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Division of

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& Safety

Department of Employment, Training
and Industrial Relations

Workplace Health and Safety
in the
**Fast Food Café &
Restaurant Industry**

A Guide to Risk Management

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Contents

Hazards	3
Risks	3
Control Measures -	3
Food Industry Hazards	4
1. Manual Handling	4
2. The Work Environment.....	4
3. Plant.....	4
4. Heat	4
5. Electricity.....	4
Other hazards include:	4
Risk Management in the Food Industry	4
1. Storage	5
1.1 Manual Handling	5
1.2 Work Environment.....	6
2. Kitchen	7
2.1 Manual Handling	7
2.2 Work Environment.....	8
2.3 Plant.....	9
2.4 Heat	10
2.5 Electricity.....	11
2.6 Gas	12
2.7 Fire.....	12
3. Service Delivery	13
3.1 Manual Handling	13
3.2 Work Environment.....	14
3.3 Heat	15
3.4 Personal Security: Violence At Work.....	15
3.5 Noise.....	16
4. Clean-up	17
4.1 Biological Hazards	17
4.2 Sharps - Skin Penetrating Injuries.....	17
4.3 Hazardous Substances	18
Further Information	19

If you're in business...any business, you know about managing risk. Your survival depends on it!

Property insurance, worker compensation insurance, bank overdraft..., all involve carefully calculated risk.

But what about workplace health and safety? Just how risky is the fast food, cafe, and restaurant business? What risks are people in your establishment facing every day?

As an employer, you should know. You have a legal obligation, under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995, to ensure the health and safety of everyone in your workplace...staff, customers, and visitors.

This guide will help you to identify and assess the risks to health and safety in your workplace, and if necessary, to eliminate them, or reduce them to an acceptable level.

Hazards

The Macquarie Dictionary defines a hazard as "a potential source of harm." There are hazards in every workplace. In a kitchen, for example, a knife is a hazard because it is sharp. A cutting board is a hazard because it can harbour bacteria.

Risks

The Macquarie Dictionary defines a risk as "exposure to the chance of injury or loss." In a kitchen, when a knife is properly used, for the purpose for which it has been designed, by someone who knows how to use it, there is very little chance of injury. The risk is low. On the other hand, if the knife is carelessly or improperly used by an untrained person, the risk of injury is high. If a cutting board is kept clean and in good condition, the risk of infection from salmonella and other bacteria is low. If kitchen hygiene is poor, the risk of infection is high.

The level of risk depends on the way the situation is **managed**.

As an employer, you must know the hazards in your workplace. You must assess their potential to cause harm. Some pose a significant threat to health and safety; others are relatively low risk.

Then, if necessary, you must take steps to reduce the exposure of everyone in your workplace to the chance of injury; i.e. you must control the risk, either by eliminating it, or reducing it to an acceptable level.

Control Measures - The Hierarchy of Control

To control the level of risk posed by a hazard in your workplace you have a number of options:

In order, these are.

Elimination The most desirable option. If you eliminate a hazard you completely eliminate the associated risk.

Substitution You can substitute something else (a tool or a process) that has less potential to cause injury.

Separation You can separate workers from the hazard (by safety screens, soundproofing, etc).

Redesign You can redesign a process or equipment to make it safer.

Administration You may be able to reduce risk by upgrading training, changing rosters, or other administrative actions.

Personal Protective Equipment The least desirable option. When you can't reduce the risk of injury in any other way, use personal protective equipment (gloves, goggles, etc) as a last resort.

In practice, several control options are often used in combination.

In the case of kitchen knives, for example, personal protective equipment (steel mesh gloves) may be used in conjunction with administrative controls (proper training in their safe use, cleaning, maintenance and storage).

Review: When you have put a control option (or a combination of control options) into practice, you must review it after a period of time to make sure it is actually reducing the risk.

Food Industry Hazards

People who work in the food industry have identified five major hazards.

They are:

1. Manual Handling

Any activity requiring a person to use force to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move or restrain an object. Manual handling tasks include:

- lifting heavy cartons
- repetitive or forceful movements
- work carried out in awkward postures.

Injuries may happen as a result of a "one-off" event, but more often they are the result of **stress and strain** over a long period of time.

2. The Work Environment

The characteristics of the area where you work. Elements include floors and other surfaces, noise, lighting, temperature, ventilation, accessibility and housekeeping. The most common causes of injury arising from the work environment in the food industry are **slips, trips and falls**, and heat stress.

3. Plant

The term "plant" refers to both powered and non-powered equipment. Caterers, chefs and kitchen staff use many items - **slicers, mincers, knives, mixers, etc** - which have the potential to cause injury.

