

Health and safety compliance in 2022

Shining a spotlight on safety

Never before has in-store health and safety been so public. Pandemic-struck consumers demand and expect their in-store experience as safe as possible.

The South African government has mandated several new safety measures for shoppers and store employees, and some retailers and wholesalers have also introduced their own health and hygiene precautions. However, despite the massive impact the pandemic has had on health and safety, it's not all about Covid, and it never has been.

South African consumers have experienced their share of food-related safety issues in the last few years, with a listeriosis outbreak doing severe damage to consumer trust levels and fatally toxic noodles causing a stir. Consumers want to know that the food they are buying and feeding to their families is safe.

In conjunction with these issues, Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) is a real concern in stores where employees operate potentially dangerous machines and handle possibly toxic materials such as cleaning fluid and medication on a daily basis. Ensuring your store meets OHS standards for the safety of consumers, contractors, and employees is a legal requirement – so where do you start?



Image courtesy of Cottonbro, Pexels

How has covid-19 affected occupational health and safety and food safety?

Covid-19 has had a lasting effect on the OHS sector, and rightly so. The importance of regular and effective cleaning and sanitisation of the entire retail space, as well as frequent hand washing and sanitising by employees, suppliers, and customers, has been emphasised by the pandemic. In a broader sense, this has also underlined the importance of food health and safety compliance, as well as OHS for the built environment.

In-store sanitisation is here to stay

It's probably safe to say that trolley and basket handles have never been so clean, and more concerningly, neither have everyone's hands. It's taken a pandemic for people to realise the benefits of hand washing – but old habits die hard, and retailers may need to take matters into their own hands to ensure clean hands remain the order of the day.

The very nature of the retail space leads consumers and employees to touch everything – surfaces, handles, keypads, packaging, products, trolleys, and handbaskets. Even areas that are not considered 'high touch' will, at some

point, come into contact with someone's hands. Requiring shoppers to sanitise their hands upon entering the store and employees to either sanitise or hand wash at set points throughout the day is every day common sense. The need for increased and sustainable hygiene at home, at the office, and in retail spaces is clear.

No-touch hand sanitisers are a good solution for retail store entrances. Customers like them because they don't have to touch the same spray bottle as everyone else, but they can be finicky,



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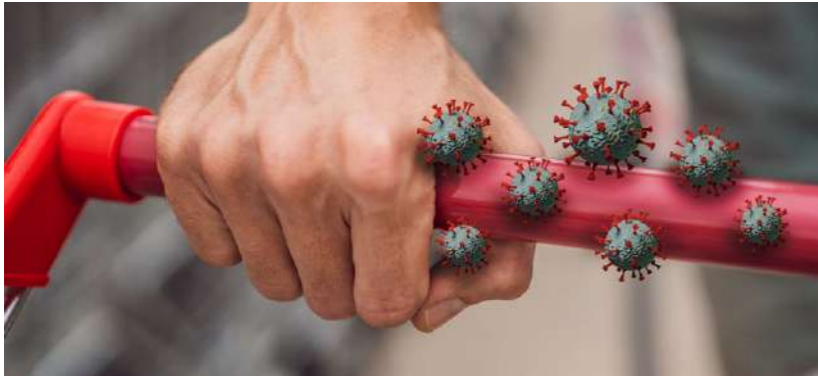


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prone to breaking, and do need to be checked and replenished with an effective yet not-too-harsh sanitising product on a regular basis.

There are two issues that retailers should consider when it comes to sourcing reliable sanitising products – efficacy and environmental impact. An effective, high-quality product may come at a price, but it also comes with guarantees. It also may come with decades of experience, product innovation, and a sense of trust. Look for recyclable or biodegradable wipes and eco-friendly sanitising products for increased sustainability and decreased environmental impact.

Sanitising wipes are useful as many customers prefer to wipe down their trolleys or basket handles themselves. Wipes are also useful for employees tasked with cleaning high touch areas or equipment, as well as food production and preparation areas.

