



Restaurant Employee's Safety Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Each year many thousands of workers are killed or injured while working. Some of these are involved in jobs that seem on the surface to be no more hazardous than yours. In addition to your own safety and that of your co-workers, it is very important that you do everything you can to make sure your restaurant is as safe as possible for customers.

Large numbers of accident losses represent a significant overhead expense for restaurants. High operating expenses tend to reduce the profit margin and take up money which could be used for higher salaries and fringe benefits. You, as an individual employee, can do a lot to improve your accident experience.

Included in this booklet are several ideas of ways you can help to reduce the accident experience. This will help to provide a safer place for customers who may be friends of yours to dine and also provide a safer place for yourself and your co-workers to work. This material in no way describes all possible accident-producing situations, but it should serve as a guideline to help you think of other accident-producing situations which you may be able to correct.

FALLS:

Many people are killed each year from falls on the same level. These aren't falls from balconies or from high levels but merely stumbling and falling as they walk across a level floor. For this reason, it is extremely important that all falls be viewed as a possible fatal accident.

The most common cause of falls in restaurants is wet or greasy floors. Frequent offenders in the restaurant include spilled liquids or water from melting ice or grease on the floor from cooking. Grease can be carried from the floor of the cooking area to the dining room on the soles of your shoes. This problem is especially serious since customers may be in a hurry or may be old and feeble and may not be able to see to well.

Items on the floor are the type of thing that needs constant attention. You should try to make yourself continuously aware of the condition of the floors and you should never walk past anything on the floor which might cause someone to fall. If a spill has occurred, **the time to clean it up is now.** Customers certainly do not like to wait for service, but far more ill will is developed if these same customers are injured in a preventable accident. The busier you are, the more important it becomes that spills and other emergency situations be corrected at once. The same concern for walking surface conditions should extend to the parking area. In addition to picking up broken glass and other hazards, you should be concerned about the condition of the parking lot and curb service area and report any major holes or cracks which are developing to the manager.

Falls from stepladders are extremely hazardous and proper use of stepladders will prevent these. Stepladders should always be used in the open out position. They should never be leaned against anything and used as a straight ladder. Whenever it is necessary for you to stand near the top of a stepladder, someone should be around to help steady the ladder. You should never stand on the top step of a stepladder. If ladders become cracked or wobbly, they should be reported to the manager.

Other causes of falls include climbing on pantry shelves or homemade ladders. Only ladders should be used for climbing.

Remember that falls are no laughing matter and you can do a lot individually to prevent them.

CUTS:

Knives and broken glass are the most frequent source of cuts in restaurants. All knives should be kept in a proper storage rack when not in use and should be maintained sharp enough to do the job without the employee having to use excessive force. All broken glass should be removed promptly and care must be used to prevent any injury to yourself. You should be on guard also for sharp metal counters and sharp edges generally throughout the restaurant that might be missed by the manager on his regular inspections and where a customer or small child might get cut.

BURNS:

Burn injuries are among the most painful. They heal slowly and **have a high susceptibility to infection**. The primary sources of burns are hot cooking equipment, hot grease, hot pots and pans, and water from steam tables or dishwashers. If you are involved in cooking, all potentially hot surfaces should be treated with respect. Hot pads and mittens should be used where feasible. Deep fat fryers should be operated at the lowest temperature which will do the job. Excessive heat tends to encourage grease splatters.

Extra caution is required where pressure deep fat fryers are used. If the tops are removed too soon, the hot grease vapors may cause serious injury.

Anytime a burn occurs, it is essential that you obtain immediate first aid. The burn usually destroys the outer layers of tissue which are the body's primary defense against infection. Medical attention should be sought if signs of infection appear.

ELECTRICAL SHOCKS:

Electrical shocks can kill instantly. Many people are not aware that a 115 volt 20 amp electrical current can kill. This is a dangerously erroneous misconception. The most common type of electrical shock occurs when a loose wire or a bare wire inside an electrical device comes in contact with the outer case of the device. This leaves the outer casing of the device energized.

If you come into contact with the energized case and the resistance of a path through your body to the ground has less resistance than the path of the current through the apparatus, you will experience an electrical shock. To prevent this type of shock situation, most electrical apparatus today is manufactured with a third wire connected to the case of the apparatus and when plugged in, connects to the ground. This provides a low resistance path of electricity to the ground and prevents the electric current from being conducted through your body to the ground. Water increases the accident hazard because it will reduce the resistance of the current path through your body if you were standing in water and your hands are wet. Bare electrical wires should always be reported to the manager, especially any time they are around water.

The plastic cover plates over electrical outlets sometimes get broken. These should be replaced if they are damaged since they do leave bare wires exposed if they are not intact. Also, missing electrical inspection plates on refrigeration equipment should be reported to the manager. Any extension cords used in connection with electrical equipment should be of the three wire type and grounded. Of course, any extension cords used should be used in such a way that they do not create a trip hazard.

LIFTING:

The strongest muscles in the human body are the leg muscles and whenever possible these should be used for lifting. **Whenever you attempt to lift with your legs straight and your body bent at the waist**, you are taking a chance on stressing the comparatively weak muscles of the lower back. The proper way to lift is to bend at the knees and come to a squatting position with your feet comfortably spaced. Get a firm grasp on the object to be lifted and lift the object by straightening out the legs. Of course, the best way to avoid subjecting yourself to a painful muscle sprain or back injury is to **get help whenever you think something is too heavy to be lifted alone. Nothing is wrong with asking for help.** You should be particularly cautious of bending over something to lift an object behind it since the back is fully extended in this position. An example would be leaning across a table to pick up a tray loaded with dishes. The closer to an object the body is, the easier it is to lift. Remember, use your legs and ask for help when it is needed.

WHEN CUSTOMERS HAVE ACCIDENTS:

There is one other way in which you can help to reduce accident costs. Sometimes the things which are done immediately following a customer accident have a great deal to do with the final cost of the claim. Accident instruction should be posted on the bulletin board and you should be familiar with these. Briefly, you should attempt to find out if there were any witnesses to the accident. Most of the time an unbiased customer will cooperate.

In the case of falls, you should check the floor area to see if there is anything on the floor which might have caused the fall and thoroughly familiarize yourself with the conditions which led to the accident, both in the interest of providing details later, and also in the interest of preventing similar accidents. While the ultimate goal is to eliminate accidents completely, accidents will probably continue to occur sometimes. Prompt action at these times can make sure that minor accidents remain minor.

Remember, safety depends upon everyone doing their part. The health, happiness and future well