Food Safety Week – 11-15 June

National Food Safety Week is an opportunity for highlighting the importance of food safety and the basic principles of food hygiene. It is now in its fifteenth year and the focus for 2007 is the 4 Cs for food safety.

The 4 Cs for food safety are:
- Cleanliness
- Cooking
- Chilling
- Cross-contamination.

Those participating in National Food Safety Week are predominantly local authority environmental health departments, health promotion and infection control teams in hospitals, schools and companies. Across the country there are numerous activities happening including exhibitions, presentations and competitions. For further information, please see: http://www.foodlink.org.uk.

Falkirk Council’s Food Safety team held an exhibition stand in a local supermarket with balloons, leaflets, competitions, free thermometers, hand-washing experiments and officers on hand to give out food safety advice. The team also visited a number of community groups including Mothers and Toddlers, Women’s Guild and an after-school care club to speak to them about relevant aspects of food hygiene and safety. They received positive media coverage after one of their Environmental Health Officers visited a local journalist’s kitchen and assessed the safety of her food storage techniques.

Another example of the activities happening across Scotland has been acquired from Aberdeenshire Council Environmental Health Officers.

Aberdeenshire Council has strongly supported Food Safety Week during its 15 year history. During the past three years the Council has successfully applied for funding from the Food Standards Agency Scotland and this has enabled literature and merchandise to be produced to enhance participation during Food Safety Week and throughout the year.

They recently commenced their activities to highlight the importance of food safety by exhibiting at the annual ‘Taste of Grampian’ food festival which took place in Inverurie prior to National Food Safety Week. This event brings the Food Safety Week message to over 10,000 people in one day and also to attending food businesses. During exhibitions at the ‘Taste of Grampian’, hourly prize draws were held for both adults and children, and the winners received a specially designed coolbag/backpack as a prize.

During Food Safety Week this year, they located an exhibition stand and daily prize draw at Aberdeenshire Council’s HQ in Aberdeen and were also involved with a local...
secondary school in a ‘farm to fork’ exercise. The pupils learn about livestock and crop production in a farm environment, are given a demonstration by a local butcher on the preparation of a side of beef, transportation, storage, preparation and the service of food. Emphasis is made throughout the exercise on health, nutrition and most importantly, hygiene. The hand washing cabinet, Glitter Bug Potion and Carex handwash were in abundant supply at the event.

The Council has also designed and produced various forms of merchandise and, during previous years, has given away around 10,000 pens, keyrings, coasters, balloons, carrier bags, stickers and badges emblazoned with the Food Safety Week message.

Aberdeenshire Council’s EHOs treat Food Safety Week as the start of a national focus on the importance of food hygiene principles which continues beyond the end of the week through to the following year when it will all start again with the sixteenth National Food Safety Week in June 2008.

**Noise Mapping in Scotland**

Across Europe, member states are preparing noise maps for their busiest cities, as part of the Environmental Noise Directive (END). This directive concerns noise from road, rail and air traffic and from industry. It focuses on the impact of such noise on individuals, complementing existing EU legislation which sets standards for noise emissions from specific sources.

In Scotland, strategic noise maps for Edinburgh and Glasgow are being finalised showing the noise levels from road, rail and air transportation. Also included will be noise from industrial premises and SEPA is collating noise data from large industrial areas to include in the maps. Once prepared, action plans will then be created to reduce and control excessive noise in the environment.

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**World Health Statistics 2007**

The *World Health Statistics 2007* are the most recent health statistics from the 193 WHO member states. This official record of data acts as the authoritative health reference tool for over 50 health indicators across the world. The report shows:

- How much money is currently spent on health in comparison to regional burdens of disease
- Projected patterns of major causes of death for 2030
- Gaps in reliable information, and how estimates of maternal mortality are made
- The diseases that are killing people, and those that make them sick
- The extent to which people can access treatment, the major risk factors for ill-health, the human resources underpinning health systems, and
- Health outcomes in the context of demographic and socioeconomic status of individual countries.

