

Kitchen Safety Checklist

There are three basic rules to remember when working in a kitchen:

1. Be on the lookout for potential hazards. They are always present.
2. Use safe work procedures. Accidents can be prevented by doing things correctly and by not taking shortcuts.
3. Use protective equipment when needed.

Here are some additional areas to be assessed:

Fire Hazards

Kitchen fires can be serious. They often involve combustibles that ignite and foods that flare up. Defects in ovens, burners, electrical and gas connections can also be hazardous.

Keep combustible materials away from stoves. If a stove is near a window with curtains or drapes, make sure they are short and flame-resistant. Do not put napkins, towels or paper containers on a stove. Watch cooking pots and use the lowest practical heat. Use care when lighting gas ovens that do not have a self-lighting feature. Check that all burners and ovens are off when finished cooking and before closing. Do not use flammable fuels to start a fire in a cook stove.

If a fire occurs assess the situation. Always have an escape route posted and make sure

that kitchen staff is familiar with it. If it is possible to safely turn off the electricity or gas feeding the fire, do so. If a pan is on fire, shut off the heat and tightly cover the fire with a lid. This should be done only if the fire is small. Never pour water on a pan fire involving grease, or try to carry it to the sink or outdoors.

A type K extinguisher should be present and used for grease fires. The fire extinguisher should be kept no farther than 30 feet from the cooking appliances. When using the fire extinguisher, follow the instructions printed on the side of the extinguisher.

Stoves can be a source of many accidents in the kitchen. Always make sure pilot lights are on. If they are not, turn the dials to off and wait for the gas to disperse before relighting. Never leave pan handles over burners.

Food Safety

Food must be prepared, cooked and stored properly to ensure safety. Fresh foods need to be washed before cutting or eating.

Follow the directions on package labels when handling meats. Wash the tops of cans before opening them. Always clean contaminated surfaces before putting something on them. Check “use by” and “sell by” dates. If there is a question about the freshness of food, discard it.

In the event of a power outage, foods stored in a refrigerator or freezer will stay fresh for a period of time if the doors are kept closed. Any cooked foods that thaw should be eaten immediately or thrown away.

Hygiene and Personal Protective Equipment

Employees should always wash hands before, during and after working in the kitchen. Nails need to be kept clean to prevent the spread of germs. Any cuts need to be covered with waterproof bandages that should be changed when work in the kitchen is finished. All jewelry should be removed. Hair should be tied back and hairnets worn. Kitchen staff should never wear dangling sleeves that may get caught in appliances or catch fire.

Oven mitts should be used when handling hot dishes. Elbow-length oven mitts are preferable. Help to prevent burns by using extreme caution when working with steam.

Knives are one of the most useful tools in the kitchen, but also one of the most dangerous. Workers should always cut away from their bodies on a proper cutting surface. Keep fingertips holding the food curled under, tucked away from the blade. Keep blades sharp and clean. Keep knife grips clean.

Never leave knives lying in water. They can injure an unsuspecting dishwasher. When wiping blades always point the cutting edge away from the hand. Lay knives flat and away from counter edges. If a knife should fall, do not try to catch it. Pick it up after it has fallen. Always clean and return knives to their proper storage areas when finished working with them.

Falls and Spills

Always clean up messes and spills immediately. Close storage doors and drawers when done. Use a sturdy step ladder to reach for things. Do not step on objects that are unstable. Containers that will be transferred to a dolly or cart should be stored as close as possible to the height of the dolly or cart. On shelves, heavier materials should be stored as close to waist level as possible. Lighter materials should be at the higher locations. Slip resistant mats should be placed in front of all pieces of equipment, especially in the dishwashing area.

Use proper lifting techniques when lifting and carrying heavy loads. Make sure the path you intend to take is clear. When lifting, bend the knees and use the legs to lift. Keep the natural “s” curve in your spine. Hold the item being lifted as close to your body as possible. Be careful when carrying liquids, especially hot ones. Never lift beyond your own lifting capacity.

Following basic safety rules can help reduce the chance of fires, accidents and food poisonings. Make everyone who uses the kitchen aware of these rules and enforce them. The following checklist will help you better assess your kitchen. Yes or No should be checked for each question, and action to be taken noted for any No answer.

COOKING AREA	YES	NO	ACTION TO BE TAKEN
Are exhaust fans operating properly (note if fans are excessively noisy)?			
There are no foul odors near cooking, preparation or eating areas?			
Are exhaust fans used whenever cooking, washing dishes and cleaning?			
Are gas appliances functioning properly?			
Are gas appliances vented outdoors?			
There are no combustion gas or natural gas odors, leaks, back-drafting or headaches when gas appliances are used?			
There are no signs of microbiological growth in the kitchen, including the upper walls and ceiling (e.g., mold, slime, algae)?			
Kitchen is free of plumbing and ceiling leaks (signs include stains, discoloration and damp areas)?			
Slip resistant mats are in front of each piece of equipment with special attention to the dishwashing area?			

FOOD HANDLING AND STORAGE	YES	NO	ACTION TO BE TAKEN
Food preparation, cooking and storage areas are free of insects and vermin?			
Stored leftovers are in well-sealed containers with no traces of food on outside surfaces?			
Food preparation, cooking and storage practices are sanitary?			
Food scraps are disposed of properly?			
Counters are wiped clean with approved detergent after being used?			
Knives are cleaned after each use?			
Floors are swept and wet mopped?			
Items are stored at appropriate heights to minimize bending and reaching with heavy items?			
Refrigerators are running properly at an acceptable temperature?			
Freezers are running properly at an acceptable temperature?			

HYGIENE/PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT	YES	NO	ACTION TO BE TAKEN
Does the kitchen staff wash their hands before every shift and periodically throughout the day?			
Are gloves, hairnets and aprons supplied and being used, as necessary, by each of the staff?			
Are knives properly stored?			
When using knives do employees always cut away from their bodies?			
Are proper oven mitts available and used as needed?			
Precautions taken to prevent burns when working with steam pots?			
Personal Protective Equipment provided and utilized?			

WASTE MANAGEMENT	YES	NO	ACTION TO BE TAKEN
Is waste placed in appropriate, designated containers?			
Are food container lids securely closed?			
Food waste, food-contaminated items, other wastes separated?			
Are stored waste containers in a well-ventilated area?			
Are dumpsters properly located away from air intake vents, operable windows and food service doors?			

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