You should consider the following issues:

- guarding moving parts
- the power source (e.g. electricity)
- the risk of fire or explosion
- noise
- vibration
- radiation
- stability (how well plant is mounted or secured)
- the use of pressure vessels (e.g. espresso machines).

4. Heat

Burns are very common in the catering industry.

Many operations involve contact with hot food, equipment, surfaces and liquids.

Heat is a risk when:

- cooking food
- taking food from ovens, bain maries etc
- making beverages using hot equipment or steam

5. Electricity

Electrical equipment is widely used in the food industry. Because of frequent use and cleaning, its electrical safety may be compromised, exposing workers to the risk of shock, burns, or fatal injury.

Electrical accidents are usually caused by:

- using faulty equipment
- working with damaged leads
- unsafe work practices, or
- a combination of the above.

Other hazards include:

- Gas
- Noise
- Fire
- Personal security and violence at work
- Biological hazards
- Sharps - skin penetrating injuries
- Hazardous substances (chemicals)

Risk Management in the Food Industry

Some work areas in the food industry, and some tasks, are obviously more hazardous than others. For risk management purposes, we suggest that you consider your workplace under the following categories:

1. **Storage**
2. **Kitchen**
3. **Service Delivery**
4. **Clean-up**

1. Storage

Here the main hazards are Manual Handling and the Work Environment.

1.1 Manual Handling

Workers are at risk when they are:

- **lifting** cartons from a vehicle
- **carrying** cartons
- **stacking** shelves
- **pulling** items off shelves

**Assess the risk in your workplace.
To manage it, apply the hierarchy of controls.**

Elimination

Avoid manual handling wherever possible.

Here are some ideas:

- Arrange for suppliers to restock refrigerators on a needs basis. As well as eliminating unnecessary handling, this will minimise stock levels.
- Provide storage facilities for perishable foods on the loading dock. This will reduce the distance goods must be carried.
- Arrange for food to be prepared before arrival at the loading area; e.g. potatoes washed and peeled.
- Arrange for delivery drivers to unload their vehicles.

Substitution

Use an alternative method of handling.

Ideas include:

- Use forklifts or pallet jacks to unload vehicles
- Buy smaller or lighter cartons of stock.

Separation

Separate the hazard from the workers.

By definition, impossible to apply to manual handling!

Redesign

Redesign the workplace layout, processes or equipment.

Suggestions include:

- Make storage facilities readily accessible.
- Provide shelving that allows easy access to most items; i.e. between knee and shoulder height.
- Store items according to usage: most-used in the middle shelves, lighter goods on top shelves.
- Provide access equipment (e.g. ladders) close at hand.

Administration

Change work practices.

Some ideas:

- Organise workers so that they share tasks such as lifting.
- Arrange set times for delivery of goods so that enough workers are available to handle them.
- Display charts to identify location of goods easily.
- Purchase by demand. This will save storage space, reduce stock levels, double handling and clutter and provide better access.
- Provide training in preferred lifting methods.
- Provide training in company work practices. Validate the training by competency test, and make sure only trained and competent workers perform the task.

Personal Protective Equipment

Consider all other control options first.

- Provide workers with non-slip shoes to reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls.
- Gloves may improve grip

1.2 Work Environment

Here, workers are primarily at risk of slips, trips and falls, and heat stress.

**Assess the risk in your workplace.
To manage it, apply the hierarchy of controls.**

Elimination

Avoid walking on slippery floors whenever possible.

Substitution

- Review the type of floor surface and replace with non-slip material or non-slip mats if required.
- Use floor cleaning products which remove oil and grease.

Separation

- Provide roofing in the unloading area to keep rain and heat off workers.

Redesign

- Provide adequate lighting in delivery and storage areas.
- Provide plenty of room for workers to move about without restriction.
- Minimise moisture build-up on floors.
- Provide smaller (non walk-in) cold rooms.
- Ensure that vehicles can park close to loading docks to minimise slips and falls from the dock.
- Design the area so that unloading is done as close as possible to storage.

Administration

- Have documented procedures so that spills are cleaned up immediately. For example, post signs close to the work area to remind workers.
- Have clean-up equipment stored close to the place where it is likely to be used.
- Provide training in safe work practices.
- Develop a maintenance program to check and fix equipment (light bulbs, fans, etc) regularly.
- Ensure that only workers performing a task (e.g. unloading a van) are in a work area (e.g. a loading bay).

Personal Protective Equipment

Consider all other control options first.

- Provide non-slip shoes or recommend and encourage a style of non-slip footwear, preferably rubber soled (an electrical insulator).
- If people are unloading outdoors, provide sunscreen and hats.