It is interesting to learn that, over the next 25 years, it is predicted that the world will experience a substantial shift in the distribution of deaths from younger age groups to older age groups, and from communicable diseases to non-communicable diseases. Large reductions in mortality are anticipated from communicable, maternal, perinatal and nutritional causes, with the exception of HIV/AIDS. The leading causes of death in 2030 are projected to be ischaemic heart disease, cerebrovascular disease (stroke), HIV/AIDS and chronic pulmonary disease. Tobacco-attributable deaths are expected to rise and be responsible for 10% of all deaths worldwide in 2015. Data shows that daily tobacco smoking is most prevalent among the lowest-income households in developing economies, leading to severe health inequalities, especially where health resources are limited. The geographical distribution of financial resources for health is uneven, whereby 30 of the WHO members spend 90% of the world’s total resources on health on 20% of the world’s population. The full report is available on-line at: [www.who.int/whosis/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/whosis/en/index.html).
Success for Food Hygiene Information Scheme Pilot!

Last year, five Scottish local authorities volunteered to pilot a Food Hygiene Information Scheme: Aberdeen City Council, City of Edinburgh Council, Fife Council, Perth and Kinross Council and Renfrewshire Council. The scheme is designed to provide consumers with simplified information about food hygiene in catering and retail establishments. The Food Hygiene Information Scheme was launched on 6 November 2006 in specific pilot areas within the five local authorities. Each establishment within the pilot area was issued with a certificate categorised as ‘Pass’, ‘Improvement Required’ or ‘Awaiting Inspection’ and encouraged to prominently display the certificate, although this is not compulsory. In addition each local authority created a section within their website where consumers can access and check the status of all establishments within the pilot area.

A report has recently been published on behalf of the Food Standards Agency evaluating the scheme in terms of consumer awareness, public reaction to the scheme, business reaction to the scheme, consumer behaviour, website use and local authority administration of the scheme.

The findings are very positive with:

- 98% of consumers, and 89% of businesses, agreeing that it’s fair that the public should be able to check a retailer/caterer’s food hygiene status.
- 91% of consumers, and 77% of businesses, believing the scheme will encourage retail and catering businesses to comply with food hygiene legislation.
- 89% of consumers, and 68% of businesses, believing that the scheme will raise food hygiene standards.
- 68% of businesses who received a certificate displayed this prominently within their premises. This can be broken down to 73% of businesses who received a ‘Pass’ and 39% of businesses who received an ‘Improvement Required’.

The five pilot local authorities were also positive about the scheme and most would like to see the scheme being made compulsory across Scotland. The full report can be viewed at http://www.food.gov.uk/scotland/safetyhygienescot/foodhygieneinfoscot/fhisreport.

Fife Intervention Team Receives Trophy!

Fife Chamber of Safety’s Annual Awards were presented last month and the Nairn Trophy for Outstanding Contribution to the Community was awarded to the Intervention Team for Health and Safety at Work within the Environmental Services Department of Fife Council.

This team has been in existence since October 2005 with a remit to provide free advice on health and safety at work to businesses in Fife.

The team’s involvement with the European Week of Safety and Health, presentations to schools introducing safety in the workplace, Safety and Health Awareness Days (SHADs), as well as a survey of UV tanning premises across the Kingdom of Fife have all contributed to winning this highly prestigious award.

From left to right: Peter Ager, Les Roberts, Brian McGloughlin and Dr Karen McDonnell of RoSPA who presented the award.
National Water for Health Alliance Meeting

The Water for Health Alliance is a stakeholder group established by Water UK to promote greater awareness of the importance of hydration and stimulate research. This has broad support among professionals who understand the relationship between water services and public health. The Alliance aims to work closely with government and health authorities to influence policy. The fourth anniversary meeting of the Water for Health Alliance will be hosted by UNISON at their headquarters in London on 28 June. The key topics will include: water and good hydration in UK schools, care homes, hospitals, workplaces and water availability in public areas. If you would like to attend, please e-mail Amy Evans: aevans@water.org.uk.

