

Introduction

This information will give employers practical advice on how to reduce health and safety risks associated with food service work. The program summarizes the employers' responsibilities and provides a checklist for employers and staff. The main risks of injury to food service staff are slips and trips, cuts, burns and injuries from lifting heavy or awkward loads. Many injuries in a restaurant or dining area can be avoided by following a few simple procedures.

Employer's responsibilities

You must:

- ensuring the health and safety of your employees and those (such as contractors and customers) who might be affected by their food service activities;
- carrying out a risk assessment to identify any risks and put procedures in place to control and monitor risks;
- discussing health and safety with employees or their appointed representative;
- providing personal protective equipment (PPE to include gloves, etc.)
- providing adequate first-aid facilities;
- providing relevant training and information on risks to all of staff including temporary workers;
- ensuring that there are adequate and experienced staff to supervise operations; and
- setting up emergency procedure (IE for fire, accident, robbery, etc.)

Temporary staff

It is important that temporary food service staff is fully briefed on workplace health and safety risks and the steps being taken to control them. Such staff may be unfamiliar with the workplace and may also have had little or no training in health and safety.

On and off site venues or events

It is particularly important that risk assessments are carried out, not only for permanent work locations but also for any temporary venues. The employer should establish in advance if there are any potential risks at the site of the event. This can be done, for example, by inspecting the venue beforehand. This will allow the preparation of control measures before the event takes place.

The employer should ensure that all locations meet health and safety requirements, for example adequate lighting, sufficient space for staff and customers to move in between tables, and safe electrical equipment.

Waitstaff checklist

The following list of simple measures can be used by food services managers as a checklist to brief staff, or by staff themselves as a reminder of good practice.

Site layout

Alert staff to specific hazards at a location such as:

- low ceiling and door lintels, uneven flooring or ground;
- ramp and slopes (help may be needed if pushing heavy carts on these).

Cleaning restaurant equipment

Silverware

- Always wear gloves when using any silver dip or other cleaning agents.
- Always follow manufacture or supplier's instructions.

Knives

- Kitchen and cutlery knives are a risk when left in water-filled sinks and other containers.
- Wipe knives on the blunt side, with the blade facing away from you.
- When carrying knives, point knife blade downwards.

Glassware

- When polishing glasses, handle rims with care.
- Handle chilled glasses with care; glass is more fragile when cold.

Crockery and other service dishes

- Do not stack too high; the weight can easily overload shelving and the pile of crockery may fall over.
- Do not overstock service stations (ie. dumb waiters); the weight can overload shelves and drawers.
- Open cutlery drawers slowly (particularly if full).

Laying up

Always check that tables are secure and have been put up safely before any equipment or food is placed upon them.

Cutlery

- Use containers/cutlery baskets to carry cutlery.
- Store cutlery in baskets, handle uppermost.
- Take precaution, handle knives by the handle only.

Glassware

- When laying up for large numbers, use purpose-designed baskets or trays to carry glasses.
- Pick glasses up by the foot or stem.
- Do not bang the glassware together as this weakens the glass internally.

Carrying trays and lifting loads

- Distribute crockery and cutlery evenly on trays.
- Carry only the weight that feels safe and comfortable.
- Ask the supervisor for help in moving heavy or awkward loads.
- Know where the load is to go to before moving it.
- Ensure route is clear before setting off.

Coffee machines

- Only operate when fully trained.
- Follow manufacturer's instruction to fill and operate both small-and high-volume coffee machines.

Flammable and potentially explosive materials (methylated spirits, gas cylinders, aerosols, matches)

- Only handle when fully trained.
- Store materials away from heat and direct sunlight.
- Follow manufacturer or supplier's instructions when filling equipment with spirits or replacing gas cylinders, including what to do if they start leaking.
- Use matches and tapers when lighting candles and heaters.
- Position candles and burners well away from table decorations, curtains, fabrics, and bar spirits.

Staff dress

Footwear

- Wear stable, properly fitting footwear to reduce the risk of slips, trips, and falls.
- Footwear that covers the foot will delay heat penetration onto feet from spilt hot liquids.

