

The 'Winter Ready' Maintenance Guide for Bricks and Mortar sites

Introduction

The winter months may see a quieter footfall through the business, especially either side of Christmas. There may be a downturn in the number of trading opportunities due to the end of the event season and the inclement weather. Meanwhile the Christmas period is a concentrated storm of business and excitement.

Any challenges during this busy period, such as a boiler breakdown or a burst water pipe, will really ramp up the stress levels and could impact your ability to trade at this optimum time of year. For example, suddenly having no hot water due to a boiler breakdown will significantly undermine the businesses' ability to produce food safely and legally and will need to be resolved immediately without delay. Likewise, if the toilets are suddenly backing up on a Friday night just as the group bookings arrive for their Christmas party, how are you now going to resolve this quickly and could this have been avoided?

So why not minimise the stress by proactively planning the maintenance arrangements for your business. Use the quieter times either side of the Christmas chaos to maintain the business premises and equipment - to minimise equipment failures, breakdowns and stress-inducing emergency repair issues that can inevitably arise during the busier times.

Professional trades people e.g., plumbers, electrician and gas engineers also have seasonal peak periods in their work which often coincide with the hospitality sector. So just at the point when you need them to carry out emergency repairs, so does everyone else. They may also take time off at Christmas, reducing their availability. Plan ahead, if you think you are going to need a tradesperson don't leave it to the last minute!

Be proactive rather than reactive! Review your maintenance arrangements at these key times:

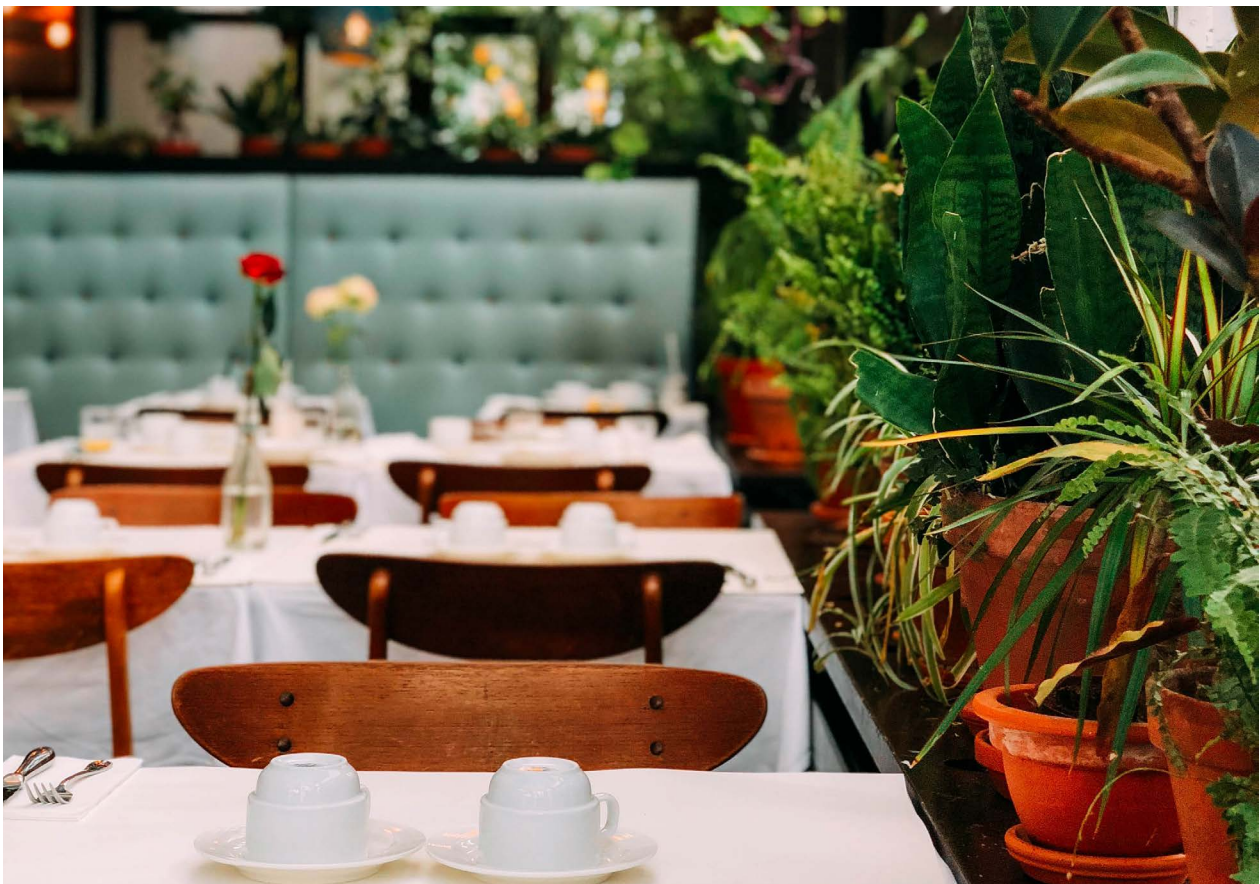
Before Christmas - Key equipment needs to be readied and checks carried out

