

SCHOOL CAMP

ALLERGY CASE STUDY

Incident summary

In May 2016, a 13-year-old student who is allergic to nuts, egg and dairy was served fried rice containing egg at a school camp.



There were three organisations involved in serving the meal and all were fully aware of the student's dietary needs. All three organisations agree the incorrect meal was supplied to the student.

The student's parents lodged a complaint with the NSW Food Authority after the student was placed in a potentially life threatening situation.

Investigation summary

Three food businesses were investigated as a result of this incident:

1. the school that had arranged the camp,
2. a third party that organised the camp (organiser) and had a role in some of the day-to-day activities in the camp and

3. the campsite itself that was responsible for supplying food to the student.

Officers found that the child's parent had advised the school and the campsite (in writing and via telephone) that her son had allergies and offered to cater meals. She was assured that there was no need to cater as there were systems in place to control this food safety risk.

During camp the student was sent to a 'special meals counter' to collect his lunch. He was asked what he is allergic to and stated "nuts, egg and dairy". The staff only heard "nuts" and informed the child "you can eat all the food at the other counter". The student took a mouthful but spat it out when told by his friends that there was egg in it. The student's anaphylaxis management plan was then activated.

Details

School: Agreed to supply the child with an egg free meal. They organised the camp but did not take all reasonable steps to ensure the correct meal was supplied: e.g. special diets teacher was not present at meal service.

Organiser: Agreed to supply the child with an egg free meal. They coordinated the camp but did not take all reasonable steps to ensure

the correct meal was supplied: e.g. sent students with special diet needs into the dining room even though the special diets teacher was not present.

Campsite: Agreed to supply the child with an egg free meal. They served meals but did not take all reasonable steps to ensure the correct meal was supplied; e.g. did not wait for the special diets teacher to arrive before serving meals; did not use the checklist prepared to identify the student and review their allergy status.

All three businesses were found to have breached Section 19 of the *Food Act 2003* (NSW):

School failed to ensure food demanded was supplied. They did not cross check the special diets list to ensure it was accurate. The campsite could not identify students without school assistance. At the very least, teachers should have checked food supplied to the three children with food allergies. A formal warning was issued to the school.

Organiser failed to ensure food demanded was supplied. They did not cross check the special diets list to ensure it was accurate. The campsite could not identify students without school assistance. At the very least the camp leader should have ensured teachers had identified the three children with food allergies. They could have kept children outside the dining room until a special diets teacher was present. A formal warning was issued to the organiser.

Campsite failed to ensure food demanded was supplied. The special diets checklist was inaccurate. They did not use the checklist and did not ask students their names. The campsite could not identify students without school assistance. At the very least, the campsite should have ensured teachers had identified the three children with food allergies. They could have kept the children waiting in the dining room until a teacher was present. The campsite received a penalty notice for failing to supply food of the nature demanded, and was added to the NSW Food Authority Name & Shame list.

Food safety implication

- Food service businesses have a responsibility to keep their customers safe by providing accurate information on the allergen status of products, and ensuring consumers are supplied with the food they order.
- This incident reinforces the potential dangers associated with catering for those with allergies and the need for adequate understanding of the associated risks. Be aware that food allergies are very serious and can have life-threatening implications. Use best practice in food preparation and storage procedures to avoid cross-contamination.
- Equally important is the corresponding implementation of risk-based management controls by the business to prevent a serious anaphylactic reaction.

What should businesses do

Don't let a consumer's request for allergen free food become lost in a complex supply chain.

Know what your responsibilities regarding allergen management are, and meet them.

Check for weak links in the system and fix them before they become a life-threatening issue

More information

Be prepared. Be allergy aware
http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/Documents/retail/be_prepared_be_allergy_aware.pdf

Allergy aware checklist
http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/Documents/retail/allergy_aware_checklist.pdf

About the NSW Food Authority: The NSW Food Authority is the government organisation that helps ensure NSW food is safe and correctly labelled. It works with consumers, industry and other government organisations to minimise food poisoning by providing information about and regulating the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

Note: This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW).



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