

# PROTECTING THE SAFETY AND HEALTH OF RESTAURANT WORKERS



A WORKBOOK



WORKER OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAM  
COMMISSION ON HEALTH AND SAFETY AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION

This workbook was developed by the Labor Occupational Safety and Health (LOSH) Program at the University of California, Los Angeles in collaboration with the Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA) as part of the Community Outreach Model of the Worker Occupational Safety and Health Training and Education Program (WOSHTEP).

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# **PROTECTING THE SAFETY AND HEALTH OF RESTAURANT WORKERS**

**A WORKBOOK**



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# How to use the Workbook

In any workplace there are hazards that can cause injuries and illnesses to the people who work there. In a restaurant, common injuries include cuts, burns, and falls. There are also repetitive motion injuries resulting from cutting and chopping too much.

This workbook is designed to be used in a short training session where workers learn skills to help prevent these injuries and illnesses from happening to themselves and their co-workers.

To complete this training, workers and employers will need to schedule a two-hour meeting. By the end of the session, participants will:

1. Discuss common causes of workers' injuries and illnesses.
2. Use tools to identify and control job hazards.
3. Identify a safety problem and propose effective solutions.

## Materials needed

- Large sheets of flipchart paper
- Markers for drawing (black, red, green and blue)

**Remember