Preventing Cuts from Meat Slicers – Kitchen Safety Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Meat slicers are widely used in commercial kitchens and butcher shops to slice meat into thin, even portions, making it easier to prepare and serve dishes. They also pose significant risks to workers if not handled properly.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

RISK AND HAZARDS OF MEAT SLICERS THAT CAN LEAD TO SERIOUS INJURIES

Food slicers are electrically powered machines typically equipped with a rotary blade, an on/off switch, thickness adjustment, and a food holder or chute. A pushing/guarding device or plunger may be used to apply pressure to the food against the slicer blade, or pressure may be applied by gravity and/or by an attachment connected to the food holder.

- **Cuts and lacerations:** One of the most significant risks of working with meat slicers is the potential for cuts and lacerations. The blades on meat slicers are incredibly sharp and can easily cut through skin, tendons, and even bone. Even minor cuts can become infected and lead to further complications if not treated correctly.
- **Repetitive motion injuries:** Workers who operate meat slicers regularly are at risk of developing repetitive motion injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome and tendonitis. These injuries can cause chronic pain and discomfort and may lead to time off work if left untreated.
- **Noise-induced hearing loss:** Meat slicers produce high levels of noise that can lead to permanent hearing damage over time

if appropriate hearing protection is not used.

- **Respiratory problems:** Meat slicers can produce fine particles of meat and other substances that can irritate the lungs and lead to respiratory problems like occupational asthma.
- **Electrical shock:** Workers may be at risk of electrical shock if the meat slicer is not maintained correctly or if there are exposed wires or other electrical hazards.
- **Improper cleaning:** Cleaning the slicer can also pose hazards if not done correctly, with improper cleaning potentially leading to injury.
- **Amputations:** In some cases, the injuries from meat slicers can be severe enough to require medical attention and even lead to amputations.
- **Burns:** Meat slicers become hot during use, and risk burns if they meet heated components.
- **Inadequate training:** Without proper training in how to use the equipment correctly, workers are not aware of the hazards involved in working with meat slicers. Lack of knowledge leads to accidents and injuries.
- **Improper maintenance:** Meat slicers that are not maintained correctly can pose significant hazards to workers. If the blades are dull or damaged, for example, they may not work correctly and could cause injury.
- **Lack of protective gear:** Without appropriate protective gear like gloves, safety glasses, and hearing protection, workers may be more vulnerable to injury when using meat slicers.
- **Human error:** Accidents happen when a worker is not paying attention while using the slicer.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

MEASURES AND STRATEGIES TO PROTECT WORKERS FROM MEAT SLICERS

- **Proper training:** All workers who operate or encounter meat slicers should receive proper training on how to use the equipment safely. This should include information on how to handle the slicer, how to adjust the blade, and how to clean and maintain the machine.

- **Use of personal protective equipment:** Workers should be provided with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect their hands and fingers from cuts and lacerations. Cut-resistant gloves are a common form of PPE used by workers who handle meat slicers.
- **Machine maintenance:** Meat slicers should be inspected regularly to ensure that they are in good working condition. Blades should be kept sharp and free from nicks or other damage that can increase the risk of injury.
- **Machine guards:** Guards should be installed on all meat slicers to prevent workers from encountering the blade. Guards should be designed so that they do not interfere with the operation of the slicer.
- **Handwashing:** Workers should be encouraged to wash their hands frequently and thoroughly when working with meat slicers to reduce the risk of contamination and infection.
- **Supervision:** Supervisors should monitor workers who use meat slicers to ensure that they are using the equipment safely and following all safety protocols.
- **Risk assessments:** Employers should conduct regular risk assessments to identify potential hazards associated with meat slicers and take appropriate measures to reduce those risks. Risk assessments should consider factors such as the type of meat being sliced, the frequency of use, and the level of experience of workers.
- **Regular breaks:** Workers should be given regular breaks to reduce the risk of fatigue and prevent accidents.
- **Proper use:** Workers should only use meat slicers for their intended purpose and in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.
- **Storage and handling:** Meat slicers should be stored and handled properly when not in use. Blades should be covered or removed to prevent accidental contact, and machines should be secured to prevent them from falling or tipping over.
- **Emergency response:** Employers should have an emergency response plan in place in the event of an accident or injury involving a meat slicer. Workers should be trained how to

use first aid equipment.

- **Reporting:** Workers should be encouraged to report any safety concerns or incidents involving meat slicers to their supervisor.

FINAL WORD

It is essential that employers provide proper training on the safe operation of meat slicers, ensure that protective equipment such as gloves and safety guards are provided and used, and implement proper cleaning and maintenance procedures.