2. Kitchen

Work in the kitchen includes preparation and cooking of food, cleaning, and disposal of rubbish. Workers face many hazards, including:

- **Manual Handling**
- **Work Environment**
- **Plant**
- **Heat**
- **Electricity**
- **Gas**
- **Fire**

Unless you identify these hazards and manage the risks effectively, your kitchen can easily become a dangerous workplace.

In a kitchen, workers are at risk when they are:

2.1 Manual Handling

- Handling equipment
 - **lifting and carrying** full pots and pans
 - **carrying** hot liquids and hot utensils
- Cleaning deep fryers
 - **bending** to clean inside fryers
 - **pushing** fryer cleaning equipment
 - **stretching** into the fryer
- Taking rubbish away
 - **bending** to pick up bags or bins
 - **carrying** a load of rubbish
 - **stretching** to place the rubbish into an outside bin.

Assess the risk in your workplace. To manage it, apply the hierarchy of controls.

Elimination

To eliminate the carrying of rubbish, install a rubbish chute system that feeds directly into the external rubbish bin.

Substitution

- Instead of carrying armfuls of plates, cutlery and drinks, use trolleys and trays.
- Place rubbish bins on trolleys that can be easily wheeled outside, and use mechanical bin lifters to transfer the rubbish into industrial bins.
- Reduce the size (and therefore the capacity) of pots and pans.
- Reduce the size (and therefore the weight) of rubbish bins.
- Install self-cleaning units for deep fryers.
- Replace utensils with heat resistant equipment.

Separation

- Install a gravity feed chute to feed oil waste directly into an external waste receptacle.
- Have products prepared by suppliers (e.g. cutting, slicing, marinating).

Redesign

- Locate equipment and work benches according to workflow, (e.g. fridge close to workbench). This will reduce double handling and increase efficiency.
- Redesign counter height and width to reduce continuous stretching.
- Design layout to limit the distance of carrying. Plan for the use of trolleys (e.g. collection point).
- Plan work processes to reduce double handling.

Administration

- Organise sufficient workers to share tasks and thus reduce individual repetitive work such as peeling potatoes.
- Limit the contents of equipment (e.g. the liquid in a deep fryer or stock pot) to reduce the weight to be lifted.
- Review manufacturers' recommendations for safe handling before using or cleaning equipment.

- When purchasing new equipment, consider
 - weight
 - who is to be using it
 - duration of use
 - worker comfort
- Provide training on new commercial cooking equipment.
- Provide training in preferred lifting methods.
- Provide training in company work practices. Validate the training by competency test, and make sure only trained and competent workers perform the task.
- Check and maintain pots, pans and other equipment (e.g. ensure handles are secure for safe lifting).
- Check and maintain trolley wheels, smooth movement will enable trolleys to be moved with less effort.
- Where possible, push trolleys and bins rather than pull them.

Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment
Consider all other control options first.

Safe manual handling relies on a good grip. In the kitchen, heat may cause a worker to release his or her grip and cause an accident.

- Provide heat resistant gloves for handling hot utensils and equipment.
- Provide aprons to protect the body when lifting equipment.
- Provide or recommend non-slip footwear, preferably with rubber (insulating) soles.

2.2 Work Environment

In a kitchen, workers are at risk of slips, trips and falls when they are:

- walking on slippery floors
- working in a cluttered area
- negotiating steps

Hot working conditions in a kitchen may also lead to heat stress, particularly when there is a low level of air movement and poor ventilation.

Assess the risk in your workplace.
To manage it, apply the hierarchy of controls.

Elimination

Avoid walking on slippery floors wherever possible

Substitution

- Review the type of floor surface and replace with non-slip material or non-slip mats if required.
- Use floor cleaning products which remove oil and grease.

Separation

- Provide a servery between the kitchen and dining room to reduce the need for customer service personnel to enter the kitchen.
- Restrict workers (e.g. customer service staff) to specified areas of the kitchen.

Redesign

- Review the workflow
 - Reduce the number of times a worker has to travel during a task (e.g. from bench to various items of equipment) and you'll reduce the potential for a slip or fall.
 - Minimise the carrying of full pots and pans. There will be fewer spills...fewer grease or oil patches on the floor..., fewer slips and falls.
- Provide separate exits and entrances to the kitchen to reduce the possibility of collisions, spilt food, and resultant slippery floors.
- Provide adequate storage for boxes and cartons to minimise clutter in passages and walkways.
- Consider changing kitchen steps into ramps.
- Review any change of floor surface between kitchen and dining room (e.g. vinyl tile to carpet).
- Provide adequate lighting.
- Provide plenty of room in the kitchen so that workers can move about without restriction.
- Avoid **heat stress** by providing an effective ventilation/extraction system, or air conditioning.
- Redesign the kitchen to locate work stations away from heat sources.

