

# Work safely in the food service industry

Take a look at some of the safety hazards you should be watching for

**By Wendy Langis**  
BY GUEST COLUMNIST

working in a mall, a large department store or a small stand outdoors;

People are busy bustling around on vacation and stop in for a quick bite to eat. They are in a rush and want to be served promptly.

They are not that concerned about the work you are doing or how you are doing it.

Are you working safely? Let's take a look at some things you should be watching for.

## Common hazards

Common hazards that happen regularly are burns, slips and falls, cuts, electrical safety and exposure to potentially hazardous chemicals.

Burns can occur from stoves, toasters, cooking pots and dishwashers.

Always assume pots are hot.



Organize your work area so you do not come in contact with potentially hot pots.

Use oven mitts when you are required to handle pots; lift lids by opening them away from you; wear long-sleeved cotton shirts and cotton pants.

Do not overfill pots, do not leave metal spoons in pots while cooking and do not use wet cloths to lift lids.

## Slips and falls

Slips and falls can occur from slippery floors, loose carpets or mats and poor visibility.

Keep floors clean and dry. If a floor is wet, ensure it is clearly marked for others to take notice.

Keep floors free of debris, and ensure carpets and mats are securely in place.

Do not substitute a chair or box for a ladder to reach that item high up on the shelf.

Do not leave cupboard doors open. Cuts can occur from knives, glass ware, equipment, counters and preparation areas.

Do not operate equipment if you do not feel well. Don't place hands near cutting blades. Do not push or place your hand in feed hoppers or delivery chutes. Use food pushers, do not wear loose clothing.

Use cutting boards while chopping, discard broken glassware, after cleaning equipment ensure that all guards are in place.

If equipment seems to be defective, place a tag on the equipment and inform your supervisor.

## Inspect equipment

Electrical hazards can occur from faulty electrical equipment, faulty wires and outlets.

Always inspect your equipment prior to using. Have damaged equipment repaired or replaced.

Switch equipment off before connecting it to a power supply. Keep power cords clear of the equipment during use.

Do not overload plug connections; pull on the plug not the cord when done with equipment.

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**By following these guidelines, you should be safe while you are at work.**

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Hazardous chemical exposure can occur from sink cleaners, bleaches, oven cleaners and floor cleaners. Knowing what you are using. Read the labels before using.

Wear proper protective equipment. Ask your supervisor for the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) on the product you are going to be using. Request WHMIS training.

Store chemicals in a designated storage area. Always store chemicals on the lowest shelf.

## Lots to remember

Working in the food industry there are a lot of things to remember to keep safe on the job, but what about the patrons who are eating at your establishments? You must keep them safe as well.

Personal hygiene is of the utmost importance. Wear hair nets, wash hands frequently, wear gloves if handling currency (gloves to be removed if food preparation is required after transaction), cover cuts with bandages and wear gloves, rinse all fruits and vegetables, cover all foods in storage area, store cooked food separate from raw food, dispose of garbage regularly to prevent bacteria and flies, do not refreeze foods and do not mix reused food with fresh food.

## Satisfied customers

By following these guidelines, you should be safe while you are at work and, in turn, satisfy those hungry vacationers and have them safe on their way to enjoying the sights around them.

**• Wendy Langis is an information technician with the Occupational Health Clinic (Sudbury). If you require information or have an occupational health topic you would like addressed in a future column, contact the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc. in Sudbury at 523-2330.**