Clothing

- Do not wear long, trailing skirts as they increase the risk of trips.
- Do not wear loose, long sleeves as they can catch on door handles and the backs of customers' chair or catch fire from candles.

Hair

Tie long hair back or pin it up at all times to prevent it from:

- Coming into contact with flames (flambé, candles); or
- Becoming caught when passing through plastic door curtains.

Food and drink service

Swing doors

- Be aware of entry and exit routes if swing doors are in operation or, if there are no swing doors, be aware that there may be different entry or exit routes to the service/kitchen area.
- Go through these types of doors sideways or backwards so that the body (and not the tray) pushes.
- If there is a single exit/entry swing door, if possible check that no one else is coming the other way; otherwise approach with caution.

Carrying trays or platters

- Ensure that load is secure and comfortable to carry.
- Distribute items evenly on the tray.
- Place hot foods and liquids in the center of trays to ensure spillage will fall onto the tray and not over you, other staff, customers, or on the floor.

Carrying liquids

- Do not overfill containers (ie. soup tureens, pots of coffee or tea).

Carrying hot dishes or plates

- Use a dry, thick, cloth (wet cloths transfer heat quicker and increase risk of burns).
- Warn customers (especially children) if plates, soup bowls, or pre-milled mugs and cups are hot.
- Pay particular attention if carrying hot dishes or plates up stairs.

Sparkling wine

- After removing foil, keep pressure on cork with cloth-end or thump, while removing wire clip.
- Then cover with cloth and ease out slowly (to control release of pressure from the bottle) by turning the bottle not the cork.

Dumb waiters

- Only use after instructions from supervisor.
- Never override interlocks.

Customers

- Be aware that customers (particularly children) may move suddenly or move their chair back just as their meal is being served.

- If space is tight when serving ask the customer politely if they can move to the side.
- If silver-serving, make sure hot surfaces do not touch customers.
- Watch out for handbags, briefcases, and coats lying on the floor.
- Know what action to take if dealing with any customer who is drunk or aggressive.

Spillages

- Clean immediately if there is a risk of slipping during service, or close the area off until it is cleaned.

Cleaning away from the table

- Never use a broken tray.
- Ensure the tray is stable and held securely before loading heavy items (place these at the center of the tray).
- Do not overload trays - ensure weight of item is evenly spread across the tray.
- Use trays that allow the arms/hands to be held more or less in line with the shoulders.
- Hold tray with both hands, especially if it is fully loaded.
- Stack plates of the same size together.
- Never stack cups more than two-high.
- Place similar cutlery together on the tray (to avoid risks of cuts when sorting prior to washing).
- Use a separate tray to clear glasses.
- When cleaning without a tray, stack crockery on arm in balanced layers, positioning cutlery securely.
- Do not load up more than can be carried securely or comfortably.
- When removing rubbish, check that cigarettes and cigars are out and disposed of in a separate metal bind with no paper.
- Dispose of any broken glass or crockery in a designated container, taking care while handling.

End of services

- Flambé lamps must be turned off when not in use.
- Make sure that candles are snuffed out.
- Check area for discarded cigarettes.
- Switch off electrical equipment.
- Do not stack chairs and tables above chest heights.

- Do not stack furniture on fire escape routes, in corridors or behind doors.

Emergencies

- Know what to do in the event of an accident, fire or other emergency.

Review Questions:

1. What are the risks of injury to food service staff?
2. What are some of the health and safety requirements for a location?
3. Why is it important to wear properly fitting footwear?

Answers:

1. Slips and trips, cuts, burns, and injuries from lifting heavy or awkward loads.
2. Adequate lightings, sufficient space for staff and customers to move in between tables, and safe electrical equipment.
3. To prevent slips, trips, and falls.

This safety training program was published with information from the Health and Safety Executive and the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation.

Resources

The Texas Department of Insurance (TDI), Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC), Resource Center offers a workers' health and safety video tape library and safety publications on website. The following publications to help ensure a safe working environment for food service staff:

- Manual Material Handling Workplace Program
- First Aid for Burns, Take 5
- Hurry Up Can Hurt, Take 5
- Slips and Falls, Take 5
- Back Injury Prevention, Safety Training Program

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

Call (512) 804-4620 for more information or visit our web site at www.tdi.state.tx.us.