



Health and safety training pays in the catering industry: Guidance for owners and managers

Catering Sheet No 5

This information sheet is part of a series produced by the Health and Safety in the Catering Industry Liaison Committee (details on the Committee are given at the end). It contains practical advice on how employers can meet their legal obligations under current health and safety legislation.

Why should I train?

There is a legal obligation to provide information and training on health and safety to all employees who need it, including full time staff, new recruits and part-timers. Temporary or agency staff, contractors and other visitors should also be given the information they need to conduct their activities in a safe and healthy way. Apart from these legal responsibilities the time and effort spent on training can have its benefits, such as:

- **saving your business time and money:**

there should be less cost and time wasted in:
sickness absence;
compensation claims;
damage to equipment and premises;
lost working time;

- **improving staff morale and feelings of security:**

this can lead to improved:
service;
commitment;
motivation.

What is meant by training?

In this information sheet 'training' means giving people the information they need to work safely, when they need it, and in a form they can understand. It does not necessarily mean carrying out formal 'classroom' sessions or sending staff on courses and seminars, although you may choose to supplement basic training by these methods.

Can I afford it?

Health and safety training can be easy and inexpensive to provide, particularly if combined with other training. Remember, you are not required to turn all your staff into safety officers. You just have to ensure they have sufficient knowledge to be able to work in a safe and healthy way.

Staff undertaking different jobs will have different needs.

It is not necessary to train everyone to the same level. For many, for example food service staff, a brief induction talk with a simple list of do's and don'ts may be sufficient. Those working in more hazardous areas, for example operating kitchen equipment or using cleaning chemicals, may require more detailed information. Supervisors will need a wider range of training.

Some staff, such as head chefs and restaurant supervisors, will have been recruited because of their prior training and experience. Take this into account when planning training. Such staff will normally only need an initial assessment to check their understanding, along with information on situations relevant to your particular premises. However if they have specific roles within your company's safety organisation, they will require training for this role.

When should I train?

Induction

Health and safety should be part of the induction for all staff. It is important to remember, however, that staff settling into a new job do not 'take in' a lot of information at this stage. Keep information short and simple and repeat it later.

Reinforcement

Regular short sessions of 10 minutes or so are probably the best way of ensuring information is understood and remembered. Introduce topics when staff are using new equipment or undertaking new jobs so they can immediately apply what they are being told. Remember that manufacturers and installation/maintenance engineers can be useful sources of information on equipment.

Ongoing

When further training is given will depend on the individual and their job. Consider the tasks you want the individual to perform, assess their abilities, and then think about the information they need to work safely. This will be particularly relevant at changes of job, work methods, equipment or substances used.

What should my health and safety training cover?

The outline given below divides a suggested training programme into two: section 1 for all staff and section 2

for managers and supervisors. In the main, contractors and other visitors should be made aware of any points which relate to the areas where they will be working.

1 All staff

General introduction

Explain your overall approach and commitment to managing health and safety, including establishing and maintaining good health and safety standards. Where applicable, explain the role of safety representatives and committees.

Remind all employees that while at work they have a legal duty to take reasonable care of the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues and others with whom they come in contact and to co-operate with their employer in complying with health and safety requirements.

Key areas

Slips, trips and falls give rise to a third of all reported accidents in catering premises. What information can you give to help prevent this happening in your establishment? Consider floor cleaning, procedures to clean up spillages, and appropriate footwear.

Contact with hot surfaces or harmful substances leads to 16% of reported accidents. Consider what causes burns and scalds. Cover: the safe use of oven cloths - keep them dry and in good condition; safety with hot fat; and the safe use of steamers. Many cleaning agents can cause bad burns: eyes are particularly at risk. What information do you need to provide?

Being struck by an object accounts for a further 12% of reported accidents. Knives are the biggest hazard. Consider their safe use: keep them sharp and clean and always replace in their scabbards when not in use: never leave in a sink or on a drainer.

What other problems do you have?

Be aware of the dangers associated with handling heavy and awkward loads, including cuts caused by sharp edges. Do staff know how to lift properly and, more importantly, when not to even try to lift? Are they aware of available equipment, such as trolleys, and when to use it?

Consider equipment hazards. Again, clear instructions on what *not* to do can often prevent serious harm. Eg 'if the equipment doesn't work, switch it off and report it to your supervisor'.

