

Potential health hazards of workers in hospitality industry

MEENU SRIVASTAVA

Textiles and Apparel Designing, College of Home Science,
Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology, Udaipur (Rajasthan)India

ABSTRACT

The hotel and restaurant industries form a significant part of the Indian economy. Both industries provide employment to a large number of people and they can be exposed to a variety of safety and health hazards at workplace depending on the specific tasks they perform. They may be exposed to the risk of injuries and to health hazards such as mechanical, chemicals, bio- hazards, strain and stress, etc. Employers should work together with employees to establish a safe and healthy working environment in the workplace.

Key Words : Health, Safety, Workers, Hospitality, Industry

INTRODUCTION

Occupational health and safety is one of the most important aspects of human concern. It aims an adaptation of working environment to workers for the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well being of workers in all occupations. Occupational health is concerned with the health and safety issues at work. Industrial workers may be exposed to different types of hazards depending upon the occupation.

The hospitality industry covers a wide range of different businesses including hotels, pubs and restaurants, contract caterers in various industrial and commercial premises, fast food takeaways cafes, etc. Whether it is a hotels, pubs and restaurants, contract caterers in various industrial and commercial premises, fast food takeaways cafes and bistros, there is a part to play in making sure people's health and safety is not put at risk.

The hotel and restaurant industries are important industries which form a significant part of the economy. Both industries provide employment for a large number of people, both direct employees as well as part-time and contract staff. There are several main departments performing different functions within a hotel like housekeeping, front desk, food and beverage, kitchen, laundry and engineering maintenance. And within a restaurant, main departments performing different functions include service staff, kitchen staff and stewarding. In providing a high standard of service to customers, the pace of work can be fast and the working hours long. Providing a safe and healthy working environment contributes to the well being, morale

and productivity of employees.

Both sectors employ a variety of staff and they can be exposed to a variety of safety and health hazards at work depending on the specific tasks they perform. They may be exposed to the risk of injuries and to health hazards such as chemicals, noise and thermal stress. There is also the risk of accidents from slips, trips, knocks and falls, cuts, burns and scalds, electrocution as well as fire and explosion. Employers should work together with employees to establish a safe and healthy working environment in the workplace.

Hospitality industry hazards :

- Physical hazards- heat, cold, light, noise, temperature, humidity.
- Chemical hazards- dust, vapors, fumes, gases, solvents, cleaning agent and its compounds.
- Mechanical hazards- improper handling of machines, housekeeping injuries, traumatic injuries and slips.
- Ergonomic hazards- posture, force (pulling/ pushing), pressure in body, poorly designed workplace.
- Psychological hazards- frustration, lack of job satisfaction, insecurity, poor human relationship, emotional tensions, worries.

These factors act in different ways on the health and efficiency of workers singly or in different combinations.

Health and safety tasks :

During planning and carrying out different operations at work place, there is need to manage a number of health and safety tasks wisely, such as:

- Risk assessments, as preliminary task
- Choosing correct tools and equipments for selected task
- Ensuring employee health and safety
- Setting out safe working procedures
- Ensuring people are adequately trained
- Supervising the work.

Health and safety at workplace :

To avoid overlooking important health and safety issues, employers need to adopt a systematic approach to managing health and safety. This can be done by establishing a program in which health and safety is an integral part of management – from top level managers to supervisors.

- Managers need to understand their responsibilities under health and safety legislation and be aware of the hazards specific to their organization.
- Management must be committed to and held accountable for providing a healthy and safe workplace.
- The responsibility for the health and safety of employees under their supervision should be promoted as an integral part of a supervisor's job.
- To ensure the health and safety of employees, supervisors need to be aware of their

responsibilities and will require adequate information, training and resources.

- Regular workplace inspections must be conducted to identify problem areas and hazards.

The hotels and restaurant sector includes a wide range of tasks and jobs which pose different risks. The complexity of the sector makes it difficult to present an exhaustive view of the situation. Much attention goes towards working in cooking staff, kitchens and to a lesser extent, to waiting staff. To ensure a safe and health working environment in the hospitality sector, everyone involved has health and safety duties and responsibilities which are clearly outlined in Sections 8, 13 and 14 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Act 85 of 1993.

Workplace hazards and suggested ways to eliminate/ control :

Most of the workplace injuries and illnesses can be eliminated, if they are identified early to minimize the risks from them.

Ways to minimize the risks include the following:

- Modify work processes or equipment (for example, evaluate safety features when purchasing or replacing equipment).
- Develop and implement safe work procedures.
- Ensure that workers use appropriate personal protective equipment and follow safe work procedures.

Table 1 : Hand, foot and eye protection commonly used in the hospitality industry		
	Type of PPE	When to use
Hands	Chemical-resistant gloves	Cleaning with or handling chemicals
	Chemical-resistant gloves	Cleaning with or handling chemicals
	Work gloves	Handling garbage, landscaping or working in storage areas
	Disposable waterproof gloves	Cleaning blood and other body fluids
	Cut-resistant gloves	Cutting and equipment cleaning operations
Feet	Non-slip footwear	Working in and around kitchens
	Steel-toed boots	Operating landscaping equipment
	Footwear with ankle support	Working outdoors
Eyes	Safety glasses	For general eye protection
	Safety goggles and face shields	Working with chemicals that may splash

Type of common workplace hazards :

Slippery floors :

Hazard : Slippery surfaces are one of the major causes of slips and falls in the hospitality industry.

