

Managing risk in catering and hospitality: Your responsibilities

HSE information sheet

Catering Information Sheet No 25

Introduction

This information sheet was produced by the Hospitality and Catering Industry Liaison Forum, which has members from trade and professional associations, unions and enforcement authorities. Members' associations are free to reproduce and distribute this guidance to catering establishments. The guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive.

Health and safety law applies to all businesses, no matter how small. As an employer or self-employed person, **you** are responsible for health and safety in your business. The nature and extent of the risks in each workplace will vary, as will the work required to manage them. Sensible risk management is about managing real risk by implementing sensible and proportionate precautions and disregarding the trivial.

This guidance is aimed at employers and those who want some basic information on what to do to make sure their catering and hospitality business complies with health and safety law.

This guidance is only about health and safety. It is not intended to cover food safety or hygiene requirements.

Why is health and safety important in catering and hospitality?

Businesses in the catering and hospitality sector report many major injuries to HSE every year. Beyond the obvious human costs, accidents also cost money and time – people off work, material costs and damage to buildings, equipment or product.

It is important to manage health and safety because it:

- prevents injury and ill health to your business's most important resource, people;
- contributes to a content and productive workforce;
- makes economic sense by reducing accidents and their costs.

Effective management of health and safety can best be achieved by:

- realising it is an integral and essential part of business management;
- identifying the main risk areas and taking action on those while disregarding trivial risks;
- setting yourself clear targets, for example to train staff and clearly allocate responsibilities;
- supervising adequately;
- consulting staff at all stages.

What are the main risks?

Individual workplaces exhibit their own patterns of risk, but the main causes of accidents and ill health in the catering industry are:

- slips, trips and falls;
- lifting and manual handling;
- contact with hot surfaces and harmful substances;
- cuts;
- dermatitis;
- upper limb disorders.

You can prevent most accidents through good management, supervision and effective training, which makes accident prevention no different from any other aspect of running a successful business. Thought and planning applied to those areas of catering where the risks are highest will help you to prevent accidents and reduce costs. It will also show enforcement officers that you are striving to comply with health and safety law.

What do you need to do?

Summary of employer's duties

As an employer you have a general duty to ensure the health and safety of your employees and others affected by your business. In particular, you must:

- provide and maintain safe plant and equipment;
- ensure a safe and healthy working environment;
- provide adequate welfare facilities, such as toilets and hot and cold running water;
- provide suitable information, instruction and training for your workers;
- have safe working procedures;
- ensure adequate supervision of your staff;
- prevent or control exposure to hazardous substances and loud noise.

Risk assessment

As part of managing the health and safety of your business, you must control the risks in your workplace. To do this you should think about what might cause harm to people and decide whether you are doing enough to prevent that.

This is known as risk assessment and it is something you are required by law to carry out. If you have fewer than five employees you don't have to write anything down.

Risk assessment is about identifying and taking sensible and proportionate measures to control the risks in your workplace, not about creating huge amounts of paperwork. You are probably already taking steps to protect your employees, but your risk assessment will help you decide whether you should be doing more.

Think about how accidents and ill health could happen and concentrate on real risks – those that are most likely and which will cause the most harm. The following might help:

- Think about your workplace activities, processes and the substances used that could injure your employees or harm their health.
- Ask your employees what they think the hazards are, as they may notice things that are not obvious to you and may have some good ideas on how to control the risks.
- Check manufacturers' instructions or data sheets

for chemicals and equipment, as they can be very helpful in spelling out the hazards.

- Some workers may have particular requirements, for example new and young workers, migrant workers, new or expectant mothers, people with disabilities, temporary workers, contractors, homeworkers and lone workers.

Having identified the hazards, you then have to decide how likely it is that harm will occur. Risk is a part of everyday life and you are not expected to eliminate all risks. What you must do is make sure you know about the main risks and the things you need to do to manage them responsibly. Generally, you should do everything reasonably practicable to protect people from harm.

Make a record of your significant findings – the hazards, how people might be harmed by them and what you have in place to control the risks. Any record produced should be simple and focused on controls. If you have fewer than five employees you do not have to write anything down. But it is useful to do this so you can review it at a later date, for example if something changes. If you have five or more employees, you are required by law to write it down.

Few workplaces stay the same, so it makes sense to review what you are doing on an ongoing basis.

More guidance on risk assessment can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/risk.

You can find a risk assessment template, example risk assessments and more online tools at www.hse.gov.uk/risk/index.htm.

