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Target Audience:
All FOD Inspectors

REVITALISING ACTIONS IN CATERING AND HOSPITALITY

This SIM reminds inspectors of the need to consider catering operations during inspections as this activity generates a rate of injuries comparable with manufacturing industry generally, most from slips and manual handling. The HSE/local authority industry wide national liaison committee has drawn up an action plan to produce, promote and disseminate guidance and other material to help influence employers. Inspectors can contribute to this by focussing on the priority areas and practical precautions, rather than employers' ability to produce paperwork on risk assessment and safety policy. This will be particularly important in small businesses.

1 Around 5000 accidents are reported annually to enforcing authorities by the hospitality and catering industry. Most of these happen in local authority enforced premises, but a significant number occur in HSE enforced premises - around 2000 accidents each year occur to cooks, catering assistants, kitchen porters and waiting staff. Taking the known degree of under reporting into account, it can be estimated that 25000 accidents annually occur across industry in this area of activity.

2 For several years the national liaison committee has produced guidance in the form of information sheets highlighting the priority areas for attention and giving practical guidance. These are distributed through trade associations, local authority inspecting departments, catering colleges as well as at exhibitions and in response to enquiries; many are also downloaded from the HSE website (www.hse.gov.uk, free leaflets, C for catering) every month. Links with several trade websites guide users directly to the information sheets.

3 Since 1997 reported injury rates have fallen 27%. This work continues to evolve and improve and latterly, in response to the Revitalising Health and Safety (RHS) agenda, HSE has encouraged committee members to work more independently to an action plan recently agreed (www.hse.gov.uk/fod/foodent/revital3.pdf). This builds on past achievements and HSE's and local authorities' contribution will continue, centrally supporting the committee itself, but increasingly to ensure that inspectors contribute to the committee's effort, by focussing in day-to-day work on the priority areas for action and practical solutions.

4 Across the industry, 75% of major injuries are caused by slips, falls, struck by and strike/step on kinds of accident. Eighty per cent of over-3-day injuries arise from slips, manual handling, exposure to hot/toxic substances and being struck by something. Dermatitis is the main health risk, along with upper limb disorders where there are retail sales. Catering sheets amplify these points and contain relevant guidance.

5 The industry generates many small businesses where intense competition and the struggle to simply survive relegate the finer points of legal compliance to the back burner. Many small caterers have made clear in research projects that written risk assessment and safety policies are just so much red tape; many have never heard of HSE, let alone the intricacies of the Management (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1999. Inspectors need to appreciate this background and direct energy into practical precautions, rather than labouring the law's administrative requirements, if real improvements are to be made.

6 Hopefully by adopting this approach, using the law where necessary to obtain improvements, and along with the national efforts of the committee and other stakeholders, real progress in reducing harm will continue. Annual reporting on the industry performance will continue in order to monitor progress.

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