Administration

- Provide rest breaks for workers, in a cool area, with access to water.
- Initiate a regular maintenance program for the air conditioning and extraction system.
- Educate workers about the risks of heat stress.
- Provide training in preferred safe work procedures (e.g. use of server, restricted access) to prevent slips and falls.
- Have documented procedures (e.g. signage close to the work area) so that spills are cleaned up immediately.
- Have clean-up equipment stored close to the place where it is likely to be used.
- Develop a maintenance program to check and fix equipment regularly.
- Ensure that only workers performing a task are in the kitchen.

Personal Protective Equipment

Consider all other control options first.

- Provide or recommend non-slip footwear, preferably with rubber (insulating) soles.

2.3 Plant

Caterers, chefs and kitchen staff use a range of equipment for a variety of tasks such as cutting, dicing, slicing and dough mixing.

Moving parts have a high potential to cause injuries such as lacerations and bruising.

Knife accidents are also very common, injuries usually occurring to the non-knife hand.

Other issues to consider include:

- electrical safety
- the risk of fire or explosion
- noise
- vibration
- radiation
- hazardous substances, such as fumes, released by the equipment
- stability (e.g. of bench mounted equipment)
- the use of pressure vessels, such as espresso machines.

Assess the risk in your workplace.

To manage it, apply the hierarchy of controls.

Elimination

Avoid using knives wherever possible.

Substitution

Outsource food preparation that involves cutting and slicing; e.g. purchase pre-made salads.

Separation

Knives: Ensure that butchers' steels for knife sharpening are provided with hand guards.

Machinery: Provide guarding on slicing machines; for example a thumb guard to cover the blade at the far end of each cut.

Redesign

Knives

- Provide knives with waterproof handles that can be sterilised.
- Provide knives made of stainless steel or carbon steel.
- Provide knives with handles that are comfortable to use.

Machinery

- Redesign machines so they can't be operated without guards in place.
- Ensure "off" buttons are readily accessible.
- Attach a last slice device or pusher to prevent injury at the cutting section.
- Ensure that equipment is securely fixed to the bench.

Administration

Knives

- Provide training in the safe use of knives and other sharp equipment.
- Provide training in correct knife-sharpening technique.
- Provide the correct knife for the task and food being cut.
- Provide alternative tasks involving other muscle groups. Variety will prevent boredom, fatigue and carelessness.
- Provide accessible first aid equipment and trained first aiders.

Make sure workers know about, and use, safe practices such as:

- Keep knives well maintained and sharp.
- Don't leave knives in washing up water. Cuts happen when people can't see the knife in the cloudy water.
- Always use a stable surface such as a cutting board and cut away from the body.
- Store knives safely in a rack or knife block, with blades pointing towards the back.
- Never try to catch a falling knife.
- Allow yourself plenty of working room so there is no chance of being bumped.
- Carry a knife with the blade pointing downwards.
- Don't leave knives on benches and work tops.

Machinery

- Provide training in the safe operation of all machines.
- Follow manufacturers' instructions for cleaning all equipment.
- Develop a maintenance program for keeping all machinery (especially sharp blades) in good working order.
- Provide appropriate signs; for example, safety instructions.
- Provide training in safe systems of work; for example, a no jewellery policy.

Personal Protective Equipment

Consider all other control options first.

Knives

- Provide mesh gloves. Be careful when using these with serrated blades.
- Provide a protective gauntlet for the non knife hand.

2.4 Heat

Workers are at risk from burns and scalds when they are:

- **cooking food;**
- **removing food** from elements, ovens, deep fryers, and grillers; and
- **making beverages** using steam or hot equipment such as urns and espresso machines.

Assess the risk in your workplace.

To manage it, apply the hierarchy of controls.

Elimination

This is an unlikely option in a kitchen situation.

Substitution

Where possible, use a microwave for cooking.
Deep Fryers: Instead of animal fat, use vegetable oil, which remains in liquid form when cool and reduces the risk of burns to your workers.

Separation

Deep Fryers: Install a gravity feed chute to an external receptacle so that workers do not have to handle hot waste cooking oil.

Redesign

- Redesign the kitchen so that work benches are away from ovens, deep fryers and other heat sources.
- Provide extended lifting tools so that workers can operate exhaust system controls that are out of reach.
- Install automatic food lowering devices.
- Install wheeled containers to receive spent grease from deep fryers. These can be safely rolled from the kitchen to the grease dumpster.
- Avoid **heat stress** by providing an efficient ventilation/extraction system, or air conditioning. Consider providing summer and winter uniforms.

