



Hazardous Chemicals and Restaurant Safety

Regular cleaning tasks are designed to protect customers from foodborne illnesses. Unfortunately, the chemicals used to clean and sanitize can pose a threat to restaurant workers.

Chlorine, quaternary ammonia and iodine are the three chemicals commonly used in commercial kitchens for cleaning and sanitization practices. These chemicals can cause serious harm to your employees. Chemical burns and skin irritations are the most prevalent adverse reactions to these substances. There are several steps restaurant employees and managers can take to reduce the risks involved when working with hazardous chemicals.

What Employers Can Do to Protect Employees

- **Use eco-friendly cleaners wherever possible.** They are safer for your guests, employees and the environment.
- **Use automated chemical dispensers.** Automatic dispensers ensure employee safety and appropriate chemical concentration.
- **Provide PPE for all employees.** Common personal protective equipment for commercial kitchen employees includes goggles, chemical gloves and dishwashing aprons.
- **Store non-compatible chemicals separately.** Non-compatible chemicals, like chlorine and ammonia, can create a poisonous gas if mixed. Store them separately to minimize the chances of them getting mixed if spilled.
- **Use lower shelves to store chemicals.** Store liquid chemicals on lower shelves to avoid the risk of spills.
- **Train employees.** Properly train employees in the correct use of cleaning chemicals and what to do in case of an emergency.
- **Have Safety Data Sheets (SDS) available for all chemicals.** Ensure employees have access to this information and that it is readily available in the event of an emergency.

OSHA standards relating to this subject indicate that employers must provide personal protective equipment to all employees, employers must provide facilities to quickly flush the eyes or body in areas of the restaurant where an employee may be exposed to hazardous chemicals and employers must train all employees on hazardous material handling as well as provide access to Safety Data Sheets (SDS).

If you would like more information about this topic or have questions, contact Jim Wirth at 1-877-360-3608, ext. 52370 or email him at jwirth@riskcontrol360.com.