

# A good work environment at your restaurant



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This brochure is about the work environment at restaurants. It has been produced for employers, work supervisors, safety representatives and employees.

The brochure contains advice on how you can work systematically to create a safe, secure work environment and reduce the risk of work injuries and ill health.



# How are your working conditions?

Employers are to monitor the working conditions of their employees and remove any risks which may lead to injury or illness. In consultation with employees and safety representatives, employers are to investigate any risks, deal with them and follow-up the results. This is what is meant by working systematically on work environment issues.

Work environment improvements are to be part of the daily routine and should include the physical, mental and social factors of the work environment.

Employers should reach an agreement with employees and safety representatives on how work environment measures are to be carried out and put in place regular routines.

## 1. What are the risks?

Employers are to investigate regularly what risks exist in the workplace, e.g. risks of accidents, work injuries and mental stress. In order to find the risks in the work environment, employers should go on safety rounds and take up work environment issues both at workplace meetings and during individual discussions with employees.

## 2. Assess the risks

Employers should assess how serious the risks are. How great, for example, are the chances that an accident will occur and what will be the consequences if it does? Written records should be kept of risk assessment results.

## 3. Eliminate the risk

If the risk of illness or injury is serious, employers should take steps to eliminate it immediately.

## 4. Write a plan of action

If it is not possible to take remedial measures immediately, employers should include them in a plan of action. This plan should state when the measures are to be taken and who is responsible. The measures should be carried out as soon as possible.

## 5. Follow-up the results

Employers are to monitor whether the remedial measures have had the desired effect.



## Take care of your body and health

It is important that you move in the right way and use the right tools when you work. This reduces the risk of injury.

When working in restaurants, bending, twisting and reaching movements are common as are long periods working in the same position. This can cause strain injuries and other injuries to the body. Long periods spent standing at work can strain the feet and leg joints and affect the heart and blood circulation. If you spend some time sitting or sitting-standing, this will reduce the strains. Examples of other positions which cause strain are working with your hands above shoulder height or below knee height.

### Carry things close to your body

- Use lifting aids for heavy or difficult lifts.
- Place heavy objects and goods you often use between knee and shoulder height.
- If you have to carry a heavy object, carry it close to your body.

Carrying heavy or unwieldy objects up or down stairs strains the legs, knees, feet, back and shoulders. It also increases the risk of a fall with resulting injuries.

### How to avoid injuries

- Work with lowered shoulders and with your arms close to your body.
- Avoid working with your hands above shoulder height or below knee height.
- Do not bend and twist your body at the same time.
- Place your working utensils close to you and in front of your body at elbow height when working, for example, on cold buffets or serving food portions.

### Things to think about when carrying

- Divide up carrying duties among a number of people. Use lifting aids for heavy lifts or get others to help.
- Use trolleys and lifts for transporting heavy and unwieldy things between two storeys instead of carrying them.
- Replace single steps or connect small differences in level with ramps in order to reduce the risk of tripping over.

- Adjust the height of the work surface for different uses and different users, for example, by using a table that can be raised and lowered.
- Make sure there are surfaces to unload items upon in the kitchen and serving areas in order to avoid harmful working positions and unnecessary trips backwards and forwards. Examples might be a trolley or sideboard for extra cutlery, crockery and glasses.
- Do some of your work sitting or standing.

### **Protect yourself against burns**

Restaurant workers are one of the groups who are most likely to suffer burns. Every year, many burn themselves so badly that they have to go on sick leave. Such accidents are mostly due to the cramped and stressful nature of many restaurant kitchens. People knocking into each other and slippery floors are often the cause. Most burns are caused by hot oil, hot water, steam or hot food. The most serious accidents occur when cleaning around deep fat fryers. These are the most harmful injuries which result in long periods off work sick.

### **A good floor covering and good footwear reduce the risk of accidents**

A good floor is important factor in reducing the risk of falls and strain injuries. Falls are the most common kind of accident in restaurants and they happen to both kitchen and serving staff.

A non-slip floor reduces the risk of slipping and it is important to replace floor coverings that are worn or damaged.