Administration

- Develop a maintenance program that ensures lids are tight-fitting, handles secure, etc, on utensils that contain hot liquids.
- Use prominent signage to warn workers of hot equipment.
- Use "hot surface" stickers for stainless steel utensils.
- Ensure that all equipment containing hot fat or fluids is covered when not in use.
- Allocate a separate storage area for hot equipment, appropriately signed.
- Train workers in preferred techniques for handling hot items, such as:
 - opening doors and lids of steam heated equipment away from the body;
 - keeping handles pointing away from the edge of a stove;
 - placing pans so that handles are not over hotplates;
 - using dry cloths to pick up hot items, thus avoiding steam burns;
 - removing all utensils from pans;

- Make sure you have emergency procedures in place, and that workers know about them.
 - Have fire fighting and first aid equipment close to the kitchen and well signposted.
- Make sure staff are trained to use it.

Deep Fryers:

- Maintain seals regularly
- Train staff in safe practices such as:
 - patting food dry before dipping in fat to reduce spitting;
 - allowing fat to cool before draining it into a container;
 - ensuring fryers are turned off prior to closing time.

Personal Protective Equipment

Consider all other control options first.

- Provide mitts, gloves and long sleeved shirts to protect the upper body.
- Provide aprons to protect arms and legs.
- Consider providing cool but protective clothing.

2.5 Electricity

Electrical equipment always has the potential to be a serious hazard. Heavy use and frequent cleaning may compromise its safety. Electric shock can be fatal.

Assess the risk in your workplace. To manage it, apply the hierarchy of controls.

Elimination

Avoid using electricity wherever possible.

Substitution

Use splashproof or waterproof electrical appliances instead of standard equipment.

Separation

- Install an RCD or safety switches.
- Ensure that interlock guards are fitted to the front edge of all compactor units.
- Under-counter compactors should have a safety switch that prevents operation until a bin or trolley is in place.
- Guards or restrictor plates should be fitted to equipment where appropriate.

Redesign

- Make sure all areas have enough outlet sockets to avoid the use of adaptors and extension leads.
- Leads and cables should not run across hot surfaces, walkways, or any other place where they can be easily damaged.
- Make sure pressure vessels are fitted with low level cut-off devices.
- Make sure equipment is fitted with safety valves, water level and pressure gauges where required.

Administration

- All equipment must be serviced and maintained by a qualified electrical worker.
- Inspection and testing should be done regularly by a qualified electrical worker.
- Provide training in:
 - electrical safety;
 - correct use and operating technique;
 - the function of controls and guards;
 - procedures to isolate electrical equipment before cleaning; and
 - cleaning near power outlets and electrical equipment. Fluids should not be allowed to enter.

Personal Protective Equipment

Consider all other control options first.

- Rubber soled (insulating) shoes may provide some protection in some cases.

2.6 Gas

Gas is a quick, efficient energy source but there are associated hazards: **naked flame** and the possibility of **gas leaks** and **gas bottle explosions**.

You can **manage the risks** by:

- following safe working practices and documenting emergency procedures for gas leaks.
- ensuring gas bottles are changed by a qualified person;
- cleaning and maintaining cooking equipment;
- locating gas equipment in a well-lit and draught-free area;
- making sure you have a gas shut-off valve to stop supply; and
- making sure all appliances have maintenance shut-off valves that are easily accessible.

2.7 Fire

There is significant risk of fire in the food industry (particularly in kitchens) due to the nature of the business.

To manage the risk of fire, you should:

- maintain electrical equipment
- clean exhaust fans and hoods to prevent build-up of residue
- dispose of rubbish which may pose a fire hazard

- make sure you have appropriate fire fighting equipment for your kitchen:
 - fire blankets
 - the correct fire extinguishers (do not use water on oil or fat fires)
- implement fire safety procedures, e.g. use of fire extinguishers and fire blankets .
- have fire extinguishers easily seen and accessible
- train your workers in fire safety procedures.

You should have emergency procedures in place so that your workers know what to do if there is a fire either in your building or in neighbouring premises.

Your emergency plans should include a procedure to provide prompt treatment for burns and smoke inhalation.

Well rehearsed evacuation procedures are useful because:

- they reduce confusion
- they save time
- people can be easily accounted for

Make sure you have appropriate fire fighting equipment for your kitchen:

- fire blanket
- the correct type of fire extinguisher.
(note: do not use water on oil or fat fires)

You can obtain further information on fire safety from your local fire station.

3. Service Delivery

Work in this aspect of the fast food, cafe and restaurant industry includes the delivery of food to your customers by table service, counter service, drive-through and home delivery.

