

1 February 2008

THE Consumers' Association of Penang refers to the recent closure of a factory in Kepala Batas which produces seafood-based products.

State Health Department officials found the factory operator had stored pork with other products in a freezer, and used recycled oil for cooking, and a banned preservative.
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In addition, the oil was stored in unhygienic recycled plastic containers. This same factory was ordered to close for two weeks last year. There appear to be no lasting changes as manufacturers got back to business as usual almost immediately. Firm action is needed to deter errant food manufacturers and food handlers. Warnings and temporary closures do not appear to have the desired effect. Action should be such that owners of food operations do not dare contravene the law for fear of heavy penalties. The Food Establishment Bylaws 1991 must be enforced so that food manufacturers comply with the requirements for food storage and other aspects of food handling and processing. Regular checks and a close eye should be kept on first-time offenders. The Health Ministry could highlight the identity of owners and food companies that break the law. Repeat offenders must be blacklisted and prevented from operating thereafter. It is unacceptable for consumers to be put at risk in this manner by irresponsible food manufacturers. CAP calls on the ministry to act.