Revised Guidance: Blue-Green Algae (Cyanobacteria) in Inland and Inshore Waters: Assessment and Minimisation of Risks to Public Health

This new guidance document was produced in April by the Scottish Executive, in partnership with other agencies. To view the document, please visit: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/04/20145428/0

The Healthy Environment Network – New Website Address

The Healthy Environment Network (HEN) provides a forum for interface and encourages multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working between organisations and professions whose activities have the capacity to change and preserve the environment in the interests of human health. Both REHIS and the Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health in Scotland are members of this forum.

One of the underlying principles of the Network is the recognition of sustainability of the environment as a way of protecting the health of future generations and the need to take a long-term view. HEN seeks to obtain wider recognition for the role that the environment plays in determining the health of the population; develop practical strategies for improving health through the environment; bring a broad perspective to issues affecting the health of the population; develop and strengthen practice by encouraging working across traditional boundaries; improve education and communication about and within Public Health; and contribute to national policy developments through:

- Acting as a sounding board for cross-cutting issues on the environment and health
- Facilitating the provision of advice on the environment and health
- Facilitating the distribution of consultation documents
- Communicating scientific issues and comments on the relative risk of competing exposures, and
- Acting as advocates for research on the environment and health and identifying gaps in the knowledge or evidence base.

HEN has been set up under the auspices of NHS Health Scotland, which provides administrative and facilitative support to the Network and its subgroups. For further information, please visit: http://www.healthscotland.com/resources/networks/healthy-environment.aspx.

If you wish to feature any Environmental Health or Public Health initiative, event or activity in the REHIS Newsletter, please contact Jennifer Watkins, Professional Development Officer, on 0131 225 5444 or jw@rehis.com
Public Health Professional Spotlight

Firstly may I congratulate you on the launch of your electronic newsletter and I feel deeply humbled to be approached as a Public Health Professional to be featured. They say that everyone has fifteen minutes of fame - well, after 47 years in the NHS (man and boy) this must be mine.

So now to the introduction; I am Graham Wharton, ‘Health Protection Nurse Specialist’ with NHS Orkney Board. For those that don’t know, Orkney is an archipelago of islands lying off the north-east coast of Scotland, between John O’Groats and the Shetland Isles, across the Pentland Firth - 23 miles of the worst stretch of water imaginable, even on a calm day (guess you realise I am not the best of sailors). Orkney consists of 70 islands, 17 of which are inhabited, with a total population of just under 20,000.

After a very broad and varied career path within the NHS, I eventually specialised in Infection Control and completed a Masters in Communicable Disease Control at Manchester University in 2000. I joined NHS Orkney in October 2003 having migrated from North Wales, the attraction of the post being that it offered a combination of both infection and communicable disease control across hospital and community in a remote and rural setting.

There are 15 NHS Boards in Scotland. They have very broad responsibilities for improving and protecting the health of their local population. Recent guidance has reiterated that health protection is one of the key functions they must deliver in the push to improve Scotland’s health.

The control of communicable diseases is a prime responsibility of the NHS Orkney Board (NHSO). This entails the surveillance of communicable diseases, immunisation co-ordination, the management of programmes to prevent bloodborne virus infections, outbreak and incident management, the development and co-ordination of infection control policy and education related to health protection. A multi-disciplinary team, led by the Consultant in Public Health Medicine, carries out these functions. The Consultant also carries the powers of Designated Medical Officer to the local authority in the event that legal powers are required to control the spread of communicable disease or other hazards.

