Quality Food (SQF), HACCP, and microbiology. Documentation can also include equipment microbiological counts on equipment and the Environmental Monitoring Program. Pest Control documentation is also reviewed making sure it is up-to-date, including the contractor licenses, looking for any corrective actions taken regarding observed pests, and evaluating the entire program for effectiveness.

The audit then moves into the manufacturing part of the facility observing the overall condition of the facility. Observations include the ceiling, while looking for leaks, mold, tape, strings, dust, and spiderwebs; walls, looking for unnecessary holes, leaks, and food particles; and floors, including quantity and type of soil, drains, and presence of water or liquids. Observations are made concerning handwashing protocols. This is followed by getting a closer inspection while moving throughout the floor. Often the audit is being done during operation and sanitation.

During operation, GMPs are evaluated as employees go about their tasks. Critical Control Limits are items that are observed as appropriate. By asking questions of employees, knowledge of Critical Control Limits is detected and evaluated, which is part of the SQF audit.

As sanitation begins, the audit usually begins at the chemical room, looking for the SDS book, making sure each chemical is listed, making sure all chemicals have labels, evaluating how the chemical dispensing operation is setup, monitoring the number of employees allowed to dispense chemicals, and checking out chemical waste containers, air exhaust, lighting. The auditor will also check the condition of the room, and if it is locked when unattended, according to Homeland Security.

Steps of the sanitation process are observed as well as random equipment procedures. Steps are evaluated according to dry pickup, first rinse, cleaning of drains, detergent foam quality and coverage, when and if scrubbing occurs, removal of suds and food particles with the 2nd rinse, sanitor's pre-operational inspection, auditor's pre-op inspection of entire environment and equipment, and application and coverage of sanitizer. Equipment cleaning issues noted are in regard to time allowed for cleaning, water temperature, time that the water is off, stains, bluing, and buildup. Sanitation process



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steps that could be more effective and efficient are included. The auditor will evaluate water usage, leaking hoses, valves, and dispensing units. The presence of critical management staff in charge of sanitation is included.

All issues that affect sanitation are related to Food Safety. During sanitation, items such as belt removal, soaking and scrubbing of belts, buildup on guiderails and sprockets, complete detergent and sanitizer coverage all have to do with Food Safety. Evaluation of the belt removal program; cleaning of totes and tubs; the keeping of belts, edible parts, and tubs off the floor; handling of drain backups; and the cleaning of air-cooling units, coolers and freezers are performed as appropriate. Uncleanable items are also noted.

Maintenance (refrigeration, electrical, general maintenance) contributes a large part to effectiveness of sanitation and food safety. They are responsible for keeping things running smoothly, maintaining items that are broken, damaged, or worn out such as leaking gaskets on control panels, leaking valves, repairing leaks, maintaining heat exchanger, repairing damaged valves and hoses, unplugging drains, maintenance of positive air pressure and replacing air filters, and cleaning inside electrical boxes. All observed items are noted in audit.

As sanitation is completed, a walk throughout the entire facility will be completed. Propped-open or unlocked exterior doors, spiderwebs in corners and ceilings of warehouse, holes near the dock doors and plates, condition of each room with regard to trash and broken pallets, presence of insects in air or in dry storage area, presence of bird nests on exterior light fixtures, placement of pest control boxes, standing water and trash near exterior of building are included in the evaluation and report.

This report serves as a soft audit where items can be evaluated, put on a list for attention, and addressed as appropriate by management without losing points or a customer. FQA members provide independent, unbiased, and constructive observations to the management group regarding the condition of their facility. All customers could benefit from this packet of information that includes discrepancies and items that require attention. Special positive items are sometimes included! Use of this information has been shown to improve audit scores, improve food quality, and cleanliness of facility.

Written by Dr. Carol Jones, Manager, AFCO/Zep Quality Action Team