

Restaurant Guide to Hand Injury Prevention

Hand injuries are the second most frequent occupational injury after slips, trips and falls for employees in the restaurant business. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly 24,000 restaurant workers lost at least a day of work in 2003 because of a cut, burn or scald to the hands. The numbers also include amputations to the finger related to misuse of cutting equipment, such as slicers, choppers and band saws.

OSHA estimates that hand injuries cost the foodservice industry about \$300 million a year in workers compensation costs and lost work time.

- Common causes of cuts and lacerations include working with cutting tools, including knives, box openers, slicers, peelers. Handling broken glass can also contribute to these injuries.
- Common causes of burn and scalding injuries include working around hot grease/oil, hot water/steam, hot cooking equipment (fryers, ovens, grills and stoves), hot plates and when performing tableside cooking.

Employees who work in the kitchen area should be trained in hand safety, including wearing hand protection, safe use of powered and nonpowered cutting, grinding, mixing and blending equipment and safe work practices around hot cooking equipment, grease and water.

Establish safe handling procedures and train employees on all appropriate equipment. Instruct employees in the safe, proper care of knives and cutting tools. This should include enforcement of the following:

Knives

- Create wash procedures for knives.
- Offer proper storage for knives— not in the sink or in places where they are not clearly visible.
- Use appropriate knives for specific jobs.
- Keep knives and other cutting tools in good condition.
- Use cutting gloves.
- Use kitchen knives only for cutting food and never for opening cans or boxes.
- Secure cutting boards by putting damp towels between the board and the countertop.
- Hold the knife by its handle at all times. With the other hand, hold the food firmly against the cutting board, with fingers tucked under the hand.
- Stop cutting if interrupted. Stay focused on the task at hand.
- Use the proper knife for the job.



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- Carry knives in their sheaths or protective cases whenever possible. Keep the blades pointed down, with the cutting edge angled slightly away from the body.
- Clean knives one at a time with the blade pointed way from the body. Be especially careful when cleaning the cutting edge. Scrub the sides of the knife to clean the knife blade. Do not directly scrub the cutting edge. Do not leave knives soaking under water where they cannot be seen.
- Store knives when not in use in counter racks, knife storage blocks or magnetized wall racks.

Mechanical Devices

- Place safety guards on mechanical devices such as slicers, cutters and mixers, and keep them in good condition.
- Turn off and/or unplug machines before cleaning or adjusting them. Keep fingers, hands, spoons, bowls and knives away from moving parts. Do not remove food until the machine comes to a complete stop.
- Ensure electrical appliances are in the “off” position before plugging them into an outlet. Establish lockout guidelines if needed.

Broken Glassware and Serrated Edges

- Safely discard chipped, cracked or broken glassware.
- Never use drinking glasses to scoop food or ice. Only use commercial food grade plastic or metal scoops with handles.
- Wear gloves or use a towel when removing lids from glass bottles or jars. Never use a knife to remove a jar lid.
- Continually inspect glasses and dishware and throw them away if chipped or cracked.
- When cleaning up broken glass:
 - » Wear safety glasses when necessary.
 - » Wear protective gloves. Never pick up glass with your bare hands.
 - » Always use a dustpan and broom.
 - » Never throw broken glass into a food-designated garbage can or put it down a drain.
 - » Provide a specific container for broken glass.
- Throw can lids away instead of recycling because of their sharp edges.
- Cover the sharp, serrated strip on commercial plastic wrap and aluminium foil with the top of the box or some other guard when it is not being used. Note: Some supply operators have guards to go over the serrated strip and will provide them at no cost.

Machine Guarding

Cuts, lacerations, punctures and amputations, primarily to the fingers, are major injuries for food preparers who use powered equipment such as blenders, mixers, meat grinders and whippers.

- Machine guards should be used where available.
- Employees should not wear loose clothing or jewelry when operating powered equipment.
- Equipment should not be energized when cleaning or repairing.
- Under the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), workers younger than 18 years of age are prohibited from operating, setting up, adjusting, cleaning, oiling or repairing power-driven meat slicers, grinders, choppers, cutters and bakery mixers and other power-driven bakery machines.
 - » Such equipment should be labeled with sticker alerts warning against operation by anyone under 18 years of age.
 - » The DOL provides free stickers for this purpose on its Youth Rules web site at <http://www.youthrules.dol.gov>

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Burn Prevention Guidelines

- Provide proper protective equipment such as gloves, aprons, potholders and wooden utensils to prevent burns. Enforce the use of this equipment.
- Check and maintain cooking and heating equipment on a regular basis and repair them promptly.
- Train employees on the proper use of cooking equipment.
- Insulate exposed steam and hot water lines.
- Maintain and enforce adequate work space, work flow and traffic patterns around cooking and heating devices.
 - » Ground all electrical equipment, including all small appliances, such as blenders and coffee makers.
 - » Determine whether or not your establishment needs personal protective equipment (PPE) that resists grease and heat to at least 400 degrees.
 - » When draining and filtering oil from deep fryers, the best protection is a filtration suit, which provides full-body protection against spills. They should have a liquid vapor barrier.
 - » Filter oil at the start of each day before using deep fryers. If you add fresh solid fat after filtering, melt it in a large pot before adding it to the oil already in the fryer. This avoids splashing and possible flames.
 - » In general, cool oil to 100 degrees or lower. Drain the oil into containers made especially for this task. Do not use plastic because they can melt and leak. Mark the containers and place in areas away from traffic, sharp objects and heat sources while it cools.
 - » Take care with cleaning products that can cause chemical burns if handled improperly. Follow the guidelines on Material Safety Data Sheets for appropriate PPE and safety precautions.

Should you have any questions or need further assistance, please visit our website, send an email or call us.



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