to ensure the business is ready for optimum service periods. Have contingency plans in place in case things do go wrong and know who to contact for assistance with emergency repairs.

After Christmas – utilise the quieter times in the business to catch up and clean after the busy period and undertake the larger more intrusive maintenance tasks within the business. Take advantage of the fact that professional trades people may be more readily available during this period, so plan in those essential services and improvements.

We have outlined some proactive pre and post Christmas maintenance checks for you to consider in the business. Refer to the handy Maintenance Plans below which will allow you to highlight actions to prepare the business for winter trading and compile a trouble shooting guide for every eventuality.

As the maintenance needs and requirements for bricks and mortar sites and mobile businesses can differ, we have produced separate plans. The following checks relate to bricks and mortar sites. If you operate a mobile catering or street food business, please refer to the ‘Winter Ready’ Maintenance Guide for Mobile Food businesses.



Maintenance Plan Pre-Christmas – October/November

Equipment or system	Type of check, inspection or works to be carried out.	Actions to be carried out	Tick if complete
<p>Emergency Contacts List</p> <p><i>This will really come in handy and will save you wasting time when in a rush to find contacts that you can call on.</i></p>	<p>Compile a list of emergency repair contacts that can be referred to in case of a sudden equipment breakdown. For example, the contact details for a reputable and competent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrician • Gas Safe Engineer • Plumber • Drinks Dispenser Engineer • Kitchen Appliance Engineer • Locksmith • Window glazer • Pest Control Contractor • As well as the contacts for your utility providers e.g., water, gas, electricity, LPG supplier, communications (phone, WiFi). <p><i>Whilst business owners and general managers may have many of these contacts already saved into their phone, junior managers, supervisors etc. may not and could be the ones dealing with an emergency repair situation. We recommend that you insert this list into the Safety Management System folder for easy reference or attach it to the wall adjacent to the phone and ensure staff know where to locate it should they need to make the call.</i></p>		
<p>Heating and Hot Water Systems</p> <p><i>Adequate heating is essential in winter to provide a comfortable environment for both staff and customers. There must be an adequate supply of hot running water at sinks and wash hand basins to ensure hygiene standards and the safe production of food.</i></p> <p><i>Are there any open fires or log burners in use? If so, get them ready for winter use.</i></p>	<p>Check systems are working correctly. If there have been any recent failures or disruption with these essential systems, then get them checked out by a competent engineer. Don't leave matters until complete failure of the system occurs. Gas boilers need to be serviced annually by a Gas Safe Engineer. If this service is due, then make sure it is arranged with your Gas Safe Engineer.</p> <p>Consider contingency plans – what would you do if the boiler broke down and you needed to provide alternative means of providing hot water or heating. Be aware that bringing in portable heaters etc. can introduce new fire safety and H&S hazards and will need risk assessments.</p>		

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<p>HVAC Systems – electrical Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (climate control)</p> <p>To function efficiently and provide a comfortable environment within the business then preventative maintenance is a must. This can improve the air quality and reduce energy bills.</p>	<p>Check the systems are working correctly. If there have recently been inconsistent or varying temperatures inside the business or a sudden spike in energy consumption/ utility bills, then request a call-out from a professional engineer and get this checked.</p> <p>Don't skip on the basic simple maintenance, so remember to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the air filters regularly (in line with manufacturer's instructions). • Visually inspect the system and clean filters and drain lines. • Clean the condenser. • Make sure the outdoor unit is kept clear. 		