If you work in a restaurant, you should wear special work shoes. They should be correctly-fitting shoes with a flexible sole and a heel to hold your foot in place inside the shoe. The upper should cover the top of the foot to protect it from spilled or spattered liquids such as detergents and cleaning fluids, hot sauces etc. To reduce the risk of slipping, the shoes should have non-slip soles. Make sure you regularly clean grease and other dirt from the soles.

### **If you burn yourself**

- Run cold water over minor burns.
- More serious burns with blisters will require pain-killers and a proper bandage/dressing.
- For even more serious burns, go straight to the hospital.





Protect your hands from stabs and cuts by not using blunt knives and by handling knives carefully.

### Remember!

Put on protective clothing even when you are stressed.

### Hazard symbols



Corrosive



Harmful



Extremely flammable or highly flammable

## Look after your hands and eyes

It is important to protect your hands and eyes at work. You risk cutting or burning yourself or getting corrosive substances in your eyes. Employers must ensure that employees have the protective equipment and clothing they need and that everybody knows when and how to use it. Examples of protective equipment and clothing are plastic gloves and protective goggles. If the restaurant handles products which are a harmful to health, safety information sheets should be kept where such products are stored.

### How to protect your hands

- Use rubber/plastic gloves when washing up and cleaning.
- Prevent dry skin/eczema by drying your hands regularly and using a moisturising cream/lotion.
- Use care when handling detergents and strong cleaning fluids as they contain corrosive substances.

### If you corrosive substances get into your eyes

Corrosive substances can cause serious injury to the eyes. If you get a corrosive substance in your eyes, it is important to rinse your eyes with water for at least 15 minutes to lessen the damage. The equipment you use for washing eyes must be ready for use at all times.

The equipment is to have easy access and should normally have a permanent connection. The eye wash should be warm, 20-30°C. Always seek medical help if you get a corrosive substance in your eyes. Keep rinsing your eyes until you can receive medical attention. Eye wash fluid is available in small bottles.

# CHECKLIST for restaurants

Create a checklist to help your workplace get started on a systematic work environment programme. There is a template and an example of a plan of action at [www.av.se](http://www.av.se)

## Systematic work environment programme

- |   |                                 |                                |
|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Are there routines in place for investigating risks in the work environment, e.g. work safety rounds, workplace meetings or staff discussions? | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Do you assess how serious the risks are?   | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Do you produce plans of action if it is not possible to carry out improvements immediately?  | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Are work environment duties divided up among managers, work supervisors and employees?   | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Do you report and investigate the causes of ill health, accidents and serious incidents?   | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Do new employees have an introductory course in using, for example, kitchen machines?  | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |

## Premises

- |   |                                 |                                |
|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 7. Is there good lighting in every part of the restaurant?                              | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Are there light bulbs and fluorescent tubes which do not work?                       | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Are there ventilation hoods over cookers, griddles, deep fat fryers and dishwashers? | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Are the floors slippery, damaged or worn?<br>Does water collect on the floor?       | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |



- |  |                                 |                                |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 11. Do you manhandle crates of drinks, beer kegs and other heavy items which may cause harmful working postures? | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. Are work heights adjusted for various uses and different users?  | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Can you open the freezer room from the inside?   | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. Is there an alarm button in the freezer room?  | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Are power cables and electrical equipment undamaged and earthed?   | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |

## Goods deliveries

- |  |                                 |                                |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 16. Is it possible to load and unload goods and returned goods in an ergonomic manner? | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. Are there trolleys, hand trucks and carts for heavy raw materials and refuse?      | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |

## Washing up and cleaning

- |  |                                 |                                |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 18. Do people need to lift things above shoulder height to do the washing up?                    | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. Is it difficult to handle the dirty dishes due to cramped spaces and lack of handling aids?  | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. Is there enough space for proper cleaning equipment?   | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. Are there safety information sheets where harmful detergents and cleaning fluids are stored? | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> | No<br><input type="checkbox"/> |

22. Do you use personal protective clothing, e.g. goggles and rubber gloves when handling chemicals? Yes  No

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23. Is there an emergency eye wash station? Yes  No

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24. Do people have to assume harmful or unsuitable work postures to do cleaning work? Yes  No

