

Kitchen Safety

Texas Workers' Compensation Commission
Workers' Health and Safety Division
Safety Education & Training Programs

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Food service employment can be, most of the time, injury free. The injuries that do occur are usually the result of failure to follow instructions, inattention, lack of knowledge, or a combination of these and similar factors. An employee can control the injuries by continually observing safe work practices, and calling to the attention of the employer or supervisor those conditions when they could contribute to an accident.

Kitchens are safe! It is the people who work in kitchens who create the problems. Heat, machines, utensils, soap, and caustics all are needed for effective food preparation. All can be used without injury if the persons using them will use them properly.

The following are points to remember for avoiding burns and increasing kitchen safety.

- Use dry hot pads or oven mitts when removing pans and kettles from the range or oven. Get help when handling large roasting pans and kettles.
- Keep pot handles turned away from burners and aisles.
- Turn off unused burners.
- Avoid wearing loose clothing and keep sleeves buttoned when working around the range, oven, or other machines.
- Avoid splashing water into the deep fryer. Always use the basket, and submerge food slowly when using deep fryer.
- When leaving the area, make certain others know what is hot before exiting.
- Keep an eye on fellow workers, warning them when they are in a danger area.
- When steam cleaning, wear proper protective clothing and eye protection...rubber aprons, hand, foot, and eye protection.

Preventing Knife Cuts

- Remember knives can be deadly when used improperly. Knives are not toys and never “fence” or “duel” with them.
- Keep knives sharp and store properly.
- Don’t let the handle or blade of a knife extend into a walking or working area when putting the knife down.
- Keep handles in good repair. Tighten or replace loose handles.



Photo courtesy of Centers for Disease Control

- Make certain the sharpening steel has a finger/hand guard. If not, replace it with a new steel with a proper guard.
- Never submerge a knife in soapy water. Always hold the knife handle securely when washing the blade.
- Use the right knife for the job!
- Cut **away** from, not towards the body. When slicing, stand to the side of the cut, use fork for steadiness, and keep fingers in the clear.
- Use cutting board or block when chopping or slicing to prevent slips and dulling.

Falls and Strains

- Wipe up spills immediately, because spilled or dropped food, grease, oil, and water can be extremely slippery.
- Clean floors, duckboards if provided, on a daily schedule.
- Keep aisles and passageways clear at all times.
- Repair holes and rough spots; provide ramps over pipes and other fixed obstructions on the floor. Remove tripping hazards such as cords and hoses, by storing them properly.

Safe Lifting

- Keep the back straight, bend the knees, and let the strong leg muscles do the lifting.

- Get help when attempting to lift heavy or bulky objects.
- Store heavy cases or cartons on lower shelves, preferably at waist level, and place lighter items on high shelves.
- Always use the proper type of ladder to reach high objects. Make certain the ladder is in safe condition, with no broken rungs, defective side rails or braces.

Kitchen Machines

- Get instructions if you don't know how a machine operates.
- Be certain all machines are properly grounded electrically. If there is a "tingle" or slight shock when turning on a machine, shut down the machine and report it immediately. Machine must be locked and tagged out to prevent further use.
- Keep guards in place when machine is operating. Replace all guards that have been removed for cleaning, adjustment, or repairs.
- Keep hands and fingers out of all machines. Do not attempt to repair or adjust any machine until it has been turned off and the power supply is disconnected.
- Use a brush to clear crumbs, scraps, and other materials when cleaning any machine. Make sure machine is turned off and the power supply is disconnected.
- When using a slicer, "zero" the blade after each use. When wiping blade, wipe from center hub to edge, to prevent slashing injury from the edge of blade.
- When using a mixer, make certain beaters are properly fastened, and bowl elevator is locked in position before starting the unit. Always stop the machine before attempting to remove anything from the mixing bowl.
- When using a dishwasher, load trays properly. Don't overload. Don't force into the machine; use gentle pressure. If tray is stuck in the unit, use a long pole with hook to pull back the leading end. Wear rubber gloves to avoid contact with harsh soaps and caustics.
- When using grinders/tenderizers, use a push stick to feed grinder, never place fingers in the feed openings, and keep guards in place on these and all machines at all times when operating.

Fire Hazards

- Know the location of fire extinguishers and the controls for sprinklers and deluge units, and know how to use them.
- Vent ovens and other gas-fired units before attempting to light them.
- Report all gas leaks immediately and don't try to make repairs.
- Make certain pilot lights on ovens, water heaters, stoves, and other appliances are properly adjusted, and that burners light immediately when burner valves are opened.
- Obey smoking regulations. Do not smoke in storage areas. Dispose of lighted matches and smoking materials in proper containers.
- Avoid the use of flammable liquids in the kitchen area, the vapors can be explosive.

Coffee Urns, Pressure Cookers

- Daily, make a check of the safety valves to insure they are unplugged and in operating condition. Be certain nothing is obstructing the pressure gauge opening, or the opening to the safety plug.
- Be sure you thoroughly understand the operating instructions for this, and all other equipment. For greater safety for all personnel, operating valves should be identified with permanent (metal) tags to show their function.

Proper use of this equipment requires effective training when a new employee starts on the job, plus continuing attention by the manager or the supervisor to make certain that the employee continues to do the job as he was taught. The kitchen supervisor, regardless of his specific job title, must **set the example** by using proper work methods as the work goes ahead. It is unreal to expect an employee to follow work rules that are being broken by his supervisor, or fellow workers.

Training and ongoing supervision will help make the kitchen a safe place to work.

Remember to practice safety. Don't learn it by accident.

This safety training program was published with information from the Montana Department of Labor and Industry and the Texas Workers' Compensation Commission.

Review Questions

1. Keep pot handles turned towards you.
True or False
2. Why is it important to use a cutting board or block when chopping or slicing?
3. Keep hands and fingers out of all machines.
True or False
4. Why is important to know the location of fire extinguishers and controls for sprinkle and deluge units?

The Texas Department of Insurance,
Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI/DWC)
E-mail resourcecenter@tdi.state.tx.us
or call 1-800-687-7080 for more information.

Answers

1. False. Always turn the handles away from burners and aisles.
 2. To prevent slips and dulling.
 3. True, otherwise you could cut your hand or fingers.
 4. In case of fire it is critical to know the location of the fire extinguishers and be trained to use them.
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Resources

The Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI/DWC) Resource Center offers a workers' health and safety video tape library. Call (512) 804-4620 for more information or visit our web site at www.tdi.state.tx.us.

Disclaimer: Information contained in this training program is considered accurate at time of publication.

The Division has the following ur website at di.state.tx.us.

- Microwave Over Safety-Take 5 for Safety
- Portable Fire Extinguishers Safety Training Program (English/Spanish)
- Pressure Cooker/Steamer Safety-Take 5 for Safety
- Preventing Trips and Falls (English/Spanish)
- Protecting Hands from Chemical Exposure Safety Training Program (English/Spanish)
- Teens Working in Food Service-Teen Guide
- Waitstaff Health and Safety Training Program (English/Spanish)

Safety Violations Hotline
1-800-452-9595
safetyhotline@tdi.state.tx.us