

# **Rules and Protocols are Applied in Food Facilities in Cases of Food Poisoning or Suspected Cases**

## **Firstly: Definition**

### **A. Food Facilities**

Any formal entity engaged in activities related to food handling throughout the food chain, excluding household and family kitchens.

### **B. Central Restaurant/Food Processing Facilities**

These are food facilities that prepare large quantities of food in one location for distribution to one or multiple sites or branches, whether affiliated with the producing facility or independent from it.

### **C. Catering and Food Supply Centers**

These are specialized facilities intend to provide food to individuals in enclosed gathering places, such as schools, hospitals, camps, home care facilities, prisons, Hajj campaigns, and similar settings. All these facilities intend to provide meals within approved SFDA health standards.

### **D. Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP)**

It is a management system designed to ensure food safety by identifying and analyzing potential hazards in production processes and determining the critical control points that must be monitored to mitigate these risks.

### **E. Corrective Actions**

It refers to the steps taken to address problems or violations that occur during production or preparation processes to ensure compliance with health standards and food safety.

### **F. Food Poisoning**

Also known as foodborne illness, it is a disease caused by consuming contaminated food. Infectious germs include bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Their toxins are the most common causes of food poisoning.

### **G. Suspected Food Poisoning**

A condition where symptoms of food poisoning appear after consuming a specific food, before laboratory confirmation is obtained.

### **H. Precautionary Closure**

It is an official precautionary measure taken to temporarily close a food facility when there is a potential risk to public health, such as cases of food poisoning, suspected food poisoning, or the presence of pollutants. This is done to protect consumers and allow for the necessary investigations to be carried out.

### **I. Relevant Authorities**

Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA), each according to its jurisdiction.

## **Secondly: Actions to be Taken by Food Facilities in the Event of Food Poisoning or Suspected Cases:**

### **A. Reporting by Food Facilities**

- Appointing a person responsible for notifying the relevant authorities and ensuring food safety and suitability for consumption, as well as for ensuring the implementation of health requirements within the facility.
- The food facility must immediately report any food process incident occur within the facility that may pose a threat to public health or result in food poisoning cases. The report must also include the actions taken by the facility to prevent the suspected food from reaching consumers.
- The report may be triggered by:
  - ✓ Routine inspections conducted by the facility, during which any failure in procedures (such as breaches in critical control points) is observed and may lead to food contamination or poisoning.
  - ✓ Complaints or observations received from consumers or clients.
- The facility must also provide the relevant authority with the initial verification data and findings.
- The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs must be notified if the facility is a restaurant, food preparation facility, or a sales outlet such as a supermarket, through one of the Ministry's official communication channels.
- The Saudi Food and Drug Authority must be notified if the facility is a factory, warehouse, or any facility subject to the Authority's supervision through one of the Authority's official communication channels.

### **B. Product Recall**

The food facility, upon becoming aware of or suspecting a defect in the food manufacturing or preparation process, or suspecting that the food may cause cases of food poisoning, must take the necessary actions to recall the suspected food, as follows:

- Immediately notify the relevant authorities (the Saudi Food and Drug Authority or the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, each according to its jurisdiction and Provide them with all necessary information regarding the product subject to recall.
- Immediately initiate the food recall procedures, including retrieving the product if it has already reached consumers or the food facilities' clients, whether individuals or entities, to ensure the effectiveness of the product recall process.
- Comply with any procedures issued by the relevant regulatory authority.

- Complete the recall process within the timeframe specified by the relevant authority (the Saudi Food and Drug Authority or the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs) and provide a report on the process to the authority.
- Refrain from trading, distributing, or marketing any food product that has been recalled, withdrawn, or prohibited from circulation by the competent authority (Saudi Food and Drug Authority or the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs).

### **C. Responsibility of Facilities in Case of Suspected Involvement in Food Poisoning Incidents**

- The facility must maintain accurate product tracking records and any documents required to be provided by applicable regulations and laws. The owner of the facility, or their representative, is responsible for providing the necessary records and documents when requested by the relevant authorities. These records include:
  - ✓ Supplier and supplied food information record – one step back – It includes details such as the supplier's name and address, date of receipt, type, and quantity of the products received, transportation and storage data, and any other information that seems necessary to the relevant authority.
  - ✓ Customer and supplied food information records – one step forward – It includes the customer's name, contact number, delivery date, type, and quantity of products delivered, transportation and storage information, and any other information that seems necessary to the relevant authority.
  - ✓ Information on the suspected food products, including raw materials, packaging materials, brand name, product identification number (barcode), product size and weight, production and expiration dates, batch number, and any other information that seems necessary to identify and trace the product.
  - ✓ Records and data related to the handling conditions of the food products and the raw materials used in their production and preparation, such as transportation, storage, and temperature control.
  - ✓ Identify all employees directly involved in the food poisoning case within the facility and prepare all necessary documentation and work licenses.
  - ✓ If the facility has quality procedures in place, it must review its Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plan and the corrective actions taken.
  - ✓ Results and data of the initial verification conducted by the facility.

- Food handlers shall not be permitted to work in the food facility if they are suspected of having an illness or infection that may cause a risk to food safety, unless they have fully recovered and provide proof of recovery.
- The facility shall not permit any employees who had direct contact with the suspected food, or were involved in applying related procedures, to leave the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This restriction also applies to the facility owner or manager. Travel is strictly prohibited until the competent authorities have completed the investigation and confirmed that the case is neither criminal in nature nor has resulted in any fatalities (God forbid). The facility must submit a complete list of the involved employees to the relevant authority. If any of them are not under the facility's sponsorship, their employment contracts must also be provided. Following this, the competent authority shall refer the matter to the appropriate government bodies to formally issue a travel ban order.
- The facility is prohibited from taking any actions such as transferring the license ownership, cancelling or renewing it, or transferring the sponsorship of any employee until the investigation results are finalized and all necessary procedures are completed by the relevant authorities.
- The facility must comply with the instructions and directives issued by the joint committee responsible for investigating the food poisoning incident (or any officially designated authority acting on its behalf). This includes promptly responding to all inquiries, disclosing required information, and providing any records or documents requested by the joint investigation committee.

#### **D. Responsibility of the Facility During Investigation and Precautionary Closure**

- The facility must not clean, remove, or destroy any equipment, tools, products, or materials related to the food suspected of causing a food poisoning incident until official permission is granted to do so.
- The facility must not prevent the committee (or any authority carrying out its duty) from performing its work, obstruct its access to the facility, or restrict entry to certain areas within the facility.
- The facility shall not obstruct the joint investigation committee (or any designated authority) from enforcing a precautionary closure of the facility.
- Comply with the prohibition against reopening the facility or resuming operations throughout the precautionary closure.



- Food facilities classified as factories, laboratories, central kitchens, catering, and food service companies must retain samples of the final food product for each production batch. This should be done based on the type of food facilities, as follows:
  - ✓ For factories, the duration for storing samples shall be in accordance with the appropriate storage conditions specified in the product's relevant standard.
  - ✓ For central kitchens and catering companies, the storage period for samples ranges from 3 to 5 days, kept at freezing temperatures in the same containers used for serving the food.