Sanitising wipes have become the undeniable heroes of the retail sanitisation space. They are used for trolley and basket handles, high touch areas and equipment such as card machines and keypads, till surfaces, and even behind the scenes in food preparation areas and bathrooms.



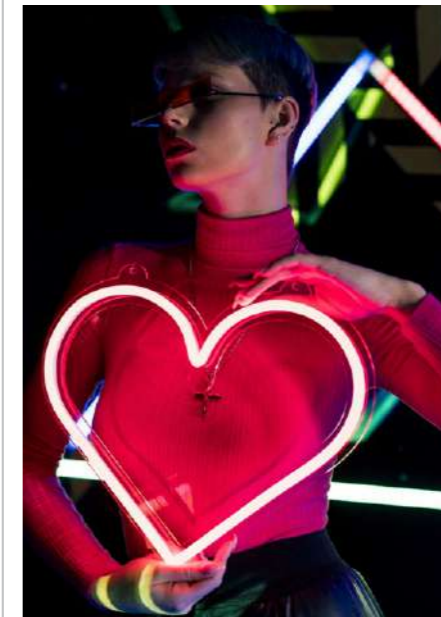
Pre-saturated wipes are convenient and effective and reduce the risk of cross-contamination. Scientists tend to agree that pre-moistened wipes are more effective than a spray-and-wipe solution. They also agree that detergent disinfectant wipes are effective against the Covid-19 virus, providing the right combination of detergent to dissolve the virus' fatty layer and disinfectant to render it inactive is used.

But not all wipes are suitable for all surfaces. Using the correct wipe substrate and fluid is essential for effective pathogen elimination. Annette Devenish, Marketing Manager at Sani-touch, says "Wipes physically remove dirt, bacteria, and any micro-organisms, including viruses, that may be present on a surface. These germs get trapped into the fibres of the wipes, allowing the fluid to coat them, deactivate them and destroy them."

Depending on the intended use, for example hand cleaning, catering or food preparation area sanitisation, or surface disinfecting, you can find 70% alcohol wipes or alcohol-free wipes that contain a safe yet effective combination of detergents and disinfectants.

New to the market and in response to the environmental impact the surge in the use of sanitising wipes has caused, companies such as Sani-touch and Stealth Wipes have launched eco-friendly biodegradable or 100% recyclable wipes.

For general cleaning, wet wipes simply can't cope with the area that needs to be cleaned, so a more targeted approach is necessary. Colour coded cloths are a practical solution to a common problem. Colour coded single use or launderable cloths prevent cross contamination when cleaning and sanitising several areas. This is particularly important in food preparation areas.



“ UV disinfection is effective against common air pollutants such as pollen, dust, and tobacco, as well as pathogens such as mould, bacteria, and viruses. ”

Image courtesy of Alena Darmel, Pexels

UV disinfection

Ensuring employee and consumer health is a moral issue, but it can also affect your bottom line. If too many staff members call off sick for Covid-19 infection (or any other serious illness), you could end up seriously short-staffed. In addition to affecting your instore processes, you might well





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have unhappy customers complaining about long queues or lack of service on the floor. And with the South African Covid-10 and Influenza seasons scheduled to coincide this winter – that scenario is looking more than possible. If you don't have access to exterior doors and windows, then air circulation can be a health and safety issue.



In all instances, efficient HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) filters are a must. One of the most effective options is an accredited HEPA high-efficiency particulate absorbing filter. Filters meeting the HEPA standard must satisfy certain levels of efficiency.

For those looking for an alternative, a UV filter disinfectant option such as the Induct Air Sterilisation System from Technilamp offers a UV filter disinfectant option that delivers sterile air on a 24/7 basis. The system is custom designed according to each store's specific air flow and duct size. It has a centralised CRM programme and, says Hugh Ward, Divisional Manager at Lascon

Lighting Group, "Retailers looking at options like this should ensure they come with full support and maintenance." UV disinfection is effective against common air pollutants such as pollen, dust, and tobacco, as well as pathogens such as mould, bacteria, and viruses.

