

Safety in the Kitchen

For the most part, food service employment can be injury free. Most injuries occur due to a failure to follow instructions, not paying attention, a lack of knowledge, or a combination of all of these. You can control injuries by observing safe work practices.

Avoiding burns

- Use dry hot pads or oven mitts when removing pans and kettles from the range or oven. Get help when handling larger pans.
- 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 stove.
- 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 you leave.
- Keep an eye on co-workers, warn them when they are in a dangerous area.
- When steam cleaning, wear proper protective clothing and eye protection.

Preventing knife cuts

- Knives are not toys, never “fence” or “duel” with them.
- Keep knives sharp and stored properly.
- Do not let the blade or handle extend into walkways when you set it down.
- Never submerge a knife in water – hold the handle.
- Keep handles in good shape. Tighten or replace loose ones.
- Use the right knife for the job.
- Cut away from the body.
- Use a cutting board or block when chopping or slicing.

Falls and strains

- Wipe up spills immediately, because spilled or dropped food, grease, oil, and/or water can be extremely slippery.
- Clean floors on a daily basis.
- Keep aisles and passageways clear at all times.
- Repair holes and rough spots; provide ramps over pipes and other fixed obstructions.
- Remove tripping hazards like cords and hoses and store 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 objects on lower shelves, preferably at waist level, and place lighter items on high shelves.
- Always use the proper ladder and make sure it’s in safe condition.

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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 the 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 anything into the machine, use gentle pressure.
- When using grinders and tenderizers, use a push stick to feed the machine, never use your fingers.

Fire hazards

- Know the location of fire extinguishers and the sprinklers, and now how to use them.
- Vent ovens and other gas fired unites before lighting them.
- Report all gas leaks immediately and don't try to make repairs.
- Make sure pilot lights on ovens, water heaters, stoves and other appliances are properly adjusted, and that burners light immediately when 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 pots, pressure cookers

- Every day be sure to check the safety valves to make sure they are unplugged and in operating condition. Be certain that nothing is obstructing the pressure gauge opening, or the opening to the safety plug.
- Be sure that you thoroughly understand the operating instructions for these machines.
- To ensure safety of employees, operating valves should be identified with permanent (metal) tags to show their function.
- Be sure that all new employees are properly trained on these and all equipment that is used.

Make sure to lead by example. It is unreal to expect an employee to use proper work methods and follow rules that are being broken by a supervisor or co-worker.

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