



## Managing Occupational Health and Safety in the Hospitality Industry

Most small employers know that occupational health, safety and welfare is important, but many employers never seem to find the time or money to attend to it. Many small employers don't look seriously at their workplace health and safety until something serious happens to a staff member. By then it may be too late and the costs may be enough to close your business.

So what is occupational health, safety and welfare, and what does it mean to you as a small employer?

Occupational health, safety and welfare is the management of hazards associated with your work so that your staff do not get hurt. In the same way that you have a duty of care to your customers if you want your business to succeed, you also have a duty of care to your staff for their health and safety.

As an employer you have to set up a system that manages health and safety so that your staff will not get injured. You must also have a plan in place to manage any injury or illness that does occur so that the worker can get back to work as soon as possible.

It all sounds costly doesn't it?

It can be but the costs of not having a system in place can be much worse. Having an accident and an injury at work will cost you in at least three ways. You should stop and think about these costs for a while.

As the owner of a small business you may believe that occupational health, safety and welfare is one of those things that bigger businesses have to worry about. You may feel that it is too complicated and costly for you as a small business to be involved with. None of your staff have ever had a serious injury and anyway, you've worked in the industry for years and never been injured. A bit of common sense and everything will be OK!

Right?

Wrong! If you employ people, occupational health, safety and welfare is important to your business. As an employer you have a duty of care to your staff to make sure they are not injured because of their work activities.

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## 1. Money

The real reason you are in business is to make money, and it is the one thing that you are sure to lose if you have accidents and injured staff. Every time somebody in your workplace has an injury it will cost you money. In fact, you could even lose your business over just one injury!

Even the small injuries, where there is no claim and no lost time will cost you. Just the time that two people take putting a band-aid on a cut will cost you money. And when you actually have to make a claim the cost can get even bigger.

## 2. People

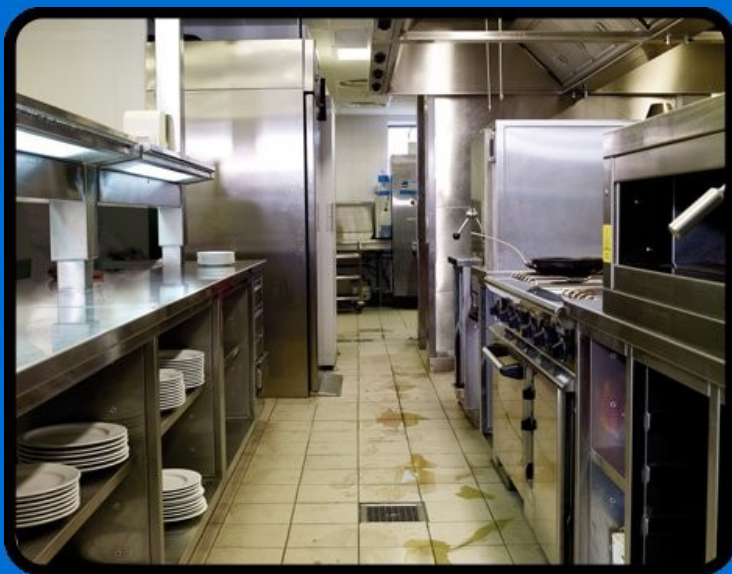
Reliable staff are hard to find. Training them to work the way you like takes time. When one of your staff can't come to work you have lost that resource either for the short term or possibly even the long term. If several of your staff get injured how are the rest going to feel? Good staff may go to where they get better looked after.

## 3. Time

Finally, you will also be losing time — your time, in the process of replacing that staff member. Time spent in investigating accidents is lost time.

### What should I do?

There are a few simple steps you can take to improve your occupational health, safety and welfare practices.



### Know your Duties

You have a duty of care to your customers, to your staff and to other visitors to your establishment to make sure they are not injured or affected by the activities of your work.

The main things you have to do are to:

- provide a safe place of work - The work environment such as the kitchen, customer areas and back of house or bar areas must be free of hazards and associated risks to the health and safety of your staff.
- provide a safe system of work - This means the way the work is done, the work instructions and procedures that are used by your staff.
- provide safe plant and equipment - This means the cookers, mixers, washers and even the hand tools such as knives and other implements have to be provided in safe condition and maintained in that condition.