Labelling requirements for food safety

Labels are an essential cog in the retail machine. Ensuring that your customers know exactly what they are buying, from ingredients to weight and sell by dates, is not a nice to have – legislation demands it. Reliable product tracing and data monitoring is a vital part of maintaining food safety.

Regulation R146 was published in the Government Gazette on March 01, 2010, but has not been regularly or effectively enforced, until now. With compliance a key issue, scale and labels experts Bizerba has put together a solution for retailers. Rob Kuipers, Bizerba Head of Sales – Retail Channel, notes that "with new labelling regulations in the pipeline geared towards replacing R146, understanding the complex nature of our South African labelling legislation has never been more important." Suppliers and retailers should take note of the many food labelling legislations as these will impact their marketing, label design, and ultimately their relationship with the consumer.



Regulation R146 protects the consumer from misleading information or information presented in such a way which may confuse them. It governs what information must appear on a label and how that information should be presented on a product. This mandatory information includes name and description of the foodstuff, country of origin, list of ingredients, storage instructions, date marking, and allergens.



Labelling solutions such as Bizerba's traceability system allows ingredient information to be printed on the label, as well as the country of origin and extra product descriptions. New batch numbers (also called LOT numbers) can also be added when the supplier batch changes, which enables the data to be easily and efficiently managed. This information can then be automatically uploaded to Bizerba scales. "In addition, linerless labels allow retailers to not be limited to a specific label size – you can print exactly what you need without running out of space or wasting label paper. It is important that manufacturers, retailers, and wholesalers are compliant with all legal traceability requirements set by food safety regulators in South Africa, to cover themselves against any legal claims by their customers," explains Kuipers.



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Testing

Food safety: Microbiology testing

Failing to do microbiology food safety testing can result in a slew of complications. But what to test for? How often should products be tested? What does the law say about microbiology testing?

It is a manufacturer's responsibility to ensure that food products comply with standards and regulations. So, you need to clarify your testing strategy. To do that, you need an understanding of microbiology testing. So, let's get into it.

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What is microbiology testing?

This is the process of analysing products to detect and quantify pathogenic microorganisms to ensure that the food is safe for consumption.

We have previously discussed the ins and outs of microbiology testing labs. But to quickly recap ...

How does this fit into overall food safety?

Foodstuffs can carry hazards that are not visible to the human eye. These could be microbiological or chemical risks. Common hazards include bacteria like salmonella. Food products can also contain parasites and pathogens. If ingested, these can cause illnesses and disease.

What does the law say?

The Department of Health has made regulations for microbiological standards, in terms of the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act, 1972 (Act no. 54 of 1972). They detail various organisms

that are not allowed to be present in food products and specify the necessary tests. For instance ...

- Food products are prone to spoilage. Microorganisms like Echerichia coli, listeria monocytogenes, as well as salmonella should be absent in ready-to-eat foods.
- Partly cooked or uncooked sea-water or fresh-water foods like mussels should have a limited amount of Vibrio and Shigella. In 25 grams of these products, microorganisms should be absent.

These are just two examples to show you the laws are in place to keep people safe.

What should you test for?

The first group are microorganisms that result in spoilage. These will not cause people to get sick, but will cause the food to go off. For this category you would test for bacteria, moulds and yeast.

Second, you should test for pathogens that cause food poisoning. For example, E.coli or Salmonella.

Remember that there are limits for the presence of all microorganisms in food products.

How often should you do microbiology testing?

The frequency of testing depends on the type of product you are producing. Moist foods need to be tested more often than dry foods. This is because dry environments are not hospitable to bacteria.

Despite the technicalities of how often you should test, it is still a good idea to test frequently.

