



Markel Specialty

Hazards and best practices for restaurant safety

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What are the most common types of injuries in restaurants?

The main types of hazards that employees are exposed include:

- Injuries from objects
- Slips, trips, and falls
- Burns
- Overexertion injuries
- Chemicals/cleaners
- Electrical
- Cold temperatures

Injuries from objects includes cuts from knives, injuries from kitchen machinery, and also injuries from running into things.

Knife safety

- Use the right knife for the job
- Always use a proper chopping board or block
- Make sure the knife is sharp
- Carry only one knife at a time, tip pointed down at your side, and cutting edge away from your body
- Store knives securely in knife sheaths or proper racks
- Hold the knife with your stronger hand
- Cut away from your body when cutting, trimming, or boning
- When not using knives, place them in a rack with the sharp edge away from you
- After using a knife, clean it immediately or place it in a dishwasher. Never leave a knife soaking in a sink of water.
- Use protective clothing such as cut-resistant gloves
- Never use knives with damaged handles or blades
- Don't be distracted while using a knife
- Don't try and catch a falling knife
- Never hand a knife to someone. Put it down on the counter and let them pick it up.

Kitchen machinery

- Cutters and choppers
- Guards must always be in place. Never operate with blades exposed.
- Every day, test the safety interlock switch that turns the power off when the cover is raised
- Use only plastic extension tools such as spatulas to feed or remove food from the cutter
- Never attempt to clean the machine unless the power switch is off and the cord is removed from the outlet. Machines have an uncanny way of turning on "accidentally" while being cleaned.
- Keep hair, clothing, jewelry, fingers, hands and gloves away from dangerous moving cutting parts
- Contact a supervisor if a guard is damaged or missing
- Follow manufacturer's instructions on the operation, cleaning and maintenance of the equipment

Slicers

- Use the food conveyor attachment and keep your hands away from the blade at all times—especially when catching products being sliced. Do not hand-feed.
- For cleaning, disconnect the power, set the slicing dial to zero, and then remove the guard. Use a spoon with a cloth wrapped around one end to clean the blade, working from the center to the outside. Ideally, wear metal mesh or Kevlar® gloves when cleaning the blade; if these aren't available, cover the blade edge with a thick cloth while you rotate it, to protect your bare hand.

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Mixers

- Since most mixer blades cannot be completely guarded, avoid loose-fitting shirt sleeves, ties, or anything that could become caught in the agitator
- Never try to wipe the sides of the bowl, adjust the machine, or remove the bowl while the machine is operating
- When cleaning, turn off the power and disconnect the cord to prevent accidental operation

Sharp surfaces

- Use care when moving your hands along any surface, especially one you don't know or can't see
- Throw away broken or chipped glassware

Slips, trips and falls

- Keep floors and stairs clean, dry, and non-slippery
- Keep floors and stairs clear of debris and obstructions
- Make sure floors are free from trip hazards such as raised or broken sections
- Mop floors with the recommended amount of cleaning product in the water, or cleaning fluid, to ensure grease and other slippery substances are removed. Use clean mops so they don't spread grease.
- Use slip-resistant waxes to polish and treat floors
- Make sure that carpeting, rugs, and mats are free of holes, loose threads, loose edges, and bumps that may cause tripping
- Use adequate warning signs for wet floors and other hazards
- Ensure there is adequate lighting everywhere
- Make sure that ladders and footstools are in good repair and have non-skid feet
- If you drop or spill something, clean it up. If you notice a hazard, immediately remove it or clean it up, if possible. If it's not possible to take care of the hazard yourself, report it immediately to your supervisor.
- Walk—don't run
- Mark swinging doors with in and out signs, or define standard movement patterns or signals to avoid collisions
- Wear closed-toe shoes with slip resistant soles and low heels
- Use non-slip floor matting. Keep mats clean and secured in place.
- Eliminate cluttered or obstructed work areas

Ladders and stepstools

- Inspect a ladder before and after each use
- Reject a ladder if it has loose, broken, or missing rungs; loose hinges; or loose or missing screws or bolts. Have defective ladders repaired or thrown out.
- Set up barricades and warning signs when using a ladder around hot liquids, in a doorway or passageway
- Clean muddy, greasy or slippery footwear before mounting a ladder
- Face the ladder when going up or down and when working from it. Never step on the top two steps.
- Keep the center of your body within the side rails and never overreach
- Locate the ladder on a firm footing using slip-resistant feet or secure blocking, or have someone hold the ladder
- Use a three-point stance, keeping both feet and at least one hand on the ladder at all times

Stairways

- Ensure that stairways are well lit
- Keep stairs clear of obstructions
- Use handrails
- When carrying a load up and down stairs, make sure that the load does not block your vision
- Report tripping hazards to your supervisor and place warning signs

