

Health and safety in catering: A training aid for tutors



What is the problem?

Accidents and ill health rates within the catering and hospitality industry have been on an upward trend since 2001.

In 2004/05 there were over 5000 reported accidents of people injured while at work in this industry, 1224 of which were serious and two resulted in death. With an estimated 15 000 non-reported accidents per year, this means that, on average, 55 people are injured at work every day in the catering industry.

New workers are up to 2.5 times more likely to have an accident at work than their more experienced colleagues.

Through early training on health and safety practices, we can bring these numbers down and give them the opportunity of a long and healthy career in catering.

Occupational health issues such as work-related contact dermatitis are a serious issue in the hospitality industry.

What can you do?

We would like to encourage you to refer to the HSE guidance available when preparing lectures, to make sure that students are aware of the main causes of accidents and risks to their health and safety in a catering environment. Information sheets are freely available to download from the HSE website.

In particular, you should promote the following main messages.

Slips

Most slip injuries happen on wet floors so clean up spills immediately.

- Avoid spillage and leakage onto the floor.
- Clear up spillages and dry floor immediately.
- Dry floors after wet cleaning eg after mopping.

Trips

- Keep passages and walkways free from obstructions.
- Report uneven floors or loose tiles that may cause accidents.

Handling

- Avoid lifting items that are too heavy (eg pans, dish trays, furniture). Two people can lift the item if necessary.
- Avoid pushing, pulling or dragging excessive loads.
- Avoid prolonged periods in one position, leading to postural strain.
- Use proper lifting techniques and avoid lifting tasks which involve reaching too high or too low.
- Use lifting aids eg trolleys or sack trucks.

Cuts

Cuts from sharp objects, including knives and handling glasses, account for about one third of manual handling accidents.

- Be aware of risks and safe procedures when using knives.
- Be aware of risks and safe procedures when handling glass.

Exposure to hot and harmful substances

- Be aware of risks posed by hot surfaces or equipment.
- Hot oil or fluids are particularly hazardous, ensure all equipment containing hot oil or fluids are covered when not in use.
- Avoid carrying hot liquids and materials if there is a risk of splashes.
- Follow safe procedures for opening steam oven doors.
- Follow safe procedures for cleaning and draining fat fryers.
- Follow safe systems of work in the use and storage of cleaning substances.
- Ensure personal protective equipment (PPE) is worn where required.

Work-related contact dermatitis

Work-related contact dermatitis is a skin disease caused by work. It is often called eczema and develops when the skin's barrier layer is damaged. This leads to redness, itching, swelling, blistering, flaking and cracking. The most susceptible parts of the body are the hands, followed by the forearms and face. It can be severe enough to keep you off work or even force you to change jobs.

Contact dermatitis is one of the main causes of ill health for catering staff (chefs, cooks and catering assistants) with the number of new cases per year being twice the general industry average.

The main causes in the catering industry are contact with foods (eg juices from fruit and vegetables, proteins in fish, shellfish, meat and flour), water (ie washing-up and food washing), soaps and cleaning products.

You can prevent dermatitis developing with a few simple measures:

- Avoid contact with cleaning products, food and water where possible eg use a dishwasher rather than washing up by hand, use utensils rather than hands to handle food.
- Protect your skin. Where you can, wear gloves when working with substances that can cause dermatitis and moisturise your hands to replenish the skin's natural oils.
- Check your hands regularly for the early stages of dermatitis – ie itchy, dry or red skin. These symptoms should be reported to a supervisor as treatment is much more effective if dermatitis is caught early.

General

Other areas to note include dangers on use of equipment, falls from ladders and stairs, and fire risks.

Further reading

The HSE website www.hse.gov.uk can provide a number of leaflets and information sheets free of charge that will be useful to lecturers and students. There is a specific site for the catering and hospitality industry on the HSE website: www.hse.gov.uk/catering/index.htm

The following information sheets are available free through the HSE website, and can also be obtained from HSE Books.

- *Preventing slips and trips in kitchens and food service*
- *Preventing back pain and other aches and pains to kitchen and food service staff*
- *Safety during emptying and cleaning of fryers*
- *Safe use of cleaning chemicals in the hospitality industry - Occupational dermatitis in the catering and food industries*

Other information sheets in the catering series that you may find useful are:

- *Health and safety of children and young people in catering*
- *Health and safety of new and expectant mothers in the catering industry*
- *The main health and safety law applicable to catering*

Further information

HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995 Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk
(HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops and free leaflets can be downloaded from HSE's website: www.hse.gov.uk.)

For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline Tel: 0845 345 0055 Fax: 0845 408 9566 Textphone: 0845 408 9577 e-mail: hse.infoline@natbrit.com or write to HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG.

This leaflet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

This document is available web-only at:
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/web19.pdf

© *Crown copyright* This publication may be freely reproduced, except for advertising, endorsement or commercial purposes. First published 08/06. Please acknowledge the source as HSE.