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<p>Gas appliances</p> <p><i>For example, fryers, griddles, ovens, pizza ovens. Essential to catering operations so it is vital that they are properly maintained.</i></p> <p><i>Failure to properly maintain can result in significant harm e.g., fire, explosion, Carbon Monoxide poisoning.</i></p>	<p>Take some time to review the condition of the gas appliances in use. Suitable gas appliances should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CE or UKCA marked (is there data plate on the appliances?). • Have Flame Failure Devices (check this is working correctly). • Have individual isolation valves and connected to an emergency isolation control point. • Kept clean with no obvious signs of wear and tear. • Installed with the correct hoses (yellow) and joints or fixed and in good condition. • Sited under an interlocked extraction canopy. • Fitted with restraining chains or wires secured to the wall. <p>Flame Failure test – When the appliance is lit, turn off the gas at the isolation valve and LISTEN for the ‘click’ of the valve closing (takes about 60-90 seconds).</p> <p>Is the quality of the gas flame on the appliances satisfactory? – it should be a light blue flame not a long yellow wavy visible flame.</p> <p>Have the appliances been serviced by a Gas Safe Engineer in the last 12 months? If this service is overdue or due over the Christmas period, or many of the above matters have been highlighted, then make arrangements with a gas engineer now.</p> <p>Is there a carbon monoxide detector in place to provide early detection of a faulty gas appliance?</p> <p>Energy Saving Tip: Avoid turning on gas appliances too early. Kitchen staff will often light up all the appliances on arrival at the business, well ahead of their required use. Consider reviewing this process to reduce energy use.</p>		

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<p>Electrical appliances</p> <p><i>Faults in appliances, plugs or cables can result in equipment failure and serious accidents/injury.</i></p>	<p>Visually check the electrical appliances in use throughout the business. Not just those in use in the kitchen e.g., microwaves and food mixers but also hoovers, stereo systems, TVs, and any electrical equipment accessible to the public. Check for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage to electrical plugs, sockets, and cables e.g., fraying, cuts • Coloured wires visible where the lead enters the plug • Burn marks or staining on the plug, lead or equipment indicate overheating • Damage to the equipment casing e.g., loose screws and parts • Evidence of poor storage e.g., water marks and dust layers <p>Remove from use any equipment that appears damaged. Do not risk electrocution. Repair or replace damaged equipment.</p> <p>Review the use of extension cables - minimise their use wherever possible to avoid overheating and trip hazards. Check those in use are suitable for use in a commercial operation and can tolerate the heavier use.</p> <p>If using electrical equipment outdoors refer to the 'Electrical Safety Checklist – Outdoor Settings' in the Safety Management System.</p>		
<p>Kitchen equipment</p> <p><i>For example, dishwashers, glass washers, bain-maries, plate warmers, refrigerators, freezers</i></p> <p><i>Important equipment that is key to providing optimum service to customers. Make sure it won't let you down when you need it most!</i></p>	<p>Invest the time checking everything is working correctly and carry out any relevant maintenance that will enable this equipment to work at its optimum/ most energy efficient. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean the condenser coils on the refrigerators and freezers which can be located via the back panel- removing dust and dirt with a Hoover. • Remove accumulated ice from freezers – a build-up of ice makes the appliance less efficient and takes up storage space. • Preheat/test warming equipment (e.g., bain-marie and plate warmers) that may have had no use for some time. • Check equipment with the potential to leak onto the floor e.g., deep fat fryers, steamers, dishwashers – checking for and resolving any leaks. • Check guards on meat slicers and dough mixers – these should be interlocked so if they become faulty it will not be possible to use the equipment. 		

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<p>Pressure Systems</p> <p>For example, coffee espresso machines, pressure fryers and cookers.</p> <p>If a pressurised system fails, they can seriously injure or kill people and cause serious damage to property.</p>	<p>Check these systems are working correctly and if in doubt arrange for them to be repaired by a competent engineer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the systems are CE or UKCA marked. • Know the safe operating limits and check the system is working within these limits – if in doubt refer to the manufacturers handbook • Set up a suitable maintenance program in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. <p>A written scheme of examination should be in place, carried out by a competent person. For example, for espresso coffee machines it is recommended that the examination is conducted every 14 months. If this has not been undertaken or is overdue then make these arrangements without further delay.</p>		