Proper footwear helps reduce slips, trips, and falls

- Wear slip-resistant shoes. For wet surfaces, the sole should have a well-defined tread as more edges will provide a better grip.
- Don't wear shoes that are dirty or worn out, as this affects their slip-resistance. To preserve your shoes, leave them at work and wear other shoes to and from work.
- Wear shoes with low or no heels
- Wear shoes or boots with internal steel-toe caps if you lift and carry heavy objects
- Wear footwear that is closed at the toe without a pattern of holes
- Avoid porous fabrics such as canvas, which won't protect your feet from spills and burns

Burns and scalds

- Assume that all pots and pans and metal handles are hot. Touch them only when you are sure that they are not hot or when you are using proper gloves.
- Organize your work area to prevent contact with hot objects and flames
- Keep pot handles away from hot burners
- Make sure that handles of pots and pans do not stick out from the counter or cooking stove
- Use dry pot holders, gloves, and oven mitts appropriate for handling hot objects. Use long gloves for deep ovens.
- Use only recommended temperature settings for each type of cooking
- Follow the manufacturer's operating instructions
- Open hot water and hot liquid faucets slowly to avoid splashes
- Lift lids by opening away from you so you won't get burned by escaping steam

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- Wear long-sleeved cotton shirts and cotton pants when cooking
- Wear shoes that will repel spilled hot foods and oils that will protect your feet
- Adjust burner flames to cover only the bottom of the pan
- Never leave hot oil unattended

Special tips for fryers

- Dry off wet food and brush or shake off excess ice crystals with a clean paper towel before placing it in the fryer basket. Wet foods splatter and cause steam.
- Wear gloves to protect your hands and arms from splashes
- Never fill fryer baskets more than half full
- Gently raise and lower fryer baskets
- Do not stand too close to or lean over hot oil
- Keep liquids and beverages away from fryers
- Follow directions for adding fat or oil
- Handle only one fryer basket at a time
- Never store items over the fryer that can fall into the hot oil
- Never strain and carry hot oil. Wait until it is cool.

Overexertion

Overexertion includes two types of accidents—those related to manual handling of containers, such as boxes and cartons; and those related to tiredness.

Manual handling

The key to preventing manual handling injuries is to reduce or eliminate the risk factors. Workplace factors associated with overexertion accidents include:

- Awkward back posture held for a period of time or repeated due to poor working heights and reaches. Examples include reaching for linen or food supplies located on high shelves.
- Heavy or frequent lifting, pushing, pulling, and carrying. For example, lifting and carrying bulk food containers, or taking materials from awkward places or putting them into awkward places.
- Prolonged sitting or standing. Examples of workers with jobs that might include these risks are:
 - Front office staff who sit for long periods working on computers
 - Hostesses or others whose duties consist of standing while greeting customers and working the cash register

How to reduce manual handling accidents

- Store heavier or frequently used items at a height between workers' hips and chest to reduce awkward postures when handling these items
- Use carts to move heavy products from storage coolers and freezers
- Use platforms, counters, and tables to eliminate repetitive bending and lifting from the floor
- Design or alter "pass through" windows in restaurants to reduce the risk of back injury. If they are too high or too deep, workers are forced to use long reaches and awkward postures to pick up orders.
- Use smaller banquet trays to lighten loads and to make them easier to handle
- Store clean plates on spring-loaded dollies to reduce repetitive bending
- Add a footrest or matting to a hostess counter to give some relief from prolonged standing
- Keep your head up, your back straight and lift with your legs not your back
- Bring the load as close to you as possible before lifting
- Keep the load directly in front of your body. Move feet to turn so you don't twist your back.
- Perform lifts at waist height with your elbows in and close to your body
- Limit lifting materials above shoulder level

Tiredness

If work gets frantic for long periods, tiredness will lead to carelessness and that means accidents. Workers can help by getting adequate sleep, taking breaks, and pacing themselves.

- Work with a partner when the load is too heavy
- When possible, spread activities that require heavy exertion throughout the day—instead of doing them all at once

Chemical hazard communication

- Be informed/trained and make sure you understand the hazards of the chemicals you work with
- Know where Safety Data Sheets (SDS's) are located and follow their instructions
- Label secondary containers, e.g., spray bottles with product name and hazard warnings
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, e.g., gloves, face shields, splash goggles, etc.

Electrical safety

- Know procedures for electrical emergencies
- Know how to shut off power in case of an emergency
- Keep access to electrical panels clear at all times
- Use ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) receptacles
- Keep power cords away from liquids and equipment when in use

Cold storage/freezer safety

- Know cold stress warning signs
- Wear multiple layer warm clothing and PPE such as a hat, gloves and rubber nonslip shoes when working in freezers
- Check units regularly to ensure no one is trapped inside

Sources: Business and Legal Resources, Cal/OSHA

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