How are other hazards controlled in your premises, for example: cleaning routines, clear walkways and one-

way systems, lifting equipment, and protective clothing.

Workers, particularly the young, should be made aware of the dangers of horseplay.

Remind staff of the duty to report accidents (even minor ones) to a supervisor and procedures for doing this. Staff should also be asked to report near misses, hazards, health and safety defects, maintenance requirements and faults.

Consider safe working practices as they apply to the employee's job, including how to carry out tasks safely. Cover personal safety in areas such as footwear, protective clothing, dress, jewellery and hair.

The reasons for any instruction need to be explained. If you don't do this, employees may develop their own working practices without appreciating that in so doing, they could be putting themselves and/or others at risk. Where applicable, safety representatives should be consulted about health and safety training.

2 Managers and supervisors

Managers and supervisors are responsible for the training of staff under their control and should be aware of the points above. They are key people who must ensure the business operates to high health and safety standards. They will need training, with updating where necessary, to ensure that they understand their legal responsibilities and role, are implementing good practice and ensure the following.

Staff

Staff are properly trained to work safely and are adequately supervised.

They act quickly and correctly if they notice any staff creating a hazard to themselves or others.

They take particular care with young and inexperienced staff.

Equipment

Equipment is in safe working order and is being correctly used, cleaned, maintained and stored.

Staff are trained in the correct use and cleaning of equipment before they are allowed to use it.

Products and procedures

Products are being correctly handled and safe procedures followed, for example:

- lifting and handling;

- cleaning, including proper isolation of equipment, safe use of chemicals; and use of protective clothing and equipment such as gloves and goggles.

Buildings

Cleaning and maintenance procedures are followed as laid down.

Damaged or broken items are not causing a risk.

Hazards are reported, and dealt with by a competent person.

In addition they will need to know about:

- monitoring health and safety standards, eg carrying out safety inspections;
- accident reporting and compiling the required forms;
- implementing effective accident investigation procedures;
- procedures for:
 - dealing with reported health and safety problems;
 - dealing with contractors and visitors;
 - dealing with emergency situations;
 - first-aid and dealing with staff/customer illness;
- hazard identification and risk assessment.

Training of supervisors will obviously need to be related to the spread of responsibilities in your organisation or business.

The Health and Safety in the Catering Industry Liaison Committee

The Committee has been established by the catering industry and the Health and Safety Executive. It comprises trade and professional associations from the industry, trade unions and enforcement authorities. The Committee acts as a network to develop and communicate information and guidance through the industry and provides a forum where issues can be identified and resolved. Although its information sheets cannot be taken as definitive HSE guidance, they do give information on accepted good practice from within the industry which has, in the past, been accepted by both HSE and local authority inspectors as a means of complying with health and safety legislation.

Where do I go for more information?

Information on health and safety at work can be obtained from the environmental health department of your local authority or your nearest HSE Area Office. The addresses and telephone numbers of both will be in the telephone directory.

Training organisations

British Safety Council
Institution of Occupational Safety and Health
Hotel and Catering Training Company

Contact your local authority or nearest HSE Area Office for advice on local provision.

References

The detailed legal requirements covering the provision of information and training are set out in the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992: Approved Code of Practice L21 1992* ISBN 0 7176 0412 8, and in *A guide to the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974: guidance on the Act L1* (4th edn) 1990 ISBN 0 7176 0441 1, both available from HSE Books.

Other relevant publications available from HSE Books include:

Essentials of health and safety at work 1995
ISBN 0 7176 0716 X

Health and safety in kitchens and food preparation Areas HS(G)55 1990 ISBN 0 11 885427 5

Catering safety: food preparation machinery HS(G)35 1987 ISBN 0 11 883910 1

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Food and Catering Information Sheets:

Food Sheet No 1 *Safety pays in the catering industry*

Catering Sheet No 2 *Priorities for health and safety in catering activities*

Catering Sheet No 3 *Precautions at manually ignited gas-fired catering equipment*

Catering Sheet No 4 *Managing health and safety pays in the catering industry*

Food and Catering Information Sheets are available from the Food National Interest Group, 375 West George Street, Glasgow G2 4LW Tel: 0141 275 3000

Other enquiries should be directed to HSE Infoline, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly, CF83 3GG

tel: 0845 345 0055 , fax 0845 408 9566

This leaflet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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