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<p>Extraction and ventilation systems</p> <p><i>This is critical to maintaining safe and healthy air quality in catering areas. Extraction systems are usually comprised of a canopy and filters, a mechanical fan and ducting. All parts are to be cleaned and maintained on a regular basis to ensure the business has a fully operational extraction system as required by law.</i></p>	<p>The extract ventilation system should be interlocked with the gas supply to appliances. So, if the ventilation system fails it could prevent use of the gas appliances. Systems should be maintained in line with the manufacturers/installers' instructions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check the canopy and filters – ensure they been cleaned recently; accumulations of grease residue should be removed to prevent a loss of efficiency and increased risk of fire. • Consider if the system is quiet and vibration free – check for disruption on the mechanical fan, a loose part or the canopy becoming detached from the wall. • Are cooking appliances properly situated under the canopy and is the system efficiently extracting fumes and heat – an indication that this is not working effectively is recurring accumulations of grease on walls, ceilings, and surfaces throughout the catering areas. • Ensure there is suitable access to the ductwork e.g., access panels to enable cleaning. • Check when the system was deep cleaned – the internal ducting will require a competent engineer to remove access panels etc. and clean the inner surfaces. <p>Most systems require a deep clean and service every 6-12 months depending on the intensity of use. Evidence of correct maintenance may be a condition of the fire insurance policy for the business.</p> <p>Consider having spare parts in place for the extract ventilation system e.g., spare filters, a replacement fan. This should make it easier to facilitate repairs.</p>		

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<p>Fire detection and alarm systems</p> <p><i>These systems should form key controls within the fire risk assessment. With open flames, hot equipment, and cooking oils, it makes sense to ensure the business has adequate fire detection and warning systems in place to ensure people and property are protected from fire.</i></p>	<p>Ensure there is adequate fire detection coverage throughout the premises – check heat and smoke detectors are working and have adequate power supply. Where necessary replace batteries or hardwire detectors with the mains wired electrical supply.</p> <p>Have the following checks been undertaken?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are alarms and warning systems working correctly e.g., are they audible in all areas of the business. • Are fire doors properly maintained – kept closed or is the self-closing mechanism working and interlinked with the fire detection system. • Are fire exits kept clear and unobstructed? • Are suitable fire safety signs in place e.g., fire exits signs. <p>Do you have an emergency plan? Ensure staff have received training on what to do in the event of a fire. Review the fire risk assessments and ensure the relevant controls are in place to protect business from fire.</p>		
<p>Firefighting equipment</p> <p><i>Fire extinguishing appliances require regular maintenance and inspection to be undertaken and recorded by a competent engineer, to ensure that they will not let you down in an emergency.</i></p>	<p>Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there adequate provision of equipment - are the correct fire extinguishers in place for the types of fuel in use e.g., electrical equipment, gas appliances, deep fat fryers, wood fired pizza ovens. Fire blankets are also to be considered. • Are they readily accessible and unobstructed? • Are they suitably sited with wall signage in place? • Check they have not been used or subject to tampering or vandalism. • Have staff been trained in the use of this equipment? • Check the expiry date on fire extinguishers and replace any that have expired. • Check when extinguishers were last serviced and if overdue or due shortly then arrange servicing. <p>Provide relevant equipment and ensure it is in good working order.</p>		

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<p>Food Storage Facilities</p> <p>Storage facilities must be safe to access, hygienic and in good repair. Finding additional storage space to facilitate busy trading periods can be challenging but if not thought through or well organised can present issues to the business e.g., accidents, trip hazards, damaged or wasted stock, food contamination.</p>	<p>Clean and re-organise storage areas such as dry stores, cellars, and walk-in chillers/freezers ready for the extra stock that will be required for the busy periods. At the same time check for leaks/water ingress, damp, pest activity, temperature control and adequate lighting. Address these matters before they become severe/problematic.</p> <p>Make sure there is sufficient safe space for extra food ingredients etc. to facilitate the busy trading periods. If using temporary facilities make sure they are well lit and safe to access.</p>		
<p>Waste Management</p> <p>The disposal of waste must be done in a proper manner, which will involve a commercial waste contractor. In the meantime, waste storage facilities must be adequate for waste produced by the business and properly maintained to prevent pest activity, littering and nuisance.</p>	<p>Compile a list of emergency repair The business will inevitably produce more waste when trading is at its busiest. Consider whether frequency of waste collection will need to be increased or additional bins will need to be installed.</p> <p>Check the general condition of bins and bin storage areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove overflowing waste, avoid leaving bin bags and waste directly on the ground around bins. • Are there secure lids on bins and are they closed? • Remember to sweep up and remove debris and vegetation from around bins as it provides harbourage for pests. • Check containers used to collect waste oil - external surfaces and lids should be kept clean, lids should be in place. <p>Check if kitchen bins are in good repair – are food pedals working correctly, are bin lids intact and easy to clean. Repair and replace as necessary.</p> <p>Clear and remove redundant or unwanted equipment to free up space in and around bins stores and reduce harbourage. Arrange for waste oil to be collected so containers can be refilled as necessary. Confirm with the waste contractor the planned collection dates for the festive period. It may be that some services will be disrupted or reduced which will require contingency planning. Consider having additional collections in the run up to Christmas or hiring additional bins to store excess waste.</p>		

