



# SOS Safety Solutions

When Safety Matters, SOS Delivers



# SAFETY IN THE FOOD SERVICE INDUSTRY

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The food service industry presents a variety of challenges pertaining to employee safety. Exposures can include lacerations, burns, strains, sprains, and contusions. Food service employees are expected to prepare meals and beverages for customers and patrons quickly.

This sometimes creates a culture that places safety at the bottom of the priority list in favor of customer satisfaction. While it may seem counterintuitive, a safe kitchen will be more productive and will attain higher customer satisfaction than an unsafe kitchen.

## Knife Safety



Cuts and lacerations are typically considered part of the territory in the food service industry. These types of injuries do not need to occur.

There are many ways to prevent cuts and lacerations, including best practices and personal protective equipment when necessary.

- Never leave knives out when you are done using them
  - Unattended knives are hazardous as coworkers may not be aware that they are there and may strike the blade
- Do not place knives in the sink
  - Immediately clean knives and place them in their designated storage location
- Always cut away from the body
  - It may seem more practical or easier at the time to pull a blade toward yourself, but if the blade slips, it may result in a cut
  - When possible, keep items being cut on a surface such as a cutting board or another work surface
- Keep knives sharp
  - A sharp knife is a safe knife
  - When using a dull knife, additional force may be used, and the blade may not cut as efficiently and slip
- When cleaning commercial slicers cut-resistant gloves are recommended





Heat is critical to preparing meals. There are many different pieces of equipment used to cook or heat food including stoves, fryers, grills, and ovens. Caution and respect must be used when cooking, frying, grilling, etc.

- When frying it is imperative to make sure food is free of any water before being lowered into oil to avoid excessive spattering or violent reactions
- Food should be placed in a basket and lowered into oil, not thrown in from heights
- Oven mitts or 100% cotton towels should be used when handling hot pans, skillets, baking sheets, etc.
  - If using towels, it is important to verify that it is 100% cotton; synthetic materials may melt and cause severe burns
- Do not leave burners on when not in use
  - This may create the potential for someone to be burned if working around the stove

## Slips, Trips, and Falls



Slips, trips, and falls are a constant challenge in a commercial kitchen. The combination of potential spills, aerosolized oil from frying, sauteing, or grilling and the hustle and bustle of a busy kitchen are a recipe for disaster. Slips, trips, and falls are completely preventable and should not be an accepted part of the industry.

- Basic housekeeping is the best defense against these types of incidents
  - Immediately addressing spills or dropped food items
  - Regularly scheduled cleaning keeps oils and messes from building up
    - While it is important to immediately address spills, tasks such as floor mopping should be scheduled around the busy times in the kitchen as much as possible as the wet surface created by mopping can create a slip hazard as well
  - Wet floor signs should be used as necessary to bring awareness to a slip hazard
- Anti-slip shoes are recommended to be a requirement to be in the kitchen area
- While not a quick fix, non-slip floor coatings may be considered to improve the overall slip resistance in the area



# Strains, and Sprains



Another injury type that may be common in the food industry is strain and sprain type injuries. Food shipments and deliveries typically include large heavy boxes, cans, and bags. These can all present different challenges when unloading trucks and stocking freezers, coolers, and shelves.

- Whenever possible use tools and equipment such as a dolly, hand cart, etc. to assist with the transportation of product to its destination
- Prepare for the physical activity of lifting and carrying products
  - Lightly stretch the body including legs, arms, shoulders, and torso to loosen up
- When it is time to lift items, remember to use proper body mechanics
  - Do not bend at the waist
  - Maintain a neutral posture keeping a slight arch in the lower back and brace your core
  - Lift with your legs
  - Keep items close to your body
  - Do not twist your torso at any point when lifting or carrying items

## Conclusion



While the goal of the food service industry is customer satisfaction, it is important to put employee safety first. Without employees, the service industry cannot thrive. Safe employees will be able to provide the level of service required to attain the satisfaction of the customer.

## Key Takeaways

- Incident and injuries are PREVENTABLE, not part of the job
- Efficiency is important in the service industry, if an employee is injured efficiency is affected greatly
- Best practices and thinking through a task can help prevent injuries

