

Teens Working in Food Service

Texas Department of Insurance
Division of Workers' Compensation
Workplace & Medical Services, Outreach & Education

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Safe Work Practices

According to the U.S. Department of Labor each year over 210,000 teenagers are injured in the workplace, 70,000 are hospitalized, and 70 are killed. With many teenagers employed in the food service industry with many safety and health risks, employers should take responsibility for protecting these workers and teen workers should follow the safe work practices set by their employer.

Before operating any machinery teen workers should:

- get trained in its use;
- wear any personal protective equipment provided by their employer;
- use any machine guarding provided;
- always ask for help if unsure how to do something;
- be aware that age restrictions exist for workers under the age of 18 from using or cleaning certain equipment;
- follow the manufacturer's instructions for machine use and cleaning;
- follow the general recommendations below to identify and avoid potential hazards associated with kitchen machinery; and
- never wear loose clothing or jewelry that could become caught in machinery.



Microwave ovens in poor repair may emit radiation.

When using microwave ovens teen workers should:

- make sure the microwave is located at approximately waist level and within easy reach, to provide for ease in the lifting of hot foods;
- follow manufacturer's instructions for operating microwave ovens;
- cover foods cooked in microwaves to avoid splattering;
- open tightly covered containers away from their face, because they may be under pressure and could be extremely hot;
- use appropriate personal protective equipment such as hotpads when removing foods from microwave;



Pressure cooker

- make sure door seals are in good condition and free from food or grease buildup;
- not use a microwave if it has a door that is damaged or doesn't lock properly because damaged ovens may emit harmful radiation;
- not microwave metals, foil, or whole eggs;
- keep the interior of the microwave clean to avoid splattering and popping;
- immediately turn off the microwave, unplug it, report it to the supervisor, and do not use it if any sparks are noted inside the microwave;
- be advised that microwaves may interfere with the workings of pacemakers; and
- be aware that food cooked in the microwave can remain hot long after the microwave turns off.

When using steamers/pressure cookers teen workers should:

- shut off the steam supply and wait for the pressure to equalize before opening the lid of the pressure cooker; and
- stand to the side and open the pressure cooker away from themselves, keeping the open lid between them and the pressure cooker.

When using coffee makers teen workers should:

- not place hot coffee makers close to the edge of counters where people passing by may come in contact with them;
- check to make sure the coffee filter is in place before making any coffee;
- not remove the filter before the coffee has stopped dripping; and
- never stick fingers into the chamber of a coffee grinder to get beans to drop into the grinder; but try tapping on the outside of the container to encourage beans to drop into the grinder.

Employer Solutions

Employers should be aware of child labor rules and regulations of the Department of Labor and their state. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) regulates the Texas child labor law. Specific information can be found on the TWC website at www.twc.state.tx.us.

For example, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) forbids workers (younger than 18 years old) from operating, setting up, adjusting, cleaning, oiling, or repairing power-driven food slicers, grinders, choppers, cutters, and bakery mixers and other power-driven bakery machines. It is considered hazardous work.

After learning the rules and regulations that apply to them, employers should implement recommended safe work practices, like labeling equipment that workers are not allowed to operate.



Coffee maker

Review Questions

1. A 16-year-old student can operate a power-driven food slicer if properly trained.

True or False

2. Why can't food be removed from machinery with your hands?

3. Can an employee wear wrist bracelets when operating machinery?

Yes or No

The Texas Department of Insurance,
Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI/DWC)
E-mail resourcecenter@tdi.state.tx.us
or call 1-800-687-7080 for more information.

Answers

1. False. Individuals 18 or older should operate power-driven food slicers.
2. Machine can be accidentally turned on or the blades can cut the operator.
3. No, jewelry should be removed prior to operating machinery.

Resources

The Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI/DWC) Resource Center offers a workers' health and safety video library. Call (512) 804-4620 for more information or visit our web site at <http://www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/safety/employers.html>.

Disclaimer: Information contained in this training program is considered accurate at time of publication.

Safety Violations Hotline
1-800-452-9595
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