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<p>External Walkways</p> <p>Applies to car parks and external paths that provide access to the business premises.</p> <p>In the winter months they can become hazardous due to icy and wet weather conditions. They should be checked and maintained to prevent slips and trip injuries.</p>	<p>Survey external walkways and identify slip and trip hazards e.g., remove wet leaves from walkways, ensure icy travel routes are salted/gritted and uneven surfaces and potholes are filled.</p> <p>Ensure you have sufficient salt/grit supplies in place for the winter months ahead.</p> <p>Consider packing away outdoor furniture to free up outdoor space and clear walkways.</p> <p>Review the NCASS Slips and Trips Risk Assessment and ensure the relevant control measures are in place to minimize slips and trip injuries in relation to outdoor slippery or uneven surfaces.</p>		
<p>Internal and external lighting</p> <p>Adequate lighting is essential at the points of ingress, egress, in public and work areas.</p>	<p>Check lighting throughout the premises. Replace lightbulbs where necessary.</p> <p>Check and replenish spare light bulbs so the lighting can be replenished immediately.</p> <p>Check emergency lighting measures work effectively.</p>		
<p>Pest Control</p> <p>High standards of pest control play a key part in providing a safe food environment. Ensure that adequate steps have been taken to control pests and meet legal requirements.</p>	<p>Are your routine checks up to date? Have all areas been checked for pest activity recently?</p> <p>Inclement weather will see pests move indoors if they can. Extra waste around bins and additional temporary food storage areas could attract them to the premises. So be extra cautious.</p> <p>Check for access points- gaps and holes around doors, windows, and drains. Over time holes can appear in building materials that can provide access to pests either through accidental damage, wear and tear or by the pests themselves gnawing and chewing.</p>		

Equipment or system	Type of check, inspection or works to be carried out.	Actions to be carried out	Tick if complete
<p>Closed Circuit TV (CCTV)</p> <p>CCTV installation may be a condition of the premises license. If this is the case, then CCTV must be working effectively.</p> <p>An effective security system could improve the safety and security of the business.</p>	<p>Check CCTV cameras are working effectively. Consider whether cameras are mounted in the correct position and if they are capable of capturing quality images. Are you able to record, retrieve and disclose images to the police and licensing authority on request? – failure to be able to implement procedures could lead to enforcement action being taken against the business by the licensing authority.</p> <p>Carry out some test recordings. If the CCTV system is not working effectively then carry out the necessary repairs or updates to the system.</p>		
<p>Point of Sales Systems (POS)</p> <p>For example, credit card payment machines, ticket printers, payment tills. Essential to a smooth and efficient ordering service and cash security.</p>	<p>Check all systems are working correctly. Consider if they will work offline, in case the WIFI goes down and what contingency measures may need to be put in place.</p> <p>Consider who to contact should these systems fail. Include the contact details for relevant repair services in the emergency contact list.</p>		

Maintenance Plan Post-Christmas – January/February

Equipment or system	Type of check, inspection or works to be carried out.	Actions to be carried out	Tick if complete
<p>Electricity and Electrical Equipment</p> <p><i>Fixed wiring systems and Portable Appliance Testing (PAT)</i></p> <p><i>The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 require precautions to be taken to prevent the risk of death or personal injury from the use of electricity at work.</i></p>	<p>Fixed Wiring - Refer to previous electrical certificates and check when the fixed wiring electrical system was last inspected by a competent electrician. Fixed wiring inspections must be carried out by an electrician every 5 years. If this is now overdue or due shortly then make the relevant arrangements and get this work planned in. Ensure that you retain the electrical certificate for future reference and due diligence.</p> <p>Electrical Appliances - As a rule, Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) should be carried out by a competent electrical engineer annually. Consider compiling a list of the electrical appliances to support PAT and correspond with PAT certification. If Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) has not been carried out in the last 12 months, consider arranging this now to validate the safety of appliances and demonstrate due diligence.</p>		
<p>Gas installation</p> <p><i>Mains Gas – systems need to be regularly checked for safety.</i></p> <p><i>Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) – making sure it is safely stored and used is essential.</i></p>	<p>Mains gas and LPG installations require an annual gas safety inspections carried out by a competent Gas Safe Engineer. Refer to previous gas safety certificates to check if this inspection is now due and plan this work in for the year ahead. Consider setting a reminder nearer to the due date so you can guarantee the availability of the Gas Safe Engineer.</p> <p>Gas Safe Engineers are registered as competent in different areas of activity and it is essential to make sure that an engineer is competent for the specific work required. For example, a Gas engineer who can work on mains gas installations may not be able to work on LPG appliances and vice versa. So always check with the engineer/outline the work that is required in advance. You can also check an engineer at the Gas Safe Register https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/find-an-engineer-or-check-the-register/check-an-engineer/</p> <p>Remember to retain the gas safety certificate as evidence that these important safety checks have been conducted.</p>		