## Machinery

25. Are there instructions for kitchen machines such as slicers, mixers and vegetable peelers? Yes  No

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26. Is it possible to start the slicer when the slice thickness is adjusted upwards from zero when the feeder tray is not in place? Yes  No

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27. Does the vegetable peeler stop when the lid is opened a little? Yes  No

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28. Have the cooking vessels been inspected? Yes  No

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29. Are mixers/dough kneaders equipped with electrically controlled protectors? Yes  No

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30. Does the tilt protector work on the griddle? Yes  No

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31. Does the deep fat fryer have a lid and does it stand steadily in a suitable place not to close to a water tap? Yes  No

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32. Are there circuit-breakers on machines connected to the electricity supply by plugs in wall sockets? Yes  No



33. Are there carbon dioxide extinguishers and fire blankets close to frying surfaces and deep fat fryers? **Yes** **No**

## Serving

34. Are there rules for how much a person can carry when serving? **Yes** **No**

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35. Do you use trolleys to transport food and dirty dishes from place to place? **Yes** **No**

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36. Do you transport food and/or dirty dishes up and down stairs? **Yes** **No**

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37. Are there windows in the swing doors leading to the dining area? **Yes** **No**

## Stress and work load

38. Do employees have time to take their scheduled breaks? **Yes** **No**

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39. Is it possible to take short breaks when necessary? **Yes** **No**

## Demand good ventilation

The air in restaurants is contaminated by fat particles and water vapour, among other things. Good ventilation which brings in fresh air and removes contaminants is therefore very important.

The ventilation in kitchens and serving areas should keep people cool without subjecting them to draughts. Make sure the ventilation system extracts heat and humidity. This can be achieved by, for example, hoods over frying surfaces. It should be possible to clean grease filters and channels without the risk of injury. Employers are responsible for regularly inspecting and maintaining the ventilation system at your workplace.

## Loud noise can harm your hearing

Loud noise can damage your hearing and make you tired and stressed. The noise in restaurants may come, for example, from the clash of crockery and cutlery, loud music, ventilation devices, dishwashers or from hard walls and floors which amplify the noise.

Employers are responsible for keeping noise at a reasonable level. Kitchens, washing up areas and dining areas are places which may need to be designed and furnished in order to limit the spread of noise, for example, by using sound-absorbers and partitions. This also applies to areas where music is played.

In order to talk at a normal conversational level, the background noise level should not be higher than 55 decibels (dB). If average levels are 80 decibels for an eight-hour working day, employers should tell employees, inform them of the risks, and make sure that ear protection is available. For levels of 85 decibels, employer must:

- take action to reduce the noise
- put up warning signs
- make sure that ear protection is available
- offer hearing tests

**At unloading bays**, suppliers must be able to leave goods without the risk of people getting injured.

The unloading bay should be close to storage spaces and lifts. It should be possible to drive right up to the unloading bay to deliver goods and there should be plenty of space for return goods, packaging, trolleys and hand trucks.

**In the staff room**, you should be able to eat, rest and attend to your personal hygiene.

The staff room should not be used as an office, store room or for any other purpose which prevents it from fulfilling its function

**In the cleaning closet**, there should be space for a cleaning cart, cleaning equipment and consumable supplies. There should also be a electrical socket, hot and cold water taps, sluice sink, floor drain and charging stations for cleaning appliances. A good idea is to have an ejector pump fitted which sucks the water out of the buckets so that people do not have to lift them.



### **Keep in mind:**

- replace burnt-out light bulbs
- fluorescent tubes emit gradually less light and need to be replaced before they go out
- clean light fittings, windows and walls regularly
- some work needs very good light conditions, such as filleting fish or operating a cash register

### **Electrical risks**

- The risk of getting electric shocks increases if you work with damp or wet hands. Electric shocks can cause serious injury.
- Circuit breakers are electrical safety devices which prevent fires and electric shocks.

## **Good lighting is important when you are working**

When you are working, you need plenty of light. If the light is weak, you often need to get closer to see better and this increases the risk of unsuitable working postures.

