



Caterers Note: Head Hair Covering is Important

A splendidly decorated venue for an international organisation took place. It was a special occasion for the multi-national organisation. They had over-achieved their profited target for the financial year-end. Clients, agents, senior & middle management were in attendance. The planner had ensured that the sub-contractors – caterer, decorator, staging, entertainer et al - were well-briefed in advance for this glittering, prestigious function.

During the afternoon of the next day – the organisation received a call from a guest’s attorney – his client had a severe stomach ailment which was attributable to the organisation’s event the previous evening. After much heated discussion of various digested foods and the like – the guest’s attorney had categorical proof that the law had been flouted by producing a picture taken at the event clearly indicating the caterer’s personnel were not wearing hairnets. The final straw for a decision to pay compensation was the inference that a media release would be distributed giving details of the brand identity along with the (perhaps exaggerated) inconvenience to the guest in question. Negative brand issues can be a serious matter.



The settlement out-of-court was substantial which included medical expenses, loss of earnings plus pain and suffering.



All because the health & safety regulations were not adhered to despite the planner stipulating the requirement within the caterer’s brief. It could be argued that the observant planner should have drawn the issue to the caterer’s attention during the event and insisted on hairnets being worn. Bear in mind that dependent on the event circumstances – this prickly issue may not have been appropriate or possible at the time.

Despite written indication within the brief, the outcome for the planner from corporate management was a severe reprimand with negative consequences albeit a further legal issue with the caterer.

Event planners are not naïve to questionable hygiene factors during food preparation. It is accepted that what happens in the kitchen – stays in the kitchen. However ignoring health regulations up-front and in one’s face is quite another matter especially in a society that is becoming more litigious on a regular basis.



The PPS Unit’s Health & Safety expert Medguys’ Alan Winstanley confirmed the following: *‘The law is clear in this regard: 9. (1) No person shall be allowed to handle food without wearing suitable protective clothing as specified in Sub-regulation (2). (2) The protective clothing, including head and other coverings and footwear, of any person handling food that is not packed so that the food cannot be contaminated shall – be so designed that the food cannot come into direct contact with any part of the body...’*

The Act is available for viewing on <https://www.gov.za/documents/foodstuffs-cosmetics-and-disinfectants-act-regulations-governing-hygiene-requirements-food>

Two PPS Subscribers received credits to be added to their respective CPD score-cards for bringing the matter to the PPS unit’s attention in order to assist in raising overall industry standards going forward.

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