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Inside this edition:

The 10 Commandments of Good Hydration.....2

Special Event Kitchen Safety—Using Cooking Oil Safely.....3

Responding to Slip, Trip and Fall Accidents.....4

Practicing Good Housekeeping

Many painful and sometimes disabling injuries are caused when employees are struck by falling objects or trip over objects they did not see. Many injuries and property damage stem from fires caused by poor housekeeping practices and improper storage of flammable materials. The best protection against these hazards is to practice good housekeeping.

When materials are stored properly with adequate space to move through the area, or with adequate clearance to work within the area, accidents are prevented. With some planning before laying out a job, tripping hazards can be avoided and many other sprains, fractures and bruises that result from falls can be prevented.

Aside from the accident prevention benefits, good housekeeping means efficient performance. When materials, tools and equipment all have a place for orderly storage and are returned to the proper place after use, they are easier to find and easier to inspect for damage and wear.

The following safety procedures are recommended:

- Keep work areas and storage facilities clean, neat and orderly.
- All aisles, stairways, passageways, exits and access ways to buildings should be kept free from obstructions at all times. All grease and water spills should be removed from traffic areas at once.
- Do not place supplies on top of

lockers, hampers, boxes or other moveable containers.

- When piling materials for storage, make sure the base is firm and level. Cross tie each layer. Keep aisles level and not stacked too high. Keep aisles clear and with adequate space to work in them.
- When storing materials overhead on balconies, provide adequate toe boards to prevent objects from rolling over the edge.
- When storing materials suspended from racks or hooks, secure them from falling and route walkways a safe distance from the surface beneath.
- Tools, equipment, machinery and work areas are to be maintained in a clean and safe manner. Defects and unsafe conditions should be reported to your supervisor.
- Return tools and equipment to their proper place when not in use.
- Lay out extension cords, air hoses, water hoses, ladders, pipes, tools, etc., in such a way as to minimize tripping hazards or obstructions to traffic.
- Clean up spills immediately to avoid slipping hazards. In the event the removal cannot be done immediately, the area should be appropriately guarded, signed or roped off. Snow shall be removed from all access sidewalks and exterior stairs to buildings as soon as practicable.

Practicing Good Housekeeping

(Continued from page 1)

- Nail points, ends of loop or tie wires, etc., should not be left exposed when packing and unpacking boxes, crates, barrels, etc. Nails are to be removed as soon as lumber is disassembled.
- Sharp or pointed articles should be stored as to prevent persons from coming in contact with the sharp edges or points.
- All packing materials should be properly disposed of to prevent fire.
- Waste baskets are to be emptied on a daily basis into approved containers.
- Oily and greasy rags should be put in a metal container for that purpose and emptied daily.
- Adequate lighting in obscure areas should be secured for the protection of both employees and the public.
- All switches or drives on machinery should be shut down, locked out and tagged with a “Do Not Touch—Men Working” sign before cleaning, greasing, oiling, making adjustments or repairs.
- Control of fuse boxes should be kept closed at all times and clear of coats, rags, bottles, etc.
- Extension cords should not be run across aisles or through oil or water. Cords should be inspected for kinks, worn insulation and exposed strands of wire before use.
- When fuses blow continually, it is an indication of an overload or short. This condition should be reported to your supervisor.

- Keep electrical equipment properly oiled, free of grease and dirt.
- To prevent static sparks, keep drive belts dressed. Also check belts for proper tension to prevent overloading motors.
- Fire inspections and prevention measures should be maintained.
- Keep safety in mind when selecting housekeeping supplies and equipment—try to minimize the use of chemicals that cause skin irritations, have harmful vapors, are combustible or otherwise harmful to the user.
- All chemicals, solvents, and fuels should be clearly marked on the container.
- All containers of chemicals should be clearly labeled so there is no question of what they contain.

The 10 Commandments of Good Hydration

1. Drink 1/2 ounce daily for every pound you weigh. A 150-lb. person drinks 75 ounces, or approximately 2.5 quarts. One glass every hour is a good rule of thumb.
2. Avoid diuretic beverages that flush water out of your body, such as caffeinated coffee, tea, soda pop, alcohol or beer.
3. Drink more water and fresh juices to maintain hydration during illness and upon recovery. Illness robs your body of water.
4. Start your day with 1/2 to 1 quart of water to flush your digestive tract and rehydrate your system from overnight fasting.
5. Drink water at regular intervals throughout the day. Don't wait



until you're thirsty. Thirst indicates an already present deficiency.

6. Get in the habit of carrying a water bottle with you or keep one in the car or on your desk. Convenience helps. Stuff it in your shoulder bag or waist-pack water bottle pocket. Hiking suppliers have a nice selection of water-bearing belt packs and accessories.
7. Make a habit of drinking water. The reason most people don't drink as much as they know they ought to is lack of time or being too busy. Decide to drink water before every meal. Set objectives for yourself such as drinking before you leave the house and first thing upon your return or before you start work. Take water breaks instead of coffee breaks. Fill a glass size that you can finish or gauge yourself by the number of water bottles you drink during the day.
8. Increase your drinking when you increase your mental activity level, stress level or exercise level.
9. Drink the purest water available.
10. Perspire. Exercise to the point of perspiration or enjoy a steam bath. Sweat cleans the lymphatic system and bloodstream. It is one of the best detoxification avenues available to us. Do sweat and do drink plenty of water afterwards to replace the loss of fluids. Drink more water in hot weather.

