

# CITY AND COUNTY OF CARDIFF

## CODE OF GUIDANCE

### MICROWAVE OVENS

This Code of Guidance is produced for the guidance of employees and their managers when using microwave ovens at work.

The Code of Guidance addresses the following:

- 1.0 The main Hazards to be encountered.
- 2.0 Precautions to take.
- 3.0 Instruction, training required
- 4.0 Cleaning the microwave
- 5.0 Maintenance
- 6.0 Points to remember.

#### **1.0 Hazards**

The main hazards associated with using microwave ovens are burns or scalds caused when sealed containers containing hot food burst open or by superheated liquid spilling out of containers. Hot food containers and steam also cause burns. Microwave ovens can catch fire if they are not used properly or if their contents overheat. Poorly sited ovens can cause the user back strain. Microwave energy could burn the user if the door seals are not effective or the protective mesh behind the glass door panel slips.

#### **2.0 Precautions**

Do not use a domestic model oven for commercial catering. Have the microwave oven regularly checked for safety. Do not take the back off a microwave oven.

The single most important precaution is not to put food in a sealed container in the oven unless the food manufacturer's instructions are to do so. A dish covered with, for example, unpierced clingfilm, or the shell round an egg, has the same effect in a microwave as a sealed container: either can burst open. Remove lids from jars and take-away food containers.

Food must not be cooked in metal containers or on metal plates unless they were supplied with the oven or the oven manufacturer says this is safe. Metal trays can be used in some microwave combination ovens but in doubt, leave out. Do not use containers or crockery with metal decorations such as gold bands.

Use only clingfilm recommended for use in microwave ovens and puncture after covering the food products.

Do not cook food for longer than necessary. Take care when setting the timer.

1.CM.027	Date: 11/00	Issue 1	Process Owner: Christina Lloyd	Authorisation: Phillip Higgins	Page 1 of 3
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When cooking foods with a high sugar or fat content, for example mince pies and Christmas puddings, follow the cooking instructions carefully. Take care when eating this kind of food as the contents may be extremely hot.

Each day after use remove all traces of encrusted food, carbonised food and other foreign matter by cleaning the inside of the oven, the inside of the door and, if fitted, shelves and supports. The roof of the oven should also be carefully wiped. The electricity supply should always be switched off before cleaning.

Do not obstruct the air vents at the side and rear of the microwave. The oven should not be placed against a wall in a way that could obstruct the vents.

The door should move freely and when closed seal the oven. The interlock switches on the door should switch off the oven as soon as the door is opened. Do not use the oven under any circumstances if the door does not close properly or the door interlock switches are broken.

Do not place the microwave under a counter or on a high shelf where loading and unloading food causes the operator unnecessary bending or stretching.

### **3.0 Instruction/Training**

Staff should be properly instructed on how to use a microwave oven. The need for the door seal to be kept clean and the door closing mechanism to work properly should be stressed.

### **4.0 Cleaning**

All internal surfaces of the microwave oven, including the door, should be cleaned thoroughly every day after use. Pay particular attention to the door seals which should completely seal the oven when the door is closed. Remove any turntable tray or supports and clean.

### **5.0 Maintenance**

As with all kitchen appliances Microwave ovens require periodic maintenance. The time duration between maintenance will vary depending on the use to which the appliance is put. Heavily used appliances might require maintenance every 6 months whereas a lightly used microwave might only need an annual service. It is for the manager of the facility in which the appliance is used to determine the frequency of servicing.

## 6.0 Remember

- Do not put metal-decorated dishes in the microwave.
- Do not pull metal dishes in the microwave unless the manufacturer's users' handbook says this is safe.
- Do not cook eggs in their shells in the microwave.
- Always pierce clingfilm covering food in dishes before cooking.
- Remove lids from jars and take-away food containers before you put them in the microwave.
- Do not cook food in a sealed container unless it has been specially manufactured for use in a microwave oven.
- Keep the inside surfaces of the oven and door clean.
- Do not use the oven if the door does not close properly.
- Take care when setting the time switch.
- Do not use the oven if it does not switch off automatically when the door is opened.
- Food containers can be very hot - use an oven cloth or oven gloves.
- Remove clingfilm carefully and keep out of the way of the steam.
- Never switch the oven on if it is empty.