Place light fittings so that they do not dazzle people and make sure that any change in light intensity is gradual if there is a big difference in light between the kitchen and dining areas. This is especially important when moving from light to dark areas. By balancing the colour tones and light intensity, the change is not so sudden and it is then easier for the eyes to adjust to the new light.

Reduce the risk of slipping or tripping in muted light conditions by illuminating steps and differences in levels.

# Kitchen machinery can cause injuries for life

Every year, many unnecessary accidents are caused by kitchen machines, for example, by the blade on a slicer or the spirals in a dough kneading machine. These sometimes result in injuries for life. It is the responsibility of employers to ensure that kitchen staff can use kitchen machines.

There should also be instruction manuals by all kitchen machines.

## Slicers

Slicers cut slightly harder foods such as cheese and ham. Many slicer accidents occur when they are used for softer foods such as bread, cucumber and tomatoes, or when the machine is being cleaned. All the protective devices on the machine are to be complete and in place.

## Mixers and vegetable cutters

Mixers and vegetable cutters are equipped with electrically controlled protectors. This means that the machine cannot be started without the protector in place. If the protector does not work, the machine should not be used.

## Cooking/boiling vessels

An unsafe cooking vessel can explode with a great risk of injury. There are therefore regulations covering how cooking vessels are to be installed and for them to be regularly inspected. If you have any questions, contact a company which inspects pressure vessels.

## How to avoid injuries

- Read the instructions carefully before you use the machine.
- Always disconnect the power source before cleaning or dismantling a machine.
- Never remove the protective devices on a machine.
- If a power cable or component is broken, the machine should not be used. Report the fault immediately and get in an authorised serviceman to repair the fault.
- Inspect cooking vessels in accordance with current regulations.





## If a fire breaks out ...

If a fire breaks out, it is important that you and others can reach safety quickly. A fire spreads rapidly and so it is important that premises can be evacuated quickly.

As a rule, there should be two emergency exit routes. Remember to keep any doors unlocked and passageways clear. Crates, serving carts and other things blocking emergency exit routes can stop people getting out.

Make sure the signs indicating emergency exit routes are clearly visible and that there is sufficient fire fighting equipment and it is easily accessible.

Follow the regulations regarding the highest number of people allowed on the premises at the same time

This is a matter of your own and your guests' safety.

## Violence and threats

Violence and threats are problems which can cause both physical and mental suffering. The restaurant business is no exception with its sometimes rowdy and intoxicated guests. Workplaces are to be safe and secure and everybody is to be familiar with the security routines which apply. Employees are to be given the training needed to deal with threatening or violent situations. If anybody is subjected to violence or threats, there are to be routines in place for taking care of him/her.

### Keep in mind:

- as a rule, there should be two emergency exit routes
- keep any doors unlocked and passageways clear
- clearly signpost the emergency exit routes

## You do report work injuries?

When an accident happens or somebody becomes unwell at work, the injured/sick person has to report this to the employer. The employer is to report this to *Försäkringskassan* (the Swedish Social Insurance Agency) as soon as possible. If your employer does not report it, you can do so yourself. The form for reporting a work injury is available from *Försäkringskassan*. If a serious accident happens or something happens which may have serious consequences, the employer is to immediately report the incident to *Arbetsmiljöverket* (the Swedish Work Environment Authority).

### Do not let it happen again

The employer is obliged to investigate the cause of work injuries in order to prevent other people being injured. A good, systematic work environment programme will include regular assessment of the risks and measures to eliminate them. Preventive measures taken early, such as ergonomically designed workplaces and varying work duties, can reduce the risk of work injuries.

### Back to work

The employer, after consulting the employee, is to provide *Försäkringskassan* with the information needed in order to determine the employee's rehabilitation needs. The employer is also responsible for ensuring that rehabilitation begins. The employee is to provide any information that is required and take an active part in the rehabilitation programme.

*Försäkringskassan* will co-ordinate all the measures included in the rehabilitation programme. With the consent of the employee, *Försäkringskassan* will also collaborate with the employer and employers' organisation, the health service, social services, labour market authorities and other authorities which may be involved.





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Our vision: Everyone wants to, and can, create a good work environment