- make sure your staff get training and supervision for the job they are doing You cannot just hire a staff member and leave them to do their job. You have to provide training in the way you want that person to do their job and for a period of time you should provide supervision to help them do the job.
- provide adequate welfare facilities - You need to make sure that your staff have access to adequate meals areas, toilets and first aid facilities.

It does not matter whether your staff are family members, part time, full-time, casual or temporary, or even whether or not they are being paid — you must make sure that they are not put at risk because of the work they do for you.

You have to:

- keep records of accidents, injuries and any training you provide
- give your staff information about hazards they may have to work with.
- Write a Policy—The law requires that you have documentation to prove that you are complying with your legal requirements. Firstly, you will need a written statement of your intention to keep the workplace safe. This is called a policy and it does not have to be complex.
- The policy has to— state clearly that you are committed to occupational health, safety and welfare for all your staff, show that you intend to satisfy your legal obligations and say what you intend to achieve from safety.

### Involve your Staff (Consultation)

You need to involve your staff for many reasons:

- The law requires that you consult with them.
- Your staff are one of the best ways of identifying hazards in the work place.
- You will get more support from your staff if they know what you are doing and are involved from the beginning.

This does not have to be a complicated or formal system and can best be done by simply talking to your staff:

- before or after work
- while you are having a cup of coffee
- while you are getting things set up for the day or cleaning up at the end of it.

The consultation does not have to be a formal meeting. It does need to be meaningful and you should maintain records.

### Managing Hazards

**See it** - Walk around the workplace with your staff and look for hazards. Use a checklist and make a list of all the hazards you can see.

**Assess it** - Once you have your list, think about how long and how often you or your staff will be exposed to the hazard and what might happen.

**Fix it** - Develop and put in place controls that will reduce the risk of somebody being hurt. Fix it before it causes damage

**Evaluate it** - Review how effective the control that you put in place was and consider whether or not you need to take any further action.

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## Hazards in the Catering and Hospitality Sector

- **Carrying hot oil**  
Emptying oil from some deep fat fryers can be difficult. Make sure you and your staff follow the manufacturers instructions to do this work safely.
- **Food spill**  
Food or cooking oil spills are one of the main causes of slips in kitchens. We all need to be vigilant and clean up any spilt substance that could cause an accident. Take a look in your workplace and see if you can improve how you work.
- **Water overflow or leak**  
An over flowing sink or a leak, no matter how your water is escaping, it can be a serious slip hazard especially on smooth floor. Stop it from getting onto the floor: turn off taps and fix leaks quickly. Use drip trays or similar as a temporary measure.
- **Floor in poor condition**  
People can trip on damaged floors, if you spot damage arrange for it to be fixed straight away, don't put off repairs. As a temporary measure, high-light the damaged area, report it and where possible keep staff away from the damage.
- **Trip hazards**  
An unexpected obstacle in your path can cause a bad trip and fall. People need a clear space to work, so make sure boxes, bags, cables and other obstacles aren't left hanging around. Storage should always be provided for incoming deliveries and bags.

## Identifying Hazards (See it)

A hazard is anything that may cause injury or illness to you, your staff, or your customers either in the short or the long term.

There are three ways you can do this:

1. Inspect the workplace with your staff using a checklist. The inspections are not done to pick fault, they are to identify hazards that may pose a risk to the people working in the area.
2. Talk with your staff about the hazards they have seen or know of in their work environment.
3. Accidents and accident data can also be very useful for identifying where hazard areas are.

Next you need to create a list of the hazards you have identified in your workplace called a Hazard Register. The Hazard Register may change from time to time as your workplace and processes change and you need to set up a regular habit of

fix immediately.

Hazards that rank medium — you need to be fixed but are perhaps not that urgent.

Hazards that low — may not require fixing as the risk may be negligible.

## Controlling Risks (Fix It - Early)

The aim is to eliminate or minimise the risks.

There is usually some cost involved though and you have to select the best way to control the hazard depending on your resources and the level of risk.

## Elimination

As a preferred option you should try to get rid of the hazard completely. Example: A damaged mat or carpet that is posing a tripping hazard may be able to be removed completely.

