

SERVING UP SAFETY:

A Health and Safety Tip Sheet for School Food Service Employees



Whether preparing food, serving food, or keeping the cafeteria clean, you provide nourishing meals so that children can thrive in the classrooms and on the playground. When you take care of your own health and safety at work, you avoid disruptions in your life, and can continue providing this important service to students.

A little planning will go a long way toward making your work environment safer. These three steps will help you get started:

1. Identify job hazards
2. Work towards solutions
3. Follow up and share your successes

Step 1. Identify job hazards

The chart on the following pages lists many of the common hazards that affect food service employees. Use this chart to identify the hazards relevant to your work. Talk to your co-workers to find out if they have similar concerns. Report any hazards to your supervisor.

Step 2. Work towards solutions

The chart also offers tips for reducing hazards. Develop a plan to implement the changes that are needed. Some suggestions:

- Assess what changes you can make on your own, and what you need your employer or supervisor to do.
- When possible, work together with your school's site safety coordinator, union, and co-workers.
- Share your ideas with your supervisor.
- Workplace hazards can be reduced or eliminated by: (1) removing the hazard (preferable); (2) instituting policies and procedures that reduce the hazard; and/or (3) using personal protective equipment.
- Find out if there are laws that support the change you need.

* Did you know?

- School employees as a whole have a higher rate of work-related injuries and illnesses than do other California workers.
- Some of the most common injuries among food service employees are caused by knives, slicers, grinders, food processors, broken glass, and dishware.
- Food service employees suffer from overexertion, often caused by lifting, and are sometimes injured by slips, trips, and falls.
- Employees working in central kitchens may be at greater risk of injury.



A HEALTH AND SAFETY TIP SHEET FOR SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Common Job Hazards and Safety Tips for School Food Service Employees

Sharp Objects

Food service employees are often in contact with knives, slicers, grinders, food processors, broken glass, and other sharp objects. Here are some tips to prevent injuries from sharp objects:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use knives that are the right size and type for your task. • Keep knives sharp. • Place a damp cloth under your cutting board to prevent slipping. When cutting, tuck in fingers on the hand that is holding the food. • If you are doing a lot of cutting, wear cut-resistant gloves that cover the wrists, fit well, and have sturdy, tightly-woven seams. • Do not place sharp objects in sinks filled with soapy water. • Before using a machine (such as a slicer), make sure machine guards are in place. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep hands, face, hair, clothing, and jewelry away from moving machine parts. • Designate one clearly-marked trash can for broken glass and sharp can lids. • Store glasses, bottles, and dishware away from areas with a lot of foot traffic. • Unplug machines before cleaning them. • Follow steps for proper lock out/tag out when cleaning or servicing equipment. Turn off and disconnect the equipment. Make sure the source of power has a lock or a tag. |
|--|---|

Chemicals

Products used to clean kitchens and cafeterias can be very toxic.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out what chemicals you use in your work. • Ask your supervisor to provide less toxic chemicals when possible. • Dilute chemicals (such as disinfectant) according to the manufacturer's directions. • Open windows and doors, if possible. • Make sure all chemicals you use are labeled and that you have a Safety Data Sheet (SDS)* for each product. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not mix chemicals unless instructed to by the manufacturer. • Close all containers, especially spray bottles, when not in use. • Ask your supervisor for chemicals training, including how to use gloves, respirators or other protective gear, as indicated by the SDS. Be familiar with the emergency plan in case of a chemical accident. |
|--|---|

***What is an SDS?** An SDS is a Safety Data Sheet prepared by the manufacturer of a chemical or product. It provides detailed information about a chemical, such as how to protect yourself (including the use of gloves, respirators, or other protective gear), how to store the chemical, and what to do in an emergency. Your supervisor must provide the SDS on request.



Hot Surfaces

Stove tops, ovens, broilers, grills, deep fryers, and microwave ovens can cause burns.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make sure grills and other hot surfaces have built-in guard bars.• Avoid overcrowding on range tops.• Set pot handles away from burners, and make sure they do not stick out over the edge of the range.• Use potholders, gloves, or heat-resistant mitts when checking food on the stove, placing food in boiling water, or reaching into ovens and broilers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Never use wet material (like a damp towel) as a potholder.• Use splash guards on fryers. Reduce splattering by drying wet food and brushing off ice crystals before placing food in the fryer basket. |
|---|--|

Slips and Falls

Slippery or uneven walking surfaces are the most common causes of slips and falls in schools.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clean up food debris on floors immediately. If this is not possible, place a warning cone on the area until debris can be removed.• Use non-slip stable floor mats in wet areas.• Use warning signs to keep people off wet floors.• Keep walkways and work areas free of clutter. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Always use a ladder or footstool to reach for objects. Never use a box or cart. Ask for help if needed.• When using a ladder, put the ladder on a stable, dry surface. Make sure it is fully open and locked. Do not stand on the top two rungs of the ladder.• Make sure shelves and storage racks are stable and secured.• Wear shoes with non-skid soles. |
|--|---|

A HEALTH AND SAFETY TIP SHEET FOR SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE EMPLOYEES




Ergonomic Hazards

These are caused by poor job design that results in sprains, strains, and other wear and tear on the body. Ergonomic hazards include: lifting or pushing heavy objects, bending to take things out of the oven, and repetitive chopping or dicing.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use smaller, lighter bus pans and trays. • Store heavy items in easy-to-reach areas to avoid overreaching or bending. • Push carts instead of pulling them, when possible. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use floor mats to protect against constant impact with hard surfaces. • Obtain the SASH ergonomics fact sheet for additional practical tips. |
|--|---|

Infectious Diseases

You could be exposed to many different viruses and bacteria, such as the common cold, flu, HIV, and Hepatitis B.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you may come into contact with blood or other bodily fluids: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - wear disposable gloves; - wash your hands with soap and water; and - disinfect any equipment or work areas that are affected. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands frequently.  |
|--|---|

Adapted from: Small Business Resources: Restaurants, Worker Occupational Safety and Health Training and Education Program, Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation, 2009.



Step 3. Follow up and share your successes

Once you've identified the hazards and solutions, follow up to make sure the changes are implemented. Contact your district's or school's safety coordinator for help or suggestions. Share your successes with your co-workers and your supervisor.

School Site Safety Coordinator

The person in charge of health and safety at your school is:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

District Resource

The person in charge of health and safety at your district is:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Reporting Injuries and Illnesses

It is important to report work-related injuries and illnesses. You cannot be discriminated against or punished for doing so. If you have a work-related injury or illness, contact:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

To learn more....

Go to the SASH website at www.dir.ca.gov/CHSWC/SASH and click on Hazards by Occupation. Or call 510-642-5507.

* Safety Pays

Although resources are limited in school districts, some solutions do not require extra money.

Preventing injuries can actually SAVE lives and SAVE money by:

- reducing workers' compensation claims;
- avoiding loss in productivity when injuries occur; and
- improving employee morale!