Food Service Safety

Food service is a primary function of every school district. Therefore, it’s important that proper safety practices become part of every food service employee’s daily routine, including temporary or volunteer staff. Food services can be divided into four basic areas:

- Arrangement or layout
- Receiving and storage
- Food cooking and preparation
- Cleanup

Arrangement or layout

Kitchen design and arrangement should eliminate unnecessary movement, save time and effort, and simplify housekeeping concerns.

Slip, trip and fall hazards can be controlled by having designated dishwashing areas, ice machines and other liquid sources out of general walking paths. Sharp tools should have a designated storage location where other utensils are not kept. Floor drains should be kept free of debris. Non-slip flooring and/or mats with beveled edges should be utilized.

Receiving and storage

When receiving supplies, hand carts and other small load lifters should be used. Proper preventive maintenance for lifting equipment is essential, while proper lifting techniques should be used. Storage shelving should be arranged so heavier material are stored on the middle shelf rather than high or lower shelf. See the Back Injury Prevention section later in this guide for more information.

Food cooking and preparation

Safety awareness goes a long way toward preventing accidents during food preparation. Cleaning up spills immediately, avoiding hot surfaces, using personal protective equipment and washing hands are all important considerations.

Oven mitts should be readily accessible for use with the steamer equipment and not stored on top. Employees should not have to walk a long distance to obtain needed personal protective equipment. Cutting gloves should be used when appropriate and only trained and authorized employees should clean the meat slicer.

Cleanup

Continuous cleaning procedures should be implemented. Basic housekeeping includes liquid spill cleanup, taking boxes to the compactor, keeping floors grease free, using clean water for mopping and using personal protective equipment necessary for cleaning agents and other chemicals.

Garbage bags should be taken to the outdoor bins often, while utilizing carts or safe lifting techniques. Mops and buckets should be returned to their proper storage location. Periodic inspections should be conducted to ensure proper cleanup.
Injury Prevention in the Kitchen

Prevention of Lacerations

Knives
- Store knives and other sharp tools in a separate location from other utensils.
- Keep knives sharp — dull knives slip easier than sharp ones.
- Use the proper knife for the job.
- Use a cutting board to keep blades sharp.
- Use cut-resistant gloves for protection.
- Keep fingers on top of items being cut — use knuckles as a guide.
- Wipe knives by moving your cloth from the dull edge to the sharp, across the blade.
- Avoid wiping along the blade.
- Cut away from your body and do not use a hacking motion.
- Never attempt to catch a falling knife.
- Never place knives in dishwasher where they can cut someone.

Slicer
- Only trained and authorized personnel should clean the slicer.
- Unplug before cleaning.
- Use cut-resistant glove when removing or cleaning blade.
- Don’t put slicer blade into dishwasher.

Dishes
- Do not stack glasses or cups. Store upside-down.
- No glassware should be placed in the sink used to wash pots.
- If breakage occurs:
  - Do not use bare hands to pick up the pieces. Use broom and dustpan or a damp cloth.
  - Drain water before trying to remove glass from the sink.
  - Do not dispose of glass in trash bags. Take glass to the dumpster using a box or can.

Prevention of Burns

Ovens
- When lighting a gas oven, make sure pilot is lit.
- Stand to one side when lighting oven.
- Remove hot pans using oven mitts.

Ranges
- Assume all things on the range, including the range itself, are hot.
- Use mitts or potholders.
- Keep utensil handles away from burners.
- Don’t allow pan/pot handles to stick out into travel aisles where they can be knocked off of the range.
- Use help when handling large pots of hot food.
- Direct steam away from you when removing the lid of a pot or pan.
- Raise the backside of the lid with a mitt or potholder.

Steam Tables
- Tilt food containers away from you as you insert them into the well.
- Avoid reaching across steam tables when serving food.
- Turn off the valves when the tables aren’t in use.
- Let equipment cool before cleaning it.

Fryers
- Keep grease from building up on fryer and frying area.
- Do not overfill — fill to the mark, or not more than 3 inches from the top of the fryer, to prevent overflows.
- Use rubber gloves and apron when filtering or handling vats of hot grease.
- When changing oil, allow it to cool before draining.
- Drain oil into metal containers, not plastic, to avoid collapse of the container.

Dishwashers
- Avoid handling very hot dishes with bare hands.
- Turn machine off and allow to cool before cleaning it.
- Be sure safety switch is operating.
- Dishwasher should shut off when opening the door.
Prevention of Muscle and Back Strains

Lifting and Carrying
- Use a two-wheel cart or dolly when moving boxes, pallets, crates, bags or barrels.
- Store heavy, bulky materials on mid-level shelves — preferably those near waist height. This eliminates the need to lift heavy objects over your head or from floor level.
- Stand close to objects with feet spread for balance.
- Never twist your body to get position — move your feet instead.
- Bend at your knees and arch your back.
- Maintain your natural spine curve.
- Grasp object gently, holding it close to your waist.
- Lift smoothly with your legs and abdomen, keeping shoulders back. Then return your back to a vertical position.
- Get help when lifting heavy items if they are too heavy for you.

Prevention of Slips and Falls
Slips and falls are frequent accidents in serving areas and kitchens due to food, grease, water and ice spills on floors.
- Clean up all spills immediately. Do not leave a spill or slippery condition unattended.
- Clean up with a towel or send for someone to get a mop.
- Use “Wet Floor” sign when mopping.
- Use floor fan for drying.
- Mop a small area and follow with a dry mop to remove moisture.
- Keep floor mats and carpets flat on the floor.
- Fix any folded edges or lumps on mats.
- Wear slip-resistant shoes.
- Frequently clean freezer and cooler floors to remove moisture, food and frost.
- Report any loose flooring to management for repair.
- Keep travel areas free of storage or obstacles.
- Avoid running, even if during a rush period.
- Use flow-through mats near sinks and ice machines.
- Use good sturdy stepladders when climbing. Never stand on anything but a ladder or stepladder to reach high places.

Safe Ladder and Stepladder Use
- Read and follow the manufacturer’s instructions affixed to the ladder if you are unsure how to use the ladder.
- Do not use ladders that have loose rungs, cracked or split side rails, missing rubber foot pads or are otherwise visibly damaged.
- Keep ladder rungs clean and free of grease — remove buildup of material such as dirt or mud.
- When performing work from a ladder, face the ladder and do not lean backward or sideways from the ladder.
- Allow only one person on the ladder at a time.
- Do not stand on the top two rungs of any ladder.
- Do not stand on a ladder that wobbles, or that leans to the left or right.
- Do not try to “walk” a ladder by rocking it. Climb down the ladder and move it.
- Do not use a ladder as a horizontal platform.

Miscellaneous
- Remove lids from cans completely and discard.
- Avoid putting hands into garbage disposal — make sure guard is in place.
- Do not reach into trash bags or cans, as you may get cut on lids or other sharp objects. Use trash pusher to push trash down in the cans or bags.
- Use a wooden tamper when operating food choppers or meat grinders. All guards should be in place on the grinders.
- Do not wear jewelry or let long hair hang loose when operating mixers or grinders. Long hair should be pulled up in a net or hat.
- Know the location of the first aid kit.