

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

Takeaway food retailing industry - Plant and equipment

Caterers, chefs and kitchen staff use many items of machinery and equipment such as slicers, mincers, knives, mixers, etc which have the potential to cause injury.

Possible solutions

- Outsource food preparation, so that you buy in food that is already chopped or sliced etc
- Make sure all machines have guards attached and workers always use them when operating the equipment
- Redesign machines so they cannot be operated without guards in place
- Ensure "off" buttons/switches are readily accessible
- Attach a last slice device or pusher to prevent injury at the cutting section
- Ensure that equipment is securely fixed to the bench
- Avoid using knives where possible
- Use bull nose knives rather than pointed-end knives where possible
- Provide a magnetic strip for knife storage
- Ensure butchers' steels for knife sharpening have hand guards
- Provide guarding on slicing machines, eg a thumb guard to cover the blade at the far end of each cut
- Provide knives with waterproof handles that can be sterilised
- Provide knives made of stainless steel or carbon
- Provide knives with handles that are comfortable to use
- Train all workers in the safe use of knives, cover topics such as:
 - Keep knives well maintained and sharp
 - Do not leave knives in washing up water (wash them up and return them to storage area straight after use)
 - Always use a stable surface such as a cutting board and cut away from the body
 - Store knives safely in a rack or knife block with blades pointing towards the back
 - Never try to catch a falling knife
 - Allow plenty of room so there is no chance of being bumped
 - Carry knives with the blade pointing downwards
 - Don't leave knives on benches or worktops
- Train workers in the safe use of machinery, including what equipment is to be used for specific tasks
- Train workers in how to sharpen knives correctly or outsource this service
- Provide the correct knife for the task and food being cut
- Regularly inspect and have your equipment serviced to make sure it has not been damaged (this may also improve productivity by reducing downtime of equipment). Repair faulty equipment as soon as possible
- Ensure interlock guards are fitted to the front edge of all compactor units
- Under-counter compactors should have a safety switch that prevents operation until a bin or trolley is in place
- Guards or restrictor plates should be fitted to equipment where appropriate
- Make sure pressure vessels are fitted with low level cut-off devices

- Make sure equipment is fitted with safety valves, water level and pressure gauges where required
- Provide accessible first aid equipment and trained first aid officers
- Follow manufacturers' instructions for cleaning equipment - arrange for rep to demonstrate
- Provide appropriate safety instructions and signs for equipment
- Develop safe systems of work and train workers about them (eg, a "no jewellery" policy)
- Provide mesh gloves and make sure workers use them when working with knives. Be careful when using these with serrated blades.

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

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