

## INTRODUCTION

In the food industry, vacuum sealers have a variety of uses from helping food last longer to marinating foods for added flavor. While vacuum sealers are relatively safe pieces of equipment, improper maintenance and handling of these machines could potentially expose employees to harm. Following the safe work practices presented in this lesson will help ensure safety.



## TYPES OF VACUUM SEALERS

There are three types of vacuum sealers available on the market for home and commercial use. These include:

- Handheld
- External (may sometimes be referred to channel or suction sealers)
- Chamber



## HAZARDS

When using a vacuum sealer, employees could potentially be exposed to the following hazards:

- Electrical shock
- Fire (Some manufacturer's say that a fire could occur from the unit overheating by being plugged into an extension cord.)
- Burns
- Foodborne illness (from improper sealing of food)
- Slipping, tripping, or falling (from cords)



## SAFE WORK PRACTICES

Before using a vacuum sealer, employees should do the following:

- Inspect the unit for damage. Report a damaged vacuum sealer to your supervisor. Do NOT operate a damaged vacuum sealer.
- Ensure the unit is on a stable surface prior to use.

When using a vacuum sealer, employees should do the following:

- Operate the unit in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Ensure power cords are placed out of the way of walking surfaces.
- Only use manufacturer-provided or manufacturer-approved accessories and attachments.
- Only use manufacturer-provided or manufacturer-approved heat-seal bags.
- If you notice that a machine is malfunctioning during operation, turn the unit off or unplug it, and report the malfunction to your supervisor. Do NOT operate a malfunctioning machine.
- Ensure that the unit has been unplugged when not in use or when performing maintenance tasks such as cleaning.
- Ensure that no liquids are sucked into the vacuum sealer (if applicable). Liquid getting into the vacuum sealer could cause it to malfunction or damage the unit.
- Ensure that bags are appropriately sealed as improper seals can lead to foodborne illnesses.

When using a vacuum sealer, employees should NOT do the following:

- Do NOT modify the unit. Report modified units to your supervisor. Do NOT operate modified units.
- Do NOT touch a hot sealing bar.
- Do NOT use units on hot or wet surfaces.
- Do NOT operate a unit that has a damaged power cord.
- Do NOT let the power cord touch hot surfaces.
- Do NOT immerse the vacuum sealer or power cord in water or other liquids.
- Do NOT use the vacuum sealer in outdoor environments.
- Do NOT operate a chamber vacuum sealer in the presence of explosive or flammable fumes.
- Do NOT leave the unit unattended while it is operating.
- Do NOT touch a chamber vacuum's lid while unit is operating.

## CONCLUSION

Vacuinating sealing food can help food keep for long periods of time. Vacuum sealers can also be used for culinary purposes such as marinating foods. Improper use or maintenance of a vacuum sealer could potentially expose employees to harm such as electric shock or burns. By following the safe work practices presented in this lesson, employees can help minimize the chances of an accident or foodborne illness occurring when using a vacuum sealer.