

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

Cafe and restaurant industry - Chemicals

Anyone using chemicals should see the sample risk assessment for hazardous substances.

What are some of the harmful chemicals used in the takeaway food retailing?

Chemicals are used everyday in cafes and restaurants and some of these have the potential to injure people or make them sick. These chemicals are called hazardous substances. Some common hazardous substances used include those used for cleaning tasks, such as cleaning ovens, toilets and using dishwashing detergents.

Product Name and Where Used/Found	Hazardous Ingredient
Machine dishwashing liquid	Potassium hydroxide Sodium hydroxide Sodium hypochlorite (also used in chlorine bleaches and cleaners)
Oven/grill cleaner	Sodium hydroxide
Methylated spirits	Ethanol

These are only some of the chemicals you might be using. You need to identify and control all the harmful chemicals used in your business. It is important to train staff in the correct use of chemicals including the correct first aid. Emergency numbers including the poisons information number should be near the telephone.

I have some hazardous substances...what do I do about it?

If you store or use hazardous substances you need to:

- make sure all chemical containers have a label on them that clearly identifies what they are and the main safety information about the chemical (eg 'Flammable'; 'Toxic if swallowed'; 'Avoid contact with skin'). **Do not** use old drink or food containers to store chemicals
- get a material safety data sheet (MSDS) from your chemical supplier for all the hazardous substances you have
- put a copy of those MSDS in a folder with a list of all the chemicals at the front (the chemical register)
- read the MSDS and do a written risk assessment for all "hazardous substances" to help you figure out how you can use the chemical safely. It is a good idea to keep that written risk assessment with the MSDS in your hazardous substances register
- put in place those things you decide to do in your risk assessment to make using the chemical safer
- train people who have to use the chemical in how to use it safely

- make the MSDS and risk assessments available to those people who have to use the chemicals at all times so they can refer to them.

How do I make it safe to use the chemicals I have?

When you do a risk assessment for each hazardous chemical you need to make some decisions about the safest way for you to use each chemical. Some questions to consider when making these decisions include:

- **Can I get rid of the chemical altogether?** If a chemical is not there it cannot harm people. So if you do not need it, get rid of it. For example, you may even be able to change your cleaning processes to make some chemicals unnecessary.
- **Can the chemical be substituted for something less harmful?** Chemical manufacturers are frequently developing new products that do the same job but are less harmful. Alternatively there may be other processes that use less harmful chemicals.
- **Can I prevent people coming in contact with the chemical?** For example, it may be possible to have cleaning chemicals automatically pumped into dishwashers eliminating the need for workers to do it by hand. Similarly, if chemicals need to be diluted or mixed, buying it pre-diluted or mixed will eliminate the need for your workers to do it by hand.
- **Do I have adequate ventilation to remove chemical fumes?** Some chemicals can give off fumes that people can breathe in (inhale). The MSDS will tell you if this is possible. If it is possible, you might be able to remove the fume from the workplace through an exhaust system or by increasing the flow of fresh air into the area. **IMPORTANT:** Don't rely on being able to smell a chemical to know if people are breathing in fumes as some chemicals have no, or very little odour.
- **Do I have work procedures that limit people's exposure to the chemical?** Developing good work procedures can help minimise people's exposure to chemicals. For example, make sure:
 - equipment is properly maintained to prevent leaks
 - flammable chemicals are stored away from heat sources
 - chemical spill procedures are in place
 - work involving chemicals is done when there are no other people around
 - people have been trained how to use the chemical safely.
- **Have I provided people using the chemicals with the right personal protective equipment (PPE)?** If you cannot prevent people being exposed to a chemical in any other way, you must provide people with the right personal protective equipment (eg gloves, masks, aprons). The right protective equipment for each chemical is set out in the MSDS for that chemical.

For more information on hazardous substances and other workplace health and safety issues call 1300 369 915 or visit www.worksafe.qld.gov.au

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