

Maintenance priorities in catering

HSE information sheet

Catering Information Sheet No 12

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.

This guidance is aimed at employers operating catering businesses. It highlights priority areas based on accident experience.

Poor standards of maintenance are a major underlying cause of accidents in the catering industry. These accidents can be very costly, in financial terms and pain and suffering. Most accidents from poor maintenance involve equipment, but maintenance of the fabric of the building is also involved.

Good maintenance by competent staff ensures that equipment performs well and reliably, and helps prevent accidents.

What the law says

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires employers to provide and maintain safe plant and equipment and to ensure a healthy and safe work environment. The requirement to maintain plant, machinery and equipment is also present in other regulations, including the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998, the Pressure Systems Safety Regulations 2000, the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 and the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989.

Accidents

There are five main types of accident caused by poor maintenance in the catering industry:

- Slips
- Exposure to hot or harmful substances
- Electrical injury
- Fire and explosion
- Machinery accidents

See Table 1 for guidance on how to prevent these types of accidents.

Table 1 Preventing accidents by good maintenance

Accident category	Relevant factors	Prevention
Slips	Slips are often due to leaks and spillages, unsafe wet cleaning methods and not drying floors after cleaning.	Ensure that all equipment and receptacles are in good condition and inspected regularly. Have procedures in place for prompt repair of leaking equipment. Clean up spillages immediately, dry floors immediately after cleaning and repair damaged areas.
Hot or harmful substances	Poorly maintained equipment can lead to leaks, exposing workers to hazardous cleaning materials and hot oil.	Inspect and maintain steam plant, dishwashing machines and other equipment.
Electrical injury	Faults in plugs or cables and poor maintenance of heated food trolleys are common factors leading to accidents.	Regularly check the condition of electrical equipment and fittings. Inspect and maintain electrical equipment and fittings (see Table 2).
Fire and explosion	Poor or no maintenance of gas appliances accounts for almost all of these accidents.	Regular inspection and maintenance of appliances by competent people is essential. To help prevent fires, regularly clean ventilation filters and ducting.
Machinery accidents	Most machinery accidents are caused by incorrect cleaning and reassembly of slicing machines and poor maintenance of guards.	Ensure machinery and guards are periodically inspected and maintained. Replace guards following cleaning and maintenance. Check guards before use.

Managing maintenance

Where premises and equipment do not belong to the caterer, for example in contract catering in a school, agree clearly between both parties who has responsibilities for maintenance.

In some cases, such as work on electrical and gas systems, there are specific legal requirements on the training and competency of the people doing the work.

During maintenance work, both the caterer and the maintenance contractor have safety responsibilities. The caterer should make sure the equipment is safe to work on, eg by keeping the surrounding area clear.

The contractor should make sure employees adopt safe systems of work and that they leave equipment and premises in safe working order.

When organising a maintenance programme, caterers should identify the equipment or elements of building fabric to be maintained, the work needed, the frequency of maintenance and the competencies of the people doing it.

Preparing the programme can usefully be linked to the health and safety risk assessment of all work activities.

Types of maintenance

There are five types of maintenance to consider:

- Cleaning
- Routine checks to detect wear and tear or damage
- Planned maintenance
- Breakdown maintenance
- Inspections and tests

Cleaning

Cleaning is an essential task in all catering businesses. The following steps are the most important to prevent injury or ill health to staff:

- Establish safe methods of cleaning, including high-level cleaning.
- Pay particular attention to the safe use of cleaning chemicals and materials.
- Train and supervise staff.
- Clean spills up immediately. If a liquid is greasy, make sure a suitable cleaning agent is used. Rinse detergent off floors. After cleaning, the floor can be wet for some time – dry it where possible. Use appropriate barriers to tell people the floor is still wet and arrange alternative bypass routes.

Routine checks

Check routinely for obvious visible wear, tear and damage to:

- machine guards;
- gas appliance controls;
- electric plugs, cables and appliances;
- ventilation systems;
- equipment causing leaks onto floors.

Staff should be trained in what to look for, what needs inspection and how to report faults.

