

Safety Zone: Chemical Safety for Restaurants

When considering the safety hazards associated with restaurants, most often cuts, burns, slips/trips/falls and back injuries are among the top hazards that come to mind. However, another key driver of workplace injuries is the task of cleaning, which is done constantly in restaurants and almost always involves the use of chemicals. Often, these are not the routine consumer products used at home but powerful industrial compounds that can pose significant hazards to those untrained in their proper use.

These chemical hazards include, but are not limited to:

- **Burns:** Cleaners for ovens, drains, grills, floors and others can cause irritation and external and internal burns to the skin, eyes, lungs and can even result in muscle and tissue damage, including disfigurement.
- **Skin irritation:** Various soaps and detergents can cause skin irritation.
- **Respiratory exposures:** Chlorine and ammonia can cause respiratory, skin/eye irritation or even death, and this hazard increases if chemicals are mixed together. Additionally, ingesting chemicals can lead to issues ranging from headaches and coughing to irregular heartbeat and seizures.
- **Infections:** Broken skin can become infected or burned from contact with hazardous chemicals.

Protecting Your Employees

Use eco-friendly or “green” cleaners where possible. They are safer for your employees.

Train your employees. Proper training will assist in understanding the dangers of the chemicals, the correct quantities and use of cleaning supplies, and how to respond in an emergency or when something goes wrong.

Make available the Safety Data Sheets (SDS). To ensure chemical safety in your restaurant, information about the identities and hazards of the chemicals must be available and understandable to workers. All workplaces with hazardous chemicals must have labels and Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for their exposed workers and train them to handle the chemicals appropriately. Every chemical used in the kitchen and front of house should have an SDS. These are readily available at the manufacturer’s website and your supplier. These sheets are not only required by law; they are an indispensable resource for proper and safe management of the array of chemicals in your operation. If hazardous chemicals are used, you must implement a written program that meets the requirements of the Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) to provide for worker training, warning labels and access to the SDS.

Store chemicals at lower heights. This helps reduce the potential for spills on the employee as well as waste and slip hazards.

Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for employees. This equipment may include gloves, aprons, goggles, etc.

Install automatic chemical dispensers. Automatic dispensers can reduce exposure to chemicals and can help ensure the proper chemical concentration.

Store chemicals in their original containers. If the chemical is placed into another container, properly label the secondary container to identify it.

For additional information and resources on this topic and other safety and risk management subjects, be sure to visit the Loss Control section on our website: <https://amtrustfinancial.com/loss-control>

Sources and Further Information:

Occupational Safety & Health Administration [OSHA]. (10/5/15). Regulations (Standards 29 CFR 1910.132, 1910.151(c) and 1910.1200). Retrieved from

https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/youth/restaurant/cleanup_haz.html

<https://www.osha.gov/young-workers-restaurant-safety>

<https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3493QuickCardSafetyDataSheet.pdf>

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