Workers face a number of hazards, including:

- **Manual Handling**
- **Work Environment**
- **Heat**
- **Sharps**
- **Violence**
- **Noise.**

You must identify these hazards in your workplace, assess the risks, and take steps to manage them effectively.

3.1 Manual Handling

Workers are at risk when they are:

- Setting up tables and function rooms:
 - **carrying** tables and chairs
 - **bending** to unfold legs of collapsible tables
 - **pushing and pulling** jammed table legs
- Delivering or collecting plates, cutlery and drink trays:
 - **carrying** many plates
 - **balancing** trays or loads of crockery and cutlery
 - **lifting** baskets of dirty dishes and utensils.
- Serving customers:
 - **reaching** over counters and hot boxes
 - **stretching** across tables to place food
 - **leaning** through windows to serve customers.

Assess the risk in your workplace. To manage it, apply the hierarchy of controls.

Elimination

Install tables and chairs permanently, instead of daily set up and pull down.

Substitution

- Use chair trolleys and platforms for moving furniture.
- Use lighter tables and chairs; perhaps stackable.
- Use smaller and/or lighter plates.
- Use smaller trays and baskets for clearing tables.
- Provide collapsible tables.
- Alternate buffet style and/or cafeteria service with table service to reduce manual handling by workers.
- Install a drive-through.

Redesign

- Re-design drive-throughs so that workers don't have to stretch through windows or across counter tops.
- Provide a chute in the drive-through.
- Place drive-through equipment so that it is comfortable to use.
- Plan work processes to improve flow of meals and reduce worker congestion.

Administration

- Organise your roster so that there are enough workers: job rotation; for example between waiting tables and cash register; shared tasks such as lifting over an extended period.
- Restrict the number of plates and glasses carried.
- Provide training in:
 - preferred lifting methods and
 - company work practices.
- Validate the training by competency tests.
- Make sure only trained workers perform a task.
- Develop a maintenance program with a check list.
- Ensure all mechanical equipment (for example chair trolleys) is working properly.
- Ensure that catches on all collapsible tables are well greased and working properly.

Personal Protective Equipment

Consider all other control options first.

- Consider providing a waiter's cloth to protect arms when carrying hot plates or trays.
- Provide mats when workers must stand for long periods of time.
- Provide non-slip shoes.

3.2 Work Environment

During service delivery, workers are at risk from **slips, trips and falls** when they are:

- walking on slippery floors
- working in a cluttered area
- working in a busy, congested area
- negotiating steps

Hot working conditions may also lead to heat stress, particularly when there is a low level of air movement and poor ventilation.

Assess the risks in your workplace. To manage them, apply the hierarchy of controls.

Elimination

Avoid walking on slippery floors wherever possible.

Substitution

- Review the type of floor surface and replace with non-slip material or non-slip mats if required.
- Use floor cleaning products which remove oil and grease.

Separation

- Provide a servery between the kitchen and dining room.
- Restrict workers to specified areas of the kitchen.

Redesign

- Review the workflow.
- Reduce the number of times a worker has to travel during a task and you'll reduce the potential for a slip or fall.
- Provide separate exits and entrances to the kitchen to reduce the possibility of collisions, spilt food, and resultant slippery floors.
- Minimise clutter in passages and walkways.
- Consider changing steps into ramps.
- Review any change of floor surface between kitchen and dining room (e.g. vinyl tile to carpet)
- Provide adequate lighting.
- Avoid heat stress by providing an effective ventilation/extraction system, or air conditioning.

Administration

- Provide rest breaks for workers, in a cool area, with access to water.
- Initiate a regular maintenance program for the air conditioning and extraction system.
- Educate workers about the risks of heat stress.
- Provide training in preferred safe work procedures (e.g. use of servery, restricted access) to prevent slips and falls.
- Have documented procedures (e.g. signage close to the work area) so that spills are cleaned up immediately.
- Have clean-up equipment stored close to the place where it is likely to be used.
- Develop a maintenance program to check and fix equipment (e.g. light bulbs) regularly.

Personal Protective Equipment

Consider all other control options first.

- Provide non-slip shoes.
- Consider providing cool but protective clothing.

Indoor air quality

Many food outlets, particularly cafes and restaurants will be air-conditioned for comfort and appeal. It is important to maintain air quality for the health of both workers and customers. Air quality can be affected by presence of tobacco smoke and different microbiological hazards. Some of these microbiological hazards (e.g. legionella) can grow and proliferate in poorly maintained air-conditioning systems which use water cooling towers. Mould and fungi can grow in building fixtures and furnishings which have been subject to water damage without being properly dried.