Planned maintenance

You may need to routinely service some appliances to ensure their continued safe operation. This must be done by competent personnel, such as appropriately-qualified service engineers.

Breakdown maintenance

Safety-critical repairs must be carried out only by a competent person using the correct components. It is important that functional and safety tests are made before putting equipment back into use.

Sub-standard, temporary repairs to keep equipment in use may cause accidents and could contravene health and safety legislation.

Inspections and tests

Periodic thorough examination is legally required for things such as steam/pressure appliances and hoists.

For thorough examination, inspection and test intervals for these and other items see Table 2. Examinations and tests have to be done by someone who is competent. Engineering inspection companies are usually used for steam and pressure plant, hoists etc. You must use a Gas Safe registered engineer for gas equipment. In factories, the use of Gas Safe accreditation to prove competence is not currently a legal requirement, but registration with Gas Safe is a useful way to determine whether a person is competent to do the work.

Asbestos

Asbestos materials in good condition are safe unless asbestos fibres become airborne, which happens when materials are damaged, for example during building repair maintenance and refurbishment, or even just through daily use if in an exposed area.

Workers who carry out repair and maintenance work such as cutting or drilling into walls, ceilings or partitions, repairing boilers and laying cables are most likely to disturb asbestos.

If you own, control or manage premises containing asbestos you will have a duty to manage it. Further information on managing asbestos can be obtained from the HSE publication *Managing asbestos in buildings*.

Food safety

You must think about food safety implications when selecting, installing, using, maintaining and cleaning any catering equipment. Your local environmental health officer (EHO) can give you advice about this.

Table 2 Thorough examination, inspection and test intervals

Equipment	Recommended inspection intervals
Gas appliances	<p>The frequency of inspections and equipment servicing may vary depending on the equipment and its use and should follow the manufacturer's recommendations. However, as a general rule, annual inspections are a reasonable minimum frequency, with repairs carried out as necessary.</p> <p>See CAIS23 for detailed information.</p>
Pressure cookers, pressure fryers, steam pans, steam pipes, water boilers and other steam-raising pressure plants, eg some coffee/espresso machines	<p>According to written scheme of examination set by a competent person.</p>
Portable electrical appliances (apart from high-risk areas such as kitchens)	<p>Check before use for damage to outside of equipment and its lead and plug.</p> <p>Formal visual inspection should be undertaken according to the type of equipment and the environment in which it is used. The manufacturer's instructions may provide recommendations.</p> <p>Combined inspection and testing by an electrically competent person, every 1–5 years.</p> <p>Maintaining portable electrical equipment (HSG107) provides further information to help you.</p>
Electrical appliances in kitchens	<p>Because of the more demanding environment, the IET recommends more frequent inspections for catering equipment in kitchens.</p> <p>Fixed</p> <p>Inspection and testing every five years, as recommended by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET).</p> <p>Portable</p> <p>Formal visual inspection, every 12 months. Combined inspection and test, every 12 months.</p> <p>Greater detail is beyond the scope of this summary table, and you should get advice from a competent electrician. All installations are different and it may be possible to reduce the frequency of inspections, based on initial results.</p>
Electrical circuit	<p>As advised by a competent electrician.</p>
Lifting equipment, eg hoists and lifts (Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998)	<p>After installation and then at least every 6 months if it is for carrying people and 12 months otherwise; or in accordance with an examination scheme drawn up by a competent person.</p>
Fire alarm/firefighting equipment	<p>As advised by the fire authority. Annual maintenance of fire extinguishers and alarm equipment with weekly alarm tests are the usual periods.</p>

Further reading

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. In particular:

Maintaining portable and transportable electrical equipment HSG107 (Third edition) HSE 2013
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg107.htm

Managing asbestos in buildings: A brief guide INDG223(rev5) HSE 2012
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg223.htm

Catering and hospitality
www.hse.gov.uk/catering/index.htm

Electrical safety at work www.hse.gov.uk/electricity

Health and safety made simple: The basics for your business www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety

Safe maintenance
www.hse.gov.uk/safemaintenance/index.htm

Further information

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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www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cais12.htm.

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