In 2017–2018, a pathogen called Listeria monocytogenes went undetected in certain meat products. This led to a listeriosis outbreak in South Africa, causing the death of more than 180 people.

If pathogens go undetected in your products, you face severe reputational risks, unnecessary costs (the sum of recalls, legal fees, damages and more), and you are putting people in harms way. It's better to test frequently to avoid a situation like this.

In conclusion

Anything that results in food poisoning or spoiled foods, is a risk to food safety. That's why microbiology testing is so important. Undetected harmful substances can cause your business and your customers harm. Avoid this by getting in contact with accredited providers of food and occupational health and safety testing to analyse your products. **SR**



Image courtesy of Testo



Testing and accreditation

The food industry is obligated to remain compliant with applicable legislations and standards, to ensure the provision of safe food and to maintain a high degree of hygiene. Transport and storage, production and preparation, display and sales, every step of

a food product's life must comply with Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) regulations.

Image courtesy of Testo



Maintaining the cold chain

When it comes to food safety, maintaining the cold chain is paramount. Cold chain management, specifically temperature monitoring, is crucial to ensure not only the shelf life of a product, but its safety for consumption too. Measuring instruments

and systems experts Testo says spot-check measurements using portable thermometers, logging of data and data monitoring is essential to maintaining your cold chain and associated products on a continuous basis.

According to Testo, while cold chain integrity is critical, food safety extends to many other relevant items such as cooking oil quality testers. Measurement and data monitoring also comes into play with refrigeration, ventilation, and aircon testing and quality control.



Image courtesy of Testo



Pallet Rack damage and collapses are a problem in South African warehouses. In the UK it is a legal requirement for staff to check pallet racking on a regular basis. Rack damage is identified quickly, noted and repaired before it can lead to a collapse.

[Click on this link to view a rack collapse.](https://youtu.be/i8YdMhCEq5Q)
https://youtu.be/i8YdMhCEq5Q

RACK SAFETY AWARENESS TRAINING FOR ON-SITE STAFF

Barpro Storage has developed a 1-day training session which allows suitable warehouse staff to establish, amongst other things, if a pallet racking frame is safe to load or not.



Rack testing inspection tool

All necessary tools are supplied, including Barpro's Rack Testing device, as well as documents to check and record rack damage. The training is both theoretical and practical, covering the knowledge required by a PRRS (Person Responsible for Racking Safety) in the UK.

THE TRAINING IS FOR A MAXIMUM OF 4 PEOPLE PER DAY.



Rob Kershaw of Barpro Storage with four trainees



Gaven Swanepoel of Barpro Storage with four trainees



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Image courtesy of Testo

Digital management solutions

Eric Moore, Certified Professional – Food Safety and Director of Food Safety and Regulatory Compliance, Testo North America, says a digital management solution utilising automated temperature monitoring of refrigerated or deep-frozen products allows retailers to adopt a more preventative approach in controlling food quality and safety. With options such as the one provided by Testo, retailers can access a central database with remote monitoring from anywhere at any time.

Testing and certification

Taking a holistic approach and engaging a single service provider such as testing services specialists AssureCloud can help retailers meet their testing, inspection, certification, and training needs. Locally based, accredited testing services providers understand local legislation requirements and industry best practice.



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Testing, inspection, and certification experts SGS also provides a comprehensive range of food safety and quality solutions. Their services include training and inspection, audit and certification, testing, technical and advisory services.

Their laboratories undertake food contaminant and food microbiology testing as well as nutrition and composition testing, and supply food audits and certification, customised audits, and authenticity certifications, for example gluten-free or Kosher.

For retailers and manufacturers who are serious about food safety (which should be everyone), or who need to get ahead of a potential food safety issue, working with a fully accredited partner who knows and understands the complex South African legislative landscape and the customer-retailer relationship is critical.