To **manage the risks** to respiratory health from poor air quality, management needs to

- provide adequate fresh air supply to all work areas
- have correct maintenance carried out on air-conditioning systems to prevent growth and spread of micro-organisms
- keep all areas, particularly carpeting, dry and free from moisture.

3.3 Heat

Service delivery workers are primarily at risk from burns and scalds when they are:

- walking through a kitchen where hot food is being prepared; and
- making beverages using steam or hot equipment such as urns and espresso machines.

In some conditions they could also be at risk from Heat Stress.

Assess the risks in your workplace.

To manage them, apply the hierarchy of controls.

Elimination

Avoid carrying hot liquids or utensils wherever possible.

Separation

Install a servery to keep customer service personnel out of the hot kitchen.

Consider separate entry and exit doors to prevent people colliding with others carrying hot dishes.

Redesign

Avoid **heat stress** by providing an efficient ventilation/extraction system, or air conditioning.

Administration

- Use prominent signage to warn workers of hot equipment.
- Train workers in the safe operation of hot beverage machinery such as espresso machines.
- Have fire fighting and first aid equipment easily accessible and well signposted. Make sure staff are trained to use it.

Personal Protective Equipment

Consider all other control options first.

Consider providing cool but protective clothing.

3.4 Personal Security: Violence At Work

Statistically, an average person can expect to experience violence in the workplace at least once during his or her working life.

Violence has many forms - verbal abuse, threats, harassment, and physical assault, resulting in serious injury and even death.

In the food industry, where many workers deal directly with the public, occupational violence is commonly associated with:

- **dissatisfied customers** and
- **criminal activity**, e.g. robbery.

To **control sources of violence** you can:

- change the work environment:
 - install security lighting
 - install video surveillance
 - improve your workers' ability to see potential offenders
 - reduce background noise
 - add locks to doors and windows
- change work systems to limit the risk of violence:
 - improve cash handling procedures
 - roster sufficient staff to handle cash
 - provide information, training and supervision to help your workers deal with security issues
- provide a confidential means for workers to report violence.

To reduce the risk, be prepared!

- Roster enough staff to keep delays to a minimum, reducing customer stress.
- Give your workers clear guidelines for dealing with aggressive clients.
- Provide training so that workers can detect imminent aggression and defuse potential violence.
- Provide access to support services for workers involved in a violent incident.

Manage the risk of cash-related assault

- Review cash management procedures:
 - Make cash less visible and less accessible.
 - Open cash drawer only when in use.
 - Use audible device to indicate opening of drawer.
 - Count cash in a secure room.
 - Encourage cashless purchasing (credit cards and EFTPOS).
- Consider using a safe to store cash.
- Examine your cash transfer procedures:
 - Develop random work patterns, e.g. go to the bank at different times or make frequent random deposits.
 - Consider using a professional collection service.
 - Use a bank nearby.
 - Avoid using public transport when carrying money.
 - When going to the bank, tell someone when you expect to return.
- Use visual deterrents:
 - By signage - "No cash kept on premises."
 - By making sure the point of sale operator is visible from outside.
- Design points of sale:
 - to minimise visibility and accessibility of cash
 - so they are situated away from entrances and exits
- Limit the chance of a quick escape e.g. by speed bumps, etc.
- Provide training for workers in security procedures such as:
 - opening and closing
 - working alone or at night
 - what to do if there is an incident.

3.5 Noise

Noise is a hazard which can permanently damage your hearing and affect your health in other ways such as increased blood pressure, head rate, and stress.

You must take steps to prevent your workers being exposed to excessive noise.

Establish whether noise levels are excessive, i.e. above certain specified levels. A good indicator of a possible noise problem is if you have to raise your voice to be heard when you are talking to someone about one metre away.

Typical sources of noise in the food industry include:

- the kitchen: loud machinery noise at times in a restricted environment.
- the drive through: excessive headset volume.
- You can **manage the risks** associated with noise by:
- relocating drive-through speakers so they are closer to drivers. This will allow headsets to be operated at a lower volume.
- limiting time that workers are exposed to the noise when taking orders.
- investigating alternative ear pieces.

4. Clean-up

Cleaning is part of the normal routine in all areas: e.g. food preparation, service, storage areas and amenities. Carparks and children's playground may also have to be cleaned.

Hazards that workers may face include:

- **Biological waste**
- **Sharps** and
- **Hazardous Substances.**

4.1 Biological Hazards

Workers who are required to clean up blood or body substance spills or who perform tasks that expose them to skin penetrating injuries may be at risk of contracting infectious diseases.