Special Event Kitchen Safety—Using Cooking Oil Safely

At a recent Catholic parish fundraiser event, a volunteer was working in the kitchen cooking food for the attendees. The event was going well and everyone was enjoying the meal. As part of the cleanup process, the volunteer poured hot cooking oil into a glass jar. The jar exploded, spraying hot oil and glass all over the kitchen, seriously burning the volunteer. The volunteer suffered second degree burns to the feet and is enduring a long recovery.

Why did something like this happen? Perhaps the volunteer was in a hurry to clean up, maybe the volunteer had done this before without anything dangerous happening, or the volunteer was not properly trained on how to safely handle and dispose of cooking oil.

Preparation and Planning are the Main Ingredients in Kitchen Safety

Preparation and planning are the main ingredients for working safely in the kitchen, especially during special events, regardless of how many times these activities have been done in the past.

Before any event that requires the handling and cooking of food, designate a person to be in charge of operations within the kitchen. This person must have a working knowledge of safe kitchen operations and needs to be able to strike a balance between not only working in the kitchen but also supervising and observing the activities of food service staff/volunteers. Know the capabilities and shortcomings of the individuals working in the kitchen and be sure to place them in tasks they know how to do.



Know the correct temperature of the food you are cooking and heat the oil accordingly. Do not overheat cooking oil—it could cause a fire.

When pre-planning the event with staff and volunteers, identify problematic areas and properly address these areas with solutions that everyone understands. Another recommended practice is to provide staff/volunteers with a kitchen-related safety talk prior to the event. *Keep in mind that the risk of injury in the kitchen is heightened when activities are at their busiest.*

Cooking Oil Safety Tips

When using cooking oil to prepare food, follow these safety tips:

- Know the correct temperature of the food you are cooking and heat the oil accordingly. **Do not overheat cooking oil—it could cause a fire.**
- Keep a Dry Powder Fire Extinguisher rated for Class “B” fires on hand and ready for an emergency.
- **Do not use hot-oil turkey fryers.** These are extremely dangerous and should not be utilized. Choose electric oil-free turkey fryers

instead. These fryers are available at outdoor sporting goods stores.

- **Use non-glass containers for storage of used cooking oil.** If possible, let cooking oil cool overnight before storing. If this is not possible, wait until the hot oil cools. Do not jeopardize the safety of those in the kitchen by trying to place hot oil in a storage container.
- Use a cooking thermometer to check oil temperature to ensure oil has cooled if you are unsure of the temperature.
- When cooking with hot oil, do not use tables or carts without locking castors or wheels.
- Have a plan to call 9-1-1 if a fire or serious injury occurs. Do not attempt to transport injured persons by a privately owned vehicle. This only delays treatment and puts everyone at risk in the event of an automobile accident.
- Ensure that cooks are dressed appropriately and utilize applicable personal protective equipment, such as: wearing closed-toed shoes, aprons, gloves and using utensils designed to safely handle hot foods. Workers handling hot oils should have gauntlet gloves to protect against hot splashing burns.
- Minimize the number of workers in and around the cooking area.

-Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services, Inc., Boca Raton, FL

Responding to Slip, Trip and Fall Accidents

In addition to having policies, procedures and training on the prevention of slip, trip and fall accidents, it is also important to be prepared to respond to these incidents. Development of a formal policy and conducting training on how to respond to a slip, trip and fall accident will go a long way in providing immediate assistance to the injured person and reducing claims costs and the possibility of potential legal recourse.

The following information, excerpted from *A Four-Step Response to Slip and Fall Accidents*, published by EMC Insurance, provides actions to take in response to slip, trip, and fall accidents.

Offer Assistance to the Injured Person

The primary focus following a slip, trip, fall injury is to address the injured person's immediate needs. When responding to an injured person, instruct employees to provide only the level of care they are qualified to offer. Immediate actions include:

- Determine if an injury has occurred and the necessity of medical assistance.
- Call 911 if necessary.
- Refrain from making statements to the injured person related to cause, responsibility, or blame and do not refer to the payment of medical bills.

Document the Incident

Regardless of whether or not the person is injured, document the incident. Record the person's full name, address and contact information. Survey the physical area where the accident occurred to determine the location of the accident and any potential causes. Write down this information along with the type and condition of footwear worn by the affected person. Take photos if necessary and review video surveillance footage if available. Complete a formal incident report according to your organization's policies and procedures.

Report the Incident

Report the incident to the appropriate channels within your organization as soon as possible. If the affected person is an employee, follow policies and procedures for workers'



compensation cases, including filling out a first report of injury form.

Investigate the Accident

Whether the incident was an accident or a near miss, conduct an accident investigation in accordance with your organization's policies and procedures. Focus on determining the root cause of the incident and do not place blame on the employee/affected person. Ask the "Who," "What," "When," "Where," "How" questions. Determine if physical hazards/unsafe conditions or human behaviors/unsafe acts contributed to the accident.

Examples of physical hazards/unsafe conditions could include the presence of black ice in the parking lot, water on the floor from a spill or leak within the facility, or worn stair treads.

Human behavior/unsafe acts could include carrying a load that obstructed the person's sight, tripping over a box left in an aisle, or texting while walking.

Implement Corrective Actions

Once the accident investigation is complete, implement corrective actions to ensure that a similar accident does not happen again and address the unsafe exposure(s). Corrective actions could include making repairs/enhancements to the facility/work area or providing employee training and communication on the identification and prevention of slip, trip and fall hazards. If training is conducted, document the time and date of the training sessions and the names of the employees in attendance.

-Information excerpted from EMC Insurance. *Loss Control Insights, A Four-Step Response to Slip and Fall Accidents*. Retrieved on April 5, 2023 from <https://www.emcins.com/losscontrol/insights-d/2015/11/slipfall/>.



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