Prevention :

- Use non-slip footwear.
- Keep floors free of water and grease.
- Clean floors regularly and also clean up spills immediately.
- Post warning signs around spills or wet floors.
- Install non-slip tiling or other non-slip floor products.

- Use rubber mats in areas where the floors are constantly wet.

Cuts :

Hazard : Knives are involved in many incidents in the hospitality industry, especially among chefs and cooks. Injuries range from minor cuts to loss of fingers.

Prevention :

- Use a flat surface or cutting board.
- Use the right knife for the job and make sure it is sharp.
- Hold the knife securely with your stronger hand.
- Curl the fingers of your other hand over the object to be cut.
- Cut away from your body when cutting, trimming or deboning.
- Wear protective equipment such as cut-resistant gloves, if necessary

Biohazards: Cleaning :

Hazard : Workers cleaning bathrooms may come across body fluids such as blood, vomit or feces.

Prevention :

- Use personal protective equipment such as disposable waterproof gloves.
- Use disposable towels to clean up all visible material.
- Discard towels in a waterproof garbage bag.
- Disinfect the area with a diluted bleach solution.
- Don't compress garbage or reach into garbage containers with bare hands.
- Don't hold garbage against your body during handling.

Sprains and strains :

Hazard : Manual handling, especially in storage areas, can lead to overexertion injuries, and sprains and strains.

Prevention :

- Stack items so they are stable.
- Organize storage areas by weight, with heavier items between knee and chest levels to minimize lifting.
- Use a ladder or stepstool to reach items on higher shelves.
- Keep the floors of cold storage areas free of ice buildup.
- Use safe lifting techniques.

Overexertion :

Hazard : More than one-quarter of overexertion incidents in hotels result from moving fixtures and furniture.

Prevention :

- Place your feet apart for good balance.
- Bend your knees.
- Keep the load close to the centre of your body.
- Use smooth, gradual motions.

- Avoid twisting your back.

Biohazards: Laundry :

Hazard : When making up rooms, workers may come across items that are soiled by blood or other body fluids.

Prevention :

- Use personal protective equipment such as rubber gloves.
- Use garbage bags or specially marked laundry bags to separate soiled items.
- Train laundry workers so they can use appropriate personal protective equipment and take other necessary precautions

Biohazards: Used needles :

Hazard : Workers can be exposed to infected blood and body fluids if sharp contaminated objects puncture their skin.

Prevention :

- Don't pick up sharps unless you have been told how to do so safely.
- Wear disposable waterproof gloves.
- Use tongs or pliers to pick up needles or other contaminated sharp objects.
- Place needles in a disposal container made for sharps. Contact your municipality for information on safe disposal.
- Look before you clean, needles maybe found on top of picture frames, under mattresses and in other unexpected places.

Chemical exposures :

Hazard : Many chemicals used in workplaces may cause irritation or even serious injury or disease.

Prevention :

- When handling chemicals, use personal protective equipment as recommended by the manufacturers and required by the employer.
- Read the labels and the safety data sheets (SDSs) that accompany chemicals.
- Follow safe work procedures.
- Store chemicals in a properly ventilated, locked area and post warning signs.

Falls from ladders :

Hazard : Falls from ladders comprise about 5 per cent of falls in the hotel industry.

Prevention :

- Use a ladder that has slip-resistant feet.
- Set the ladder on a flat, firm surface.
- Face the ladder when standing on it and when climbing up or down.
- Keep the centre of your body between the side rails of the ladder.
- Don't work from the top two steps of a stepladder

Boy and Lysson (2011) in their research on "A study of health and safety practices in small and medium sized enterprises" concluded that employers and trade unions must play a

leading role in identifying hazards, educating members and helping in protecting their members against work hazards. Prevention of the workplace accidents and infections should be an integral part in an effective and coherent strategy for a number of reasons.

Conclusion :

Employees/ workers spent the majority of time in their work place, and work environment has impact on health, comfort and productivity of employees, employed in that particular work place. It was observed by the researcher through personal visits to these industries and through studies also that hospitality workers face so many problems related to flame/fire and waste water, in their daily work routine at work place. Yet a very few researches has been done in this field. Hence, there is need to explore the problems that the workers are facing in their daily work.

REFERENCES

- <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/books-guides/health-and-safety-for-hospitality-small-business?lang=en>
- http://www.worksafesask.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Hospitality-Document_FINAL_web_14.07.15.
- L. Boy R. and Moeti-Lysson, J. (2011). A study of health and safety practices in small and medium sized enterprises. *E3 Journal of Business Management and Economics*. **2**(3) : 125-131.