Environmental Health shares the statutory responsibility for controlling communicable diseases with NHSO. On a day-to-day basis, Environmental Health Officers constitute the prime local authority resource in this area of health protection. They also have the principal local responsibility for reducing the risks from many environmental hazards. They liaise closely with NHSO colleagues in the investigation and control of outbreaks of infections, being the enforcement arm of the teams set up to manage these incidents.

NHS Orkney Public Health Department also has a remit to monitor and manage the impact on health of exposure to chemical and other toxic agents and lead the local NHS emergency planning function.

NHS Orkney Laboratory Services provides a range of clinical and diagnostic services to treat people exposed to hazards. However, they also play a key role in their prevention. All clinical services are important in the early recognition of illnesses due to exposure to hazards. Microbiology services are essential for the diagnosis and management of infections, the surveillance of biological hazards, the investigation of outbreaks and the
control of infection in healthcare settings. The Infection Control Team is fundamental to combating healthcare associated infection. The Health Protection Nurse Specialist, as part of the Public Health Department and General Practitioners, has a key role in the early recognition and subsequent control of communicable diseases.

The local authority plays a pivotal role in protecting the health of the community through three key approaches: planning, regulation and service provision. In the first, the development of local plans, the preparation of emergency plans, the promotion of sustainable development and the granting of permission to planning applications all influence the degree of health protection offered to local communities.

Orkney Islands Council (OIC) Environmental Health Department also monitors and enforces a series of national and local statutes related to health protection. These include licensing services and establishments, controlling air quality, trading standards, food safety, health and safety at work, contaminated land, public health nuisance, pest control, consumer protection, building control, road and community safety. Education, housing and cleansing are among the key services provided, which help prevent exposures to hazards.

Put simply, health protection means protecting each of us, young and old, from hazards, which can damage our health, whether from disease or from biological, chemical, radiological and physical processes. Protecting health is of course an individual and collective responsibility.

Public Health remains high on the Scottish Executive agenda and I hope this has given you a flavour of how we manage our services up here in Orkney. With this in mind we cannot be complacent and we need to continue to strive for a healthier population in Orkney. The long-term nature of health improvement means that the benefits of what we are doing now will take time to be fully realised. We do, however, identify the need with our partners at OIC and the voluntary sector in helping to create the conditions in which people here in Orkney can make healthier choices for themselves and their families and lead healthier and more productive lives. What we do today in strengthening our health protection services will have far-reaching implications for the health of future generations.

Nutrition and Health Claims Symposium ‘Ensuring Compliance, Planning for Success’

The symposium, which was held in Dundee on 15 May, was jointly hosted by the Institute, the Scottish Food and Drink Federation and the Institute of Food Science and Technology. The Institute was represented at the event by Bernard Forteath, REHIS President, and Graham Walker, REHIS Director of Training. The symposium, which was chaired by Graeme Millar, Scottish Food Safety Advisory Committee, featured presentations from well-informed individuals representing a range of sectors.

In the morning session Professor Peter Donnelly, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, gave an overview of ‘Food and Health Policy’ with regard to nutrition and health claims and Mark Thomson, Taylor Nelson Sofres, gave an overview on ‘Health Opportunities in Scotland’, Rosemary Hignett, Food Standards Agency (FSA) talked about the ‘Future Control of Nutrition and Health Claims’ and the morning ended with a panel discussion.

After lunch, Julia Clarke from Which? gave a presentation on ‘Health and Nutrition Claims’ and this was followed by a presentaiton on ‘How Local Authorities Engage Business to Ensure Compliance’ by George McCracken, Glasgow City Council.

The session that followed was titled ‘Industry Case Studies: Opportunities and Success Stories’. To illustrate this, Archie Gibson, Group New Product Development Process Controller, Baxters Food Group, talked about ‘Challenge and Opportunity’ and Bill Bartlett, Corporate Affairs Director with McCain Foods GB Ltd gave a presentation on ‘Adapting to a New Consumer Landscape’.

This was then followed by a panel discussion and the Chairman’s concluding remarks.