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Catering industry strives for compliance

Five-star properties in the UAE are unlikely to meet the deadline for HACCP compliancy, according to a leading food safety consultant.



By
Published October 1, 2006

Four- and five-star properties are unlikely to meet the deadline to be Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) compliant by the end of this year, according to Abdul Rashid, regional director of consultancy, GCC, Middle East and Africa, Johnson Diversey. Having worked in the UAE government's food safety department between 1991 and 1999, Rashid was heavily involved in developing the framework for HACCP compliancy, so he is fully aware of the process involved to become fully HACCP compliant. However, he now works for Johnson Diversey, which has created packages incorporating consultancy, training and certification for HACCP compliancy. "A system has to be implemented for three months before it is certified, so it takes a long time," he said. "In Dubai, only seven hotels have been certified, whilst 18 are currently undergoing projects," he added. A number of other companies are now offering training services and equipment in order to help implement HACCP regulations. Digitron, for example, has introduced Digitrak, its temperature control monitoring system. Automatically registering chiller temperatures, it meets HACCP legislation of having to monitor temperatures every four hours. "The monitoring sensor goes into the back of the machine, checking the temperature every five minutes and sending the reading via wireless to the base unit," explained Mirco Beutler, general manager, Digitron Middle East and Africa. Allowing data to be recorded continuously, Digitrak's electronic monitoring system processes computer reports automatically, which helps reduce costs significantly by cutting down on manpower. However, Beutler said that chefs in the region have become more vigilant about costs and Municipality requirements. "Chefs take HACCP very seriously, but it costs a lot of money to put the processes in place and then maintain them, but a temperature difference of 5°C will spoil food twice as fast, so it is important," Beutler said. Currently working with clients including the Shangri-La Group and Mövenpick Hotels and Resorts, Rashid told Caterer Middle East he believed the end-of-year deadline for HACCP certification would prove challenging for many properties, and that mid to late 2007 was a more realistic goal. "HACCP is like a driving license for the food industry. Some tourism companies will not even deal with hotels unless they have that recognition," added Rashid.

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