

6 steps to prevent mass food-poisoning

I WAS saddened to read reports of the recent Geylang Serai rojak-poisoning incident.

My deepest condolences go to the victims, especially to the two families who lost their loved ones.

To ensure that such an incident does not recur, the National Environment Agency (NEA) should take the following steps:

More checks for grade B and C stalls

These stalls should be checked regularly at short intervals by NEA.

For example, grade A stalls could be checked once in three months, grade B stalls once in two months and grade C stalls every month.

This would keep stallowners on their toes and ensure they improve their grade or maintain an A grade.

Ensure stalls display hygiene grade prominently

Some stallowners do not display their hygiene-grade certificate.

Is it because they do not have a valid grade or are they trying to conceal a poor grade?

Some also do not display their certificates prominently, making it difficult for customers to spot the grades.

Upgrade older hawker centres

NEA should continue to upgrade hawker centres that are over a decade old.

If the hawker centre or coffee shop is in a deplorable state, NEA should get the operators to spruce up the premises before allowing cooked food to be sold at these locations.

Provide proper washing areas

Crockery and cutlery should not be washed in or near toilets. A proper washing area away from toilets should have cold and hot running water.

Check toilets regularly

Toilets should be checked regularly to ensure that they are properly maintained and equipped with adequate supplies of liquid soap and toilet rolls.

The NEA "OK" sticker should bear the inspection date and the inspecting officer's name.

Check pasar malam (night market) stalls

There should be a proper water-supply system if cooked food is being sold at *pasar malam* stalls.

NEA officers should also check the food sold to ensure that it is hygienically prepared.

However, customers have the final say and they should do their part by not patronising stalls or restaurants with poor standards of hygiene.

Mr Nelson Quah