



Health and Safety in

Hotel and Catering

This leaflet has been produced to highlight some of the common health and safety hazards within the hotel and catering industry. The GMB is committed to working with responsible employers to improve health and safety standards, and to ensure that GMB members are safe at work.

Campaigning for Better Health and Safety

In an industry where low pay, high staff turnover and a lack of training is the norm health and safety standards are often poor. The government watchdog on safety - the Health and Safety Executive - has stated that injury rates in the hotel and catering industry have more than doubled. The most common form of injury being slips and trips.

If you have any concerns about safety at work then the GMB is always on hand to offer help and advice to our members.

If you are not yet a member of the GMB - Join today!

Health and Safety Hazards

Slips and Trips

The Problem

Slips, trips and falls are the most common cause of non-fatal major injuries in the hotel and catering sector each year and account for 62% of all major injuries.

Injuries can result from a multitude of hazards including slips on wet floors, spills of liquids, wet floors, unsuitable footwear, rain and snow, uneven surfaces and from trailing cables etc.

Possible Solutions

When trying to prevent slips, trips and falls consideration should be given to potential hazards and how they might be prevented.

Your employer should have carried out a risk assessment, which will show how they plan to ensure that slip, trip and fall accidents do not occur.

Measures that employers might consider taking include:

- Ensuring that floors are suitable for the work that is to be done and are in good condition.
- Ensure that work practices minimise the risk of spills.
- When spills do occur make sure that they are cleared up quickly or if this is not possible fenced off.
- Make sure that lighting is good enough for people to spot potential hazards.
- Making sure that objects such as boxes are not left lying around for people to trip over.
- Tape down rugs and carpets to prevent sliding or slips, and make good raised or frayed edges that might cause injury.
- Provide appropriate footwear for the task and floor surfaces. This should be provided free where it is necessary to reduce the risk of injury to employees.

Manual handling refers to any type of work that involves the pushing, pulling, lifting or carrying of loads by hand or by bodily force. Injuries sustained from manual handling can include harm to the back or spine, hands, knees and muscle tissue.

The nature and weight of the load, the general working environment (e.g. exposure to heat, repetitive work, stress or fatigue), and individual capacity all contribute to manual handling risks.

Possible Solutions

The law requires the avoidance of the need for hazardous manual handling where possible.

In the first instance introducing mechanical handling equipment or redesigning the job should be considered. For example, the introduction of luggage carts for reception staff could reduce the risk of injury from carrying heavy cases.

Where the use of mechanical equipment is not appropriate or not possible, other means of decreasing the risk of injury should be put in place. Employers should assess exactly what risks there could be from lifting and should look at how best to control those risks. Training should be provided for employees, and for those tasks that require heavy lifting 'doubling up' with a colleague should be the norm.


Manual Handling and Lifting

The Problem

There are a whole range of tasks which might lead to a manual lifting injury while working in a hotel or catering establishment.

Common causes of this type of injury can include lifting or carrying cases, lifting heavy trays of food and drink, cleaning, washing and carrying laundry.





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Kitchen/Catering Hazards

There are a number of hazards that can occur from work in kitchens. The most common of these are listed below with some tips for preventing or controlling the risks of injury that might arise.

Slips, Trips and Falls

- Measures to prevent spillage's and leakage onto floor.
- Clear up spillage's and dry floor immediately.
- Check cleaning methods.
- No obstacles in walkways.
- No uneven walkways.

Lifting and Manual Handling

- Remove need to manually handle heavy dishes and trays.
- Training in correct lifting techniques.
- Look at redesign of kitchen to reduce need for carrying heavy items a long way.

Hot Surfaces/substances

- Good maintenance of steam equipment.
- Avoid carrying hot liquids and materials.
- Safe procedures and training for: opening steam oven doors, storage of substances, cleaning and draining fat fryers.

Cuts

- Correct guarding on food slicers/ other machines.
- Safe cleaning practices.
- Safe disposal measures for broken crockery.
- Training in the use of knives.

Dermatitis

- Correct use of chemical data sheets.
- Proper storage of chemicals.
- Protective gloves.
- Inform staff of potential hazards.

Working Time

The Working Time Regulations give every hotel and catering worker the legal right to:

- Work no more than 48 hours each week (unless you want to).
- The legal right to 4 weeks paid holiday every year (pro rata for part time workers).
- Have at least one day off per week.
- Work no more than a 13 hour shift in any one day.
- Have a rest break of 20 minutes every 6 hours.

Bullying and Harassment

The Problem

Bullying and harassment can cause serious health problems, including stress-related illnesses, anxiety, tension, depression, lack of concentration and physical ailments.

Bullying and harassment is also bad for business. Research has proven that bullying and harassment can result in reduced job performance, absenteeism, high staff turnover and ultimately lower profits.

Examples of bullying and harassment can include:

- Verbal or written intimidation such as threats, shouting and swearing.
- Physical intimidation including assault.
- Isolation and lack of support for difficult tasks.
- Unfair allocation of work or changing work without consultation to include impossible deadlines.
- Refusing reasonable requests for training.
- Any form of harassment due to a person's sex or race.

The GMB can help!

The GMB is aware that such behaviour does occur in some hotels and we are working to eliminate it. The GMB will give appropriate support to any member who feels that they are being bullied or harassed.



Stress

The Problem

Stress at work is a fact of life for many workers. However, because of the nature of the work in hotels and catering - periods of intense activity combined with trying to please customers - workers in the industry can be subject to high levels of stress.

Staff must often comply with unreasonable, or even impossible requests and can be subjected to abusive behaviour from customers and managers.

These types of conditions can lead to a stressful working environment where people feel continually under pressure, feel tired and are irritable. These symptoms can also have a negative effect on home and family life outside of work.

Common Sense Help

The GMB has a great deal of experience in dealing with stress at work issues. We can help you by talking to your employer about aspects of your job which are causing problems, and we can offer common sense advice about measures that can be taken to control stress at work.

Violence

The Problem

Hotels and catering establishments rank high on the list of workplaces with high incidence rates of violence. Many workers have to deal with members of the public, exchange or collect money, work alone or in small numbers, work at night and can be responsible for guarding possessions.

Possible Solutions

The law states that employers should have a clearly defined statement of what potential risks staff face from violence, and what action the employer proposes to take to reduce this risk. The GMB can provide expertise and help on:

- How to identify what types of job and work situations where violence might occur.
- How to draft a policy and action plan to deal with violence at work.
- Risk assessments that must be carried out to determine which employees could be harmed, and how this might happen.
- Measures that could help to prevent violence at work including security for late night staff, ensure that lone workers are not vulnerable and can contact help at any time, training and information for staff in organising work so that the risk of violence is reduced and the issuing of personal alarms/mobile phones in certain circumstances.

Join Your Union

To achieve health and safety improvements requires a strong union. If you work full time or part time, if you are a permanent member of staff or a temporary worker you need the protection that GMB membership brings.

If you are not yet a member of the GMB join today and ensure that your workplace is safer.

Remember if you are not a member of the GMB we can't help you!

Independent research has shown that people who are in a trade union are **50% less likely to have an accident** than those who are not in a trade union.

In other words:

You are twice as safe in the GMB



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The GMB is Britain's leading union for health and safety. We have 25,000 Safety Representatives who offer advice and help on health and safety problems. To back up our Representatives the GMB has a network of health and safety specialists in each of our 10 Regions. The union also has a large National Health and Safety Department providing advice and support to Safety Representative and the Regions. It is widely acknowledged that the GMB offers the best health and safety service of any trade union.