

## INTRODUCTION

A commercial walk-in freezer can be found in nearly every commercial kitchen. Because of this, many employees don't pay attention to the hazards associated with them – and many may not know what those hazards are! Even though this environment may be familiar to you doesn't mean you should stop taking it seriously.



## GENERAL SAFETY GUIDELINES

- Keep all products in the freezer organized so it does not become an obstacle.
- Employees who use the freezer must know where the safety latch is located, if applicable.
- Freezers should be maintained and inspected for gas leaks regularly.

## FALLS

The most common hazard associated with commercial freezers are falls due to slipping on ice or climbing on crates and other miscellaneous items to reach the top shelves. To help prevent this:

- Remove standing water from the floor immediately by mopping.
- Scrape ice buildup from the floor at least weekly.
- Use step stools instead of climbing shelves to reach items on the top.
- Frequent housekeeping should be done to remove debris and other slip hazards.
- Nonskid shoes should be worn, as with any job in an industrial kitchen.



## SUFFOCATION

Depending on the size of the walk-in freezer, it is possible for a small space such as this to become oxygen deficient quickly. Several things to look out for are:

- Buildup of carbon dioxide that may occur if there is more than one person in the space for a prolonged period of time.
- Displacement of oxygen due to a refrigerant leak such as Freon.
- Oxygen deficiency may occur from either of the above, or from simply using up the oxygen due to an extended amount of time spent in the space – which is usually not sufficiently ventilated.



## HYPOTHERMIA

The worst case scenario involving commercial freezers is entrapment, which will likely end in hypothermia. To avoid this, the following practices are recommended:

- Notify a supervisor if you will be performing a task in the freezer that requires a lot of time.
- Take frequent breaks if you must spend long periods of time in a commercial freezer.
- The freezer should be checked routinely throughout the shift, and especially at closing to verify that there are no employees trapped inside.
- As stated by Cal/OSHA: an axe, pinch bar, or other tool must be provided which will enable a person to escape if the door freezes tight.
- Make sure all door latches and handles function correctly and are repaired if needed.



## CONCLUSION

The hazards associated with commercial freezers include falls, suffocation, and hypothermia. It is important to be aware of these hazards and take the appropriate steps to prevent them if you spend any portion of your work day inside of a commercial freezer.

