



INFORMATIONAL BROCHURE EMPLOYEE SAFETY

Subject: Occupational Safety in Foodservice Operations

There are few activities in school district operations that cover more safety issues than foodservice. Many districts still retain full-time staff in this endeavor although contracted services appear to be economically viable for others. Nonetheless, you need to be safe in the operation of these facilities.

Some of the occupational safety areas that need to be reviewed with staff on a frequent basis include: safe lifting and material handling – from receiving dock to dry storage and refrigerators/freezers to the food serving counters; working with knives and food cutting equipment (slicers, shredders); mixers; hot surfaces and products from ovens and soups to open burners; floor conditions in areas of food preparation and handling; use of concentrated detergents for tray washing; use of sanitation chemicals for general cleaning; walking in wet areas; emergency response – evacuation and injury accidents, and moving carts, serving trays, equipment, and cafeteria furniture.

Prevention is the key to safe work environment. Topical areas that should be covered in personal safety briefings include:

- use of proper footwear – need non-slip soles on work shoes;
- kitchen staff should be in proper dress to handle food products, splashes and so clothes do not catch on/in equipment;
- care needs to be exercised when using knives (sharp ones only) and cutting blades on slicers – use Kevlar or metal mesh gloves;
- use hot mitts and protective sleeves when working with hot items;
- mats should be used in areas where water or food spills are commonplace during working hours until it can be cleaned;

- properly lifting and handling practices should be observed;
- dry storage should be organized with light paper products on higher shelves, most frequently used foodstuffs and heavier items at knee to shoulder level, and least used and/or equipment at lowest level...ladders should be commercial grade;
- all employees need to know where safety equipment is located (like the “D” ring for the cooking hood fire suppression system and the eyewash station for chemical exposure) and response to emergencies that require evacuation;
- first aid supplies need to be readily available for likely kitchen emergencies (burns and cuts) and individuals trained in basic first aid/CPR;
- workers need to be familiar with Worker and Community Right to Know program and location of MSDS file for chemicals used in the kitchen;
- the access to the kitchen/food prep, and food storage areas needs to be secured against unauthorized access...the outside entry into foodservice is one of the easiest access points in any school building – keep this under control.

That is a pretty complete listing. If districts were following the above program, there would be likely fewer accidents, injuries, and workers’ compensation claims. Your objective is to be able to send people home after workday in one piece.

Be safe. Take the time to do it right.