

INTRODUCTION

People all over the world love pizza. It's a dish that can bring people together and have tantalizing sights and smells. The process of making it is not without risk. Because working in an active restaurant environment can expose employees to harm, this lesson will cover the hazards associated with work at the front and back of the restaurant, personal protective equipment that should be worn, and safe work practices that all employees can use to minimize their chances of accidents and injuries.



HAZARDS

Whether you work in a traditional shop or a chain, in the front taking orders or in the back working with the dough and ovens, it's important to remember that all employees working in a pizza restaurant could potentially be experience:

- Slipping, tripping, or falling from wet walking surfaces, toppings that have fallen to the floor, obstacles in walkways, and so on.
- Repetitive motion injuries from certain motions like lifting, stacking, kneading dough, tossing dough, and so forth.
- Dehydration can also be a concern. Pizza ovens can produce a lot of heat and working in that environment can cause dehydration if fluids are not replenished.
- Cuts when using knives, box cutters, dockers, or pizza cutters.
- Burns from handling pizzas in and out of the ovens. You could get a burn from making contact with a hot pizza pan or pizza paddle as well.
- Pinch points can be found in appliances like a dough press, stand mixer, oven doors, and so on. You could potentially fracture, rip, or otherwise injure your extremities if these pieces of equipment are operated without caution.
- Employees may also face physical violence from angry customers or other guests.



Perhaps one of the most common threats that employees and guests might be exposed to is foodborne illness. This usually happens if food is not safely handled in accordance with all Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) requirements.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Some hazards can be minimized or eliminated with the use of personal protective equipment. This may include:

- Non-slip, closed toe shoes;
- Oven mitts;

- Gloves. The type of glove will depend on the task. If you are using cleaning chemicals, you should wear gloves that are either chemical resistant or are manufacturer-recommended. If you are preparing food, you should wear food safe gloves; and
- Safety glasses or goggles should be worn when working with cleaning chemicals per the manufacturer instructions.

Just like any other job that requires the use of PPE, it should be inspected for wear and damage prior to being put on. Worn and damaged items should be reported to your supervisor. Remember, never wear damaged PPE.

SAFE WORK PRACTICES

How do you stay safe in a pizza restaurant? It is critical that you know the hazards you face with your particular job, as well as your particular workplace because they will be different with each establishment. Pay attention to the following work practices that can help you be more aware of how to remain safe.

Making and Cooking the Pizza

Preparing and cooking pizzas can be fun; however, the kitchen can be a hazardous place if you are not careful. When working in the kitchen you should:

- Follow all FDA and your company's safe food handling procedures.
- Be aware of your surroundings as kitchens can be crowded areas.
- Use all cleaning chemicals in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Remember to use food safe products on areas that make contact with food. If you have any questions about the chemicals you are using, please read the manufacturer-provided safety data sheet (SDS) or speak with your supervisor. When not in use, all cleaning chemicals should be properly stored away from food items.
- When cleaning mixers and other pieces of equipment that require electricity to function, you should follow your company's lockout/tagout procedures.
- Keep the floor clear of obstacles and spills. Immediately clean up any spilled food or liquid. If spills cannot be cleaned up right away, you should put out a wet floor sign to warn others about the liquid on the floor.
- Be sure to use mixers and ovens in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Mixers and other pieces of equipment should be inspected prior to use for signs of damage. Tagout damaged equipment and report it straight away. Do NOT try to operate damaged equipment.
- Only employees who are trained and authorized should operate mixers and other pieces of equipment. If you have any questions about any pieces of equipment, please speak with your supervisor.
- Before operating a mixer or other piece of equipment, make sure that all manufacturer-provided guards are in place.
- If you are working with a wood fired oven, it should be lit using dry, seasoned wood that is free of chemicals, glues, and any other unsafe food product. Fires should be started using manufacturer-recommendations or instructions, depending on the oven, along with company policies.
- Wood fire ovens should be cleaned in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and recommendations, in addition to company policies.



- Practice proper ergonomics when lifting and moving objects such as bags of flour, boxes of toppings and so on. Use a team lift or mechanical assistant when moving objects that may be too heavy or awkward for one person. Do NOT attempt to lift heavy objects on your own because this could result in injury.
- When working with a box cutter, remember to cut away from yourself. When not in use, the box cutter should be retracted back into its protective casing or properly sheathed.
- Inspect all blades for dullness. If a blade has become dull, sharpen it in accordance with your company's policies. If you have questions about sharpening procedures, please speak with your supervisor.
- Practice safe knife skills when using knives or other sharp objects. This includes carrying knives with the blade down and NOT pointing the blade at anybody. Blades should only make contact with the cutting board or surface. Furthermore, you should watch the placement of your fingers when cutting with a knife or pizza cutter.
- When you've been stretching dough for a while, you should switch tasks with other employees to help minimize the chances of developing a repetitive motion injury.
- Be mindful of all hot surfaces in the kitchen. Use a pizza paddle or other provided tools to remove pizzas from the oven.
- To help avoid burning anyone who may be in the area when removing a pizza or other items from the oven, remember to warn them that something is coming out of the oven.
- If your kitchen has a fryer, do NOT drop items into the oil. This could cause the oil to splash. It is recommended that you lower food items into the fryer. Also, remember to monitor the temperature of the oil because different cooking oils have different smoke points and overheated oil can catch on fire.
- And lastly, remember to report any injuries immediately to your supervisor.



Store Safety

Even though working the front of the store may seem less dangerous than working in the back, there are still hazards that you encounter. Along with those tip that can be used for both the back and front of the store, employees working up front should do the following:

- It is recommended that cashiers stretch prior to their shift. Stretching along with practicing proper ergonomics can help minimize the chances of musculoskeletal disorders that can come from performing repetitive motions.
- Make sure to get plenty of sleep before starting your shift. Being drowsy on the job can increase your chances of injury, because being sleepy can cause you to not be as alert to your surroundings or activities.



RESTAURANT: PIZZA RESTAURANT SAFETY

- Check the floor for spills and trash and clean them up as quickly as possible as these are slipping and tripping hazards that both coworkers and guests can encounter. If you need to get a mop and bucket to clean up a spill, remember to place a wet floor sign near the area of the spill to warn guests and coworkers about the condition of the floor.
- Make sure aisles are clear of obstacles.
- Practice proper ergonomics when standing or lifting objects.
- And finally, remain calm when interacting with angry guests. Try to use de-escalation techniques and if de-escalation is not working, notify your supervisor of the situation.

CONCLUSION

Working in the pizza industry can be fun; however, employees can still potentially be exposed to hazards if they are not paying attention to their surroundings. While employees in the back are exposed to hazards in the kitchen, front end employees could be exposed to angry customers or slips, trips, and falls. Remember, you not only have a personal responsibility for your own safety, but the safety of your coworkers and guest as well.