Equipment or system	Type of check, inspection or works to be carried out.	Actions to be carried out	Tick if complete
<p>Gas installation</p> <p>Mains Gas – systems need to be regularly checked for safety.</p> <p>Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) – making sure it is safely stored and used is essential.</p>	<p>If you use LPG appliances infrequently, e.g., BBQs, make sure the LPG supply is safely stored over the winter months. The LPG cylinders should be stored outdoors or in well ventilated storage units. They should be secured upright and should not be exposed to vandalism or tampering.</p>		
<p>Cellars and Storage Areas</p> <p>Deep Clean</p> <p>Redecoration e.g., painting</p> <p>Drink Dispenser systems</p>	<p>Review the repair and maintenance of storage areas. Consider if work is required to renew and paint walls, deep clean and remove visible mould and where applicable clean and renew shelving and racking systems.</p> <p>Review gas cylinder storage - are gas cylinders used for drinks dispensing properly secured with fastenings so they cannot topple over and cause gas leaks. Do these fastenings need repairing/replacing?</p> <p>Check the dispensing system for gas leaks, signs of corrosion and weak points. If any issues are identified contact a reputable cellar gas supplier and arrange for the necessary works to be carried out.</p>		
<p>Kitchen Deep Clean</p> <p>Hard to reach areas – below and behind fixed equipment.</p> <p>High level areas - walls and ceilings</p> <p>Complex equipment – arrangements for cleaning and serving where applicable.</p>	<p>Use the 'down period' to catch up on all those big cleaning jobs and 'refresh' the food preparation areas ready for the trading year ahead.</p> <p>Consider hiring a steam cleaner to clean the wheels and uprights of equipment and those hard-to-reach places.</p> <p>Remove accumulations of grease from ceilings, walls, floor wall junctions and renew painted surfaces where applicable.</p> <p>Consider the types of complex equipment that are in use within the business that are not cleaned on a routine basis or require additional servicing by a suitable engineer. Arrange the cleaning and maintenance of this equipment e.g., extract canopy, ice cream machines, griddles and grills, espresso machines, vacuum packers.</p>		

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<p>Fire detection systems and fighting equipment.</p> <p>Routine servicing</p> <p>Emergency Plans and staff training</p>	<p>Schedule in servicing of fire alarms, fire detection systems and emergency lighting.</p> <p>Check if the fire extinguishers are due for an annual service or inspection and arrange this work as necessary.</p> <p>Review emergency plans – train staff, carry out an evacuation drill with staff. Make sure these arrangements are recorded and communicated to staff e.g., fire evacuation points should be displayed on the staff notice board.</p>		
<p>Passenger Lifts, Wheelchair Platform Lifts, Escalators and Food Service Lifts</p>	<p>For businesses that operate on more than one floor level there may be lifting equipment in use – to move people e.g., passenger lifts or good lifts to support food services e.g. dumbwaiters. Lifting equipment is subject to Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER) and requires regular thorough examination by a competent person to ensure it is safe. Check that you have arrangements in place with a competent lift engineer for both routine maintenance and emergency call-out/repairs. The frequency of examination depends on the type of equipment and its use as outlined by the manufacturer.</p> <p>Refer to previous examination certification and plan for the next thorough examination in line with the relevant due dates. Correct maintenance of lifting equipment is likely to be a condition of your business insurance policy.</p>		
<p>List here any other relevant maintenance tasks to be undertaken</p>	<p>Consider if other maintenance arrangements need to be planned for. The following examples have been given: -</p> <p>Jet washing and cleaning of external walkways, patios, and outdoor furniture</p> <p>Cleaning windows and doors</p> <p>Cleaning signage and A-boards</p> <p>Cleaning guttering and checking for leaks in the roof</p> <p>Review winter storage arrangements for seasonal equipment e.g., LPG patio heaters, Christmas lights</p> <p>Checking hand dryers and soap dispensers in WC facilities</p>		

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