



Waitstaff Health and Safety Training Program



Objectives

This program aims to provide practical advice for employers on how to reduce health and safety risks associated with food service work. It summarizes employers' responsibilities and includes a checklist for both employers and staff. The main risks of injury to food service staff include slips, trips, cuts, burns, and injuries from lifting heavy or awkward loads. Many injuries in restaurants and dining areas can be prevented by following simple safety procedures.

Employer's responsibilities

Employers must:

- Ensure the health and safety of employees, contractors, and customers affected by their food service activities.
- Conduct risk assessments to identify risks and implement control measures.
- Discuss health and safety with employees or their appointed representatives.

- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves and other necessary protective gear.
- Offer adequate first-aid facilities.
- Provide relevant training and information on risks to all staff, including temporary workers.
- Ensure adequate and experienced staff are available to supervise operations.
- Establish emergency procedures for fire, accidents, robbery, etc.

Temporary staff

Temporary food service workers must be fully briefed on workplace health and safety risks and the steps needed to control them. These staff members may be unfamiliar with the workplace and may have had little or no training in health and safety.

On and off-site venues or events

Risk assessments should be carried out not only for permanent work locations but also for temporary venues. Employers should inspect the venue beforehand to identify potential risks and

prepare control measures before the event. Ensure all locations meet health and safety requirements, such as adequate lighting, sufficient space for staff and customers to move in between tables and safe electrical equipment.

Waitstaff checklist

The following checklist can be used by food service managers to brief staff or by staff as a reminder of good practices:



Site layout

Alert staff to specific hazards such as low ceilings, uneven flooring, and ramps.

Cleaning restaurant equipment

- **Silverware:** Always wear gloves when using cleaning agents and follow manufacturer instructions.
- **Knives:** Wipe on the blunt side, carry with the blade pointing down, and avoid leaving knives in water-filled sinks.
- **Glassware:** Handle rims with care, especially when chilled.
- **Crockery and other service dishes:** Avoid overstacking to prevent falls and overloads.

Laying up

- Ensure tables are secure before placing equipment or food on them.
- Use containers or baskets for carrying cutlery and handle knives by the handle only.

- Use purpose-designed baskets or trays for carrying large numbers of glasses.

Carrying trays and lifting loads

- Distribute items evenly on trays and carry only comfortable weights.
- Ask for help with heavy or awkward loads and ensure the route is clear before moving.

Coffee machines

- Operate only when fully trained and follow manufacturer instructions.

Flammable and potentially explosive materials.

- Handle only when fully trained and store away from heat and direct sunlight.
- Follow instructions when filling or replacing gas cylinders and use matches and tapers for lighting.

Staff dress

- **Footwear:** Wear stable, properly fitting footwear to reduce slip, trip, and fall risks.
- **Clothing:** Avoid long, trailing skirts and loose, long sleeves, which can catch on door handles and the backs of customers' chairs.
- **Hair:** Tie back long hair to prevent contact with flames or getting caught.

Food and drink service

- **Swing doors:** Be aware of entry and exit routes and approach with caution.
- **Carrying trays or platters:** Ensure loads are secure, distributed evenly, and comfortable to carry.
- **Carrying liquids:** Do not overfill containers.
- **Carrying hot dishes or plates:** Use a dry, thick cloth and warn customers if items are hot.
- **Sparkling wine:** Control cork release by turning the bottle, not the cork.
- **Dumb waiters:** Use only after receiving instructions and never override interlocks.
- **Customers:** Be aware of sudden

movements and handle drunk or aggressive customers appropriately.

- **Spillages:** Clean immediately or close the area off until cleaned.

Cleaning away from the table

- Use stable trays and avoid overloading them.
- Stack plates of the same size together and never stack cups more than two high.
- Use separate trays for clearing glasses and handle broken items carefully.

End of services

- Turn off flambé lamps and snuff out candles.
- Check for discarded cigarettes and switch off electrical equipment.
- Avoid stacking furniture on fire escape routes or in corridors.

Emergencies

- Know the procedures for accidents, fires, and other emergencies.

By adhering to these guidelines, food service workers and employers can significantly reduce workplace risks and create a safer environment for all.

Review Questions

1. What are some of the primary 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 lighting, sufficient space for staff and customers to move in between tables and safe electrical equipment.
3. To prevent slips, trips, and falls.



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