Infectious diseases which may be transmitted by blood and some body substances include hepatitis B, hepatitis C and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which causes the disease known as AIDS.

Contaminated Waste

Workers may be required to dispose of waste that is contaminated with blood or body substances. For example a worker may be required to dispose of food that is contaminated by a handler who cuts themselves, or a worker may be required to clean up a blood or a vomit spill.

Workers in the food industry may come into contact with contaminated waste.

To **manage the risk** of anyone contracting an infection you should require workers to:

- Place waste in a specifically marked bin and take it directly to a place of disposal.
- Use personal protective equipment, such as gloves and a face mask to protect breathing.
- Maintain high standards of personal hygiene; for example by washing hands thoroughly with soap and water after contact with contaminated items, and after removing protective gloves.
- Cover cuts or abrasions to prevent exposure to bacteria.

4.2 Sharps - Skin Penetrating Injuries

Workers may be required to dispose of needles that are found in toilets or carparks or workers may be required to clean up broken glass that has been contaminated with blood.

To **manage the risk** of exposure to blood or body substances employers should provide:

- adequate hand washing facilities
- infection control policies and procedures
- equipment for the safe handling and disposal of sharps eg. a sharps disposal kit containing tongs, a rigid walled puncture proof container and protective gloves
- equipment for the management of a blood or body substance spill eg. a spill kit containing such items as a cleaning agent, disposable absorbent material such as paper towels, a leak proof bag and protective gloves.

Employers should also **provide information and training** to workers who may be at risk of exposure to biological hazards on issues such as:

- infectious diseases and modes of transmission
- preventative infection control practices and procedures e.g. the safe handling and disposal of contaminated waste and sharps, personal hygiene
- correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- management of a blood or body substance exposure
- management of a skin penetrating injury
- accident reporting, recording and investigation.

4.3 Hazardous Substances

Hazardous substances may be used in your business for different purposes such as for cleaning or for pest control. For example, you may use an oven cleaner that contains sodium hydroxide (caustic soda), which irritates the skin and eyes. A corrosive beer line cleaner may be regularly used or a hypochlorite disinfectant may occasionally be used in restroom facilities. Carbon dioxide in pressurised cylinders for drink carbonators can cause asphyxiation if accidentally released in a confined space. You may have the premises sprayed regularly by a licensed pest exterminator or you may conduct nocturnal fumigation after all the staff and customers have departed in the evening.

Before any chemical is used in your workplace, **check if it is hazardous**. You can do this by reading the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) which should come with the product. The MSDS will give you information about the hazards associated with the product, and steps and precautions you can take to **manage any risks**.

These could include:

- providing proper storage facilities for all hazardous substances
- labelling all containers – it is particularly important never to use any food or drink container for hazardous substances
- ensuring an MSDS for all hazardous substances used is available in the workplace for staff to refer to
- ensuring the controls are appropriate for the use of the substance, such as ventilation or provision of PPE as specified in the MSDS
- providing training in the use of the substance

Another option is substitution; i.e. you could use another, less hazardous product.

Note: Labels on containers of cleaning products purchased over the counter should include safety precautions for use.

You also should be aware that occasionally workers may develop dermal sensitivity or allergy to certain foodstuffs, e.g. vegetables, seafood. Although these are not hazardous substances, you may need to provide gloves for these workers.

Further Information

General Information about Training

Training is an important risk control option.

Well trained workers operate more efficiently and have fewer accidents.

You should make sure that your workers receive adequate health and safety training.

On-the-job instruction should be provided by experienced workers who have themselves been trained in safe practices and instruction techniques.

Training should be provided:

- when a worker begins employment
- regularly - as refresher training
- when new procedures are adopted and
- when new equipment and/or technology is introduced.

Training programs should include instruction in:

- safe work practices
- specific tasks
- the safe operation and maintenance of equipment
- hazard identification and associated reporting requirements
- identified control measures to minimise risks
- safe procedures for handling hazardous substances
- safe manual handling practices
- the fitting, use and maintenance of PPE
- accident and emergency procedures and reporting requirements.

All training should be competency based; i.e. workers should be able to demonstrate the skills in which they have just been trained.

Ensure that the content and structure of your training meets the needs of your workers, especially if they are of non-English speaking backgrounds.

Training programs should be evaluated and reviewed in consultation with workers and health and safety representatives.

For further information on Workplace Health and Safety Issues, contact:

- **Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations:** Workplace Health and Safety Freecall 1800 177 717 Internet homepage: www.detir.qld.gov.au
- (The Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 is on our site)
- **Your industry association**
- **Goprint - for copies of the legislation**

Phone: 07 3246 3399

Freecall: 1800 679 778

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