Take a look at the example risk assessment for catering (www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies/foodprep.htm). It shows what a completed risk assessment might look like for your business. You can use these as a guide when doing your own.

Hazards and other issues in the workplace you may need to consider in your assessment include:

- slips and trips;
- contact with hazardous substances, such as cleaning fluids;
- manual handling of loads;
- work at height;
- maintenance work, for example work which may disturb asbestos;

- electricity;
- gas – natural and LPG;
- young or vulnerable workers;
- temperature and ventilation;
- transport and pedestrian safety.

Competent advice

You must appoint someone competent to help you meet your health and safety duties. A competent person is someone with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to manage health and safety. You could appoint yourself, one or more of your workers, someone from outside your business – or any combination of those.

You probably manage most aspects of your business yourself, or with the help of your staff. But if you are not confident of your ability to manage all health and safety in-house, you may need some external help or advice. Deciding what help you need is very important. Unless you are clear about what you want, you probably won't get the help you need.

Your health and safety policy

Describing how you will manage health and safety in your business will let your staff and others know about your commitment to health and safety. This will be your health and safety policy. It should clearly say who does what, when and how. If you have five or more employees, you must have a written policy. The policy does not need to be complicated or time-consuming. To help you, HSE has created a template at www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/write.htm which you can download and complete.

Training

As an employer, you must consider the health and safety training needs of your employees, including new recruits, young workers, part-timers and temporary or agency staff. You must also consider how you will train employees who do not have English as their first language.

Consult your employees

Consultation is a two-way process, allowing staff to raise concerns and influence decisions on the management of health and safety. Your employees are often the best people to understand risks in the

workplace and involving them in making decisions shows them that you take their health and safety seriously.

In a very small business, you might choose to consult your employees directly. Alternatively, you might consult through a trade union health and safety representative, or an employee representative chosen by your employees. As an employer, you cannot decide who will be the representative.

Other relevant duties

- Provide suitable personal protective equipment where necessary to protect employees against risks you cannot control by other means.
- Carry out health surveillance where appropriate (eg for dermatitis risks, if present).
- Set up emergency procedures, including those for temporary workers (in catering these are only likely to be for fire and gas leaks).
- Coordinate any procedures (ie emergency procedures) and work safely with others (for catering, these are likely to be landlords, other businesses in multi-occupancy sites, maintenance staff and catering engineers).
- Make provision for first aid for employees and facilities relative to your size and risks to cover the first-aid needs of your employees.
- Display specified safety signs for remaining risks.
- Have details available of your employers' liability insurance.
- Record and report some work-related accidents, dangerous occurrences and cases where employees have contracted an occupational disease. Full lists of the types of injuries, dangerous occurrences, gas incidents and occupational diseases that must be reported under RIDDOR can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/guidance.htm.
- If you employ anyone, you must display the health and safety law poster, or provide each worker with a copy of the equivalent pocket card. You must display the poster where your workers can easily read it. If you wish to do so, you can also add details of any employee safety representative or health and safety contacts.

Summary of duties

Employees, the self-employed and landlords

Employees must look after their own and others' health and safety, cooperate with their employer and not misuse health and safety equipment.

A self-employed person must ensure their own health and safety, so far as reasonably practicable, and ensure they don't put others at risk.

A landlord or host employer in control of the premises must take reasonable steps to ensure that the premises and equipment used by others, such as contract caterers, are safe and without risk to health, so far as reasonably practicable. The extent of this duty will depend on the extent of control over the premises and the risks present.

The role of enforcement officers

In most catering situations, local authority enforcement officers are responsible for enforcing health and safety law. Inspectors from HSE look after health and safety in catering facilities in institutions such as hospitals, schools etc. The role of the enforcement officer is not just to enforce the law, but also to promote health and safety, give advice on the law and how to comply with it and advise on other sources of information – for example, published and web-based guidance available from HSE.

Further information

HSE has produced a suite of catering information sheets dealing with specific health and safety topics in the catering and hospitality industry. These are available on the HSE website at www.hse.gov.uk/catering/index.htm.

See www.hse.gov.uk/catering/risk.htm for examples of risk assessments for the catering and hospitality industry.

HSE's website provides information, as well as a number of free leaflets and information sheets, that will be useful to help manage risks and comply with legal requirements, particularly *Health and safety made simple: The basics for your business* (www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/index.htm) and the catering and hospitality webpages.

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit www.hse.gov.uk/. You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance.

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