Preventing Cuts from Knives – Restaurant Safety Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Knives are an essential tool in any restaurant kitchen, used for a wide variety of tasks from slicing and dicing to filleting fish and carving meat. However, using knives in a restaurant setting can also pose several hazards for workers, including cuts, burns, and repetitive strain injuries.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

PHYSICAL DANGERS OF KNIFE USE IN RESTAURANT WORK

1. **Cuts and lacerations:** One of the most common hazards when working with knives is the risk of cuts and lacerations. Workers can accidentally cut themselves while slicing food or handling knives.
2. **Burns:** In addition to cuts, workers can also be at risk of burns from hot surfaces or hot foods, especially when handling knives or other cooking equipment.
3. **Repetitive strain injuries:** Workers who use knives frequently are at risk of developing repetitive strain injuries, as carpal tunnel syndrome, from the repetitive motion of cutting and chopping.
4. **Slip and falls:** In a busy restaurant kitchen, there is always the risk of slipping or falling, especially when working with sharp knives. Spills on the floor or uneven surfaces can increase accidents.
5. **Eye injuries:** When cutting or chopping food, small pieces or particles can fly into the air and cause eye injuries if workers are not wearing protective eyewear.

COMMON CAUSES OF KNIFE / BLADE INJURIES

- Handling the knife before or after the cut has been made,

for example passing a knife to another worker or picking up an unguarded knife from a worktop or draw.
- While cutting an unstable object the blade slipping when the item moves.
- While using a blunt blade, this causes you to use extra force to make the cut which increases the risk that the knife will slip.
- Not using the correct protective equipment such as cut resistant gloves or butchers' aprons.
- Using the wrong type or shape of knife for the task or using a knife when a different tool would be more appropriate. A knife is not a garlic press, tenderizing mallet or can opener.

INJURIES CAUSED BY KNIFE USE

- the knife isn't sharp enough.
- knives aren't placed in a pouch when handling other items.
- workers aren't wearing adequate personal protective equipment (PPE)
- knives are pulled back towards the body.
- workers attempt to catch falling knives.
- workers do not take adequate breaks or perform repetitive tasks with a knife.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

BEST KNIFE-HANDLING SAFETY TIPS

1. **Always Use a Sharp Knife.** Keep your knives sharp to make them safer. A dull knife forces you to apply more force, which is more likely to cause a slip and increase the risk of injury. Use a sharpening stone or knife sharpener to maintain the original sharpness of the blade.
2. **Use the Right Knife.** Knives come in many different shapes, sizes, and styles. You have your chef's knife, your paring knife, your bread knife, your cleaver, etc. Each is made for a different type of task. When choosing the best knife for a job, consider the size of the blade and what you are cutting

and the type of blade edge – serrated, etc.

3. **Know How to Cut with a Knife.** Always use a cutting board to protect your hands and your knives and to allow you to cut consistently. Knowing how to grip the knife and how to hold the food you're cutting is also important. There are two basic ways to hold a knife – the handle grip and the blade grip. The food you're cutting should be placed on a cutting board on a stable, flat surface. Protect your fingertips by curling them inward, using your knuckles to guide your knife.
4. **Be Alert.** Pay attention to what you're doing when you're holding a sharp knife. A moment's distraction causes an accident.
5. **Store Knifes Correctly.** Every knife should have a specific storage space – NOT in a drawer – where it is kept when not in use. A knife block or roll will not only help protect your employees but also keep knives easily accessible and protected, so they will last longer. Don't leave knives laying on the counter between uses.
6. **Keep Knives Clean.** Do not leave your knife on a cutting board or in a sink full of soapy water. Immediately washing your knife and returning it to its designated storage space will help keep your employees safe and prevent contamination keeping your customers safe.

KNIFE SAFETY TAKEAWAYS FOR RESTAURANT SAFETY

- Use a knife for its intended purpose.
- Keep knives sharp. A dull blade tends to slip.
- Know the proper way to walk with a knife. Carry the knife with the blade away from the body and the tip pointing down.
- Use personal protective equipment, like cut-resistant gloves or stainless-steel mesh gloves.
- If you're using a cutting board, it should be secured. Do not use the palm of your hand as a cutting board.
- Slice away from the body, keeping fingers away from the blade.
- Curl fingers under when chopping. When mincing, keep the tip of the knife on the cutting board.

- Avoid talking to others while cutting. This can be a distraction.

FINAL WORD

To prevent cuts, workers should receive proper training on knife safety and use appropriate protective equipment. It is also important to use sharp knives that are properly maintained and sharpened regularly, as dull knives require more force and can slip more easily.