## Substitution

If that is not possible you may be able to substitute the hazard with a less hazardous option. Example: You may be using a very toxic



## Assess the Risks

Risk is a combination of the likelihood that the hazard will cause an injury and the severity of the injury.

First you have to determine how likely it is that someone may be exposed to the hazard. Then you consider how severe the potential injury or illness may be and you work out the severity.

Anything that you rank as high — you need to

cleaning agent and you may find that either you don't really need to use it at all, or there is a less toxic one available that does the job just as well.

## Engineering

Many times you will find that you need to do the job, or use the substance or equipment. In this case you should consider engineering or re-engineering to minimise the likelihood of an accident or to keep people away from the hazard in the event of an accident. Examples of engineering controls include placing guards

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over mixers to stop people's hands getting caught, shields over fryers and over hot areas or extraction units to get rid of air born pollutants.

## Administrative

Administrative changes may include making changes in the way the job is done, introduce shorter task shifts, ensure equipment are maintained regularly, provide instruction or training. Examples are you may decide to keep another person back for half an hour after closing to count the till or you may count most of it before you actually close.

## Personal Protection

There are some jobs, especially in kitchens, where your staff are going to have to wear personal protective equipment such as gloves or non-slip shoes. It is your duty to supply this equipment, which your staff must wear and use. This can be a good short-term solution but in the long run can be expensive. However, there are some jobs where they is no alternative but to wear the protective equipment.

## Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Controls

Once you have developed the control and put in place you have to review what you have done to make sure it has minimised the risk.

You should also consult your staff on whether or not they think it is any better. The evaluation process is very similar to the identification process and will not only review the success of the controls but will also identify other problems or hazards.

## Inform your Staff

Once you have worked out what you are going to do to reduce the risks, you need to inform your staff. Make sure all your staff are aware of the controls and that they use them.

You must inform your staff of their duties under the law as well as requirements for health and safety in your business.

## Induction

You should provide induction training for all your new staff before they start work. That induction training will have to include information about how you manage safety and what they are expected to do to work safely.

## Keep Records

Keep records of what you have done and how you are managing the hazards.

The records should include:

- accident investigation records and data
- inspection checklists
- consultation records.

## Training Records

You need to consider what training your staff need, ensure that they get that training and maintain records.

## Monitor and Review Safety

Managing occupational health, safety and welfare is an ongoing process. You should make sure that you continually review your business activities to make sure it is safe for your employees.



## Major risks

Accident statistics show that the main risk areas for this industry are caused by slips and trips and manual handling accidents. The main cause of occupational ill health is from work related contact dermatitis.

### Stop slips in kitchens

Slips and trips remain the single most common cause of major injury in UK workplaces. In 2006/07 the hospitality industry had 558 major accidents caused by slips and trips. The occupations most affected were kitchen assistants, chefs, and waiting staff.

### Musculoskeletal disorders in catering and hospitality

Manual handling accounts for the second highest cause of accidents in the hospitality industry. In 2006/07 there were 159 major injuries and 1356 over-3-day injuries resulting from lifting and carrying loads, pushing pulling and handling materials, and injuries from sprains and strains.

### Work related contact dermatitis

Work-related contact dermatitis is a skin disease caused by work. It is often called eczema and develops when the skin's barrier layer is damaged. This leads to redness, itching, swelling, blistering, flaking and cracking. The most susceptible parts of the body are the hands, followed by the forearms and face. It can be severe enough to keep you off work or even force you to change jobs.

Contact dermatitis is one of the main causes of ill health for catering staff (chefs, cooks and catering assistants) with the number of new cases per year being twice the general industry average. Work-related ill health can cost more than twice as much as an accident causing the injury.

### You can prevent dermatitis developing with a few simple measures:

Avoid contact with cleaning products, food and water where possible, e.g. use a dishwasher rather than washing up by hand, use utensils rather than hands to handle food. Protect your skin.

Where you can, wear gloves when working with substances that can cause dermatitis and moisturise your hands to replenish the skin's natural oils.

Check your hands regularly for the early stages of dermatitis, i.e. itchy, dry or red skin.

These symptoms should be reported to a supervisor, as treatment is much more effective if dermatitis is caught early

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