OHS and occupational risk management in the built environment

Occupational Health and Safety encompasses everything from a building's safety measures (think fire doors, sprinkler systems, evacuation plans, and safety officers), to the protective gear your cold store workers wear, and how you stack, rack, and store your inventory, including storage rack safety inspections. Safety officers and facilities managers require extensive training to maintain an acceptable level of compliance. In some cases, particularly if your safety team is small or your premises large, you'll need to outsource certain OHS and occupational risk management functions and safety audits.



Image courtesy of Artem Podrez, Pexels

and should cover everything from the effect of accidents on business and the need for inspections, right through how and when to undertake an inspection and how to complete, record, and collate the relevant information. Training such as this provides a preventative safety solution for an in-house maintenance team.

NOSA (National Occupational Safety Association)

NOSA provides occupational health, safety, and environmental training, with independent audits undertaken by qualified personnel. The 10-step process focuses on site specific risk management. Areas of concern and non-compliance are identified and addressed, and solutions are offered. Visit NOSA for more information.

Storage rack inspections ensure the safety of staff and consumers, and some companies, such as mobile racking and storage specialists Barpro Storage, offer a rack inspection tool together with rack safety awareness training. In a storage or warehouse setting, rack safety is often taken for granted and damage goes unnoticed or is not deemed actionable until too late. Proper training in this area ensures that personnel are able to detect upright, beam, rack, and bracing damage,

In summary

Training and testing are two of the main pillars of Health and Safety compliance. For both ends of the business, from managers and floor workers right through to consumers, health and safety is where you never want to be caught on the back foot. With the complexities of South Africa's OHS and Food Safety legislation, poor enforcement by the authorities, and the high expectations of local consumers, getting it right can be harder than you might think.

Ensuring your own team remains up to date with legislation and best practice necessitates ongoing training from accredited instructors.

Appointing an outside service provider to implement effective, compliant, and practical solutions requires an investment of both time and money, but ultimately it could save your store or brand's reputation.

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Facilities managers education and OHS training



Natasja Ware
Afroteq Academy
Manager

Facilities Managers (FM) and OHS practitioners are often shifted into these positions out of necessity and without the training and education these positions require. Accredited by the South African Facilities Management Association (SAFMA), the Afroteq Academy offers several FM- and OHS-related courses and training opportunities that are aligned to the Facilities Management ISO 41001:2018 standard.

According to Natasja Ware, Afroteq Academy Manager, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic two years ago has highlighted the important role of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) officers in the workplace. Ware says ...

“The appointment of OHS representatives is a legal requirement. To enable OHS representatives to function optimally, they must undergo training that will not only help them create a safe working environment, but also empower them to identify any risks or hazards that might endanger their fellow employees.”

Retailers are advised to seek training that is endorsed, easily accessible, outcomes-based aligned and covers all the most important and necessary elements.



Image courtesy of Christina Morillo, Pexels



“The Occupational Health and Safety Act is vital to ensure a healthy and safe workplace. The onus rests on employers to prove that they have put the necessary measures in place to prevent accidents and

preserve the health of their workforce, while ensuring that employees are kept safe, and that the workplace is well maintained and fully functioning. While most people act instantly and instinctively when facing a dangerous situation, we believe it is always better to approach such an incident with a reasoned plan that is based on sound training and situational awareness,” Ware concludes. Some of the courses offered include:



Image courtesy of Kateryna Babaieva, Pexels

- Occupational Health & Safety Application
- Occupational Health & Safety Legislation
- Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment
- OHS Incident Investigation
- Occupational Health & Safety Representative
- Handyman Training: hand and power tool safety
- Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA). **SR**

Sources:

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Ann Baker-Keulemans, a highly experienced business and consumer journalist, is published in numerous print and online platforms, writing on topics related to business, lifestyle, and health, with extensive knowledge on the SA retail and wholesale landscape. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature (British and Commonwealth) and Media Studies and is a member of the Golden Key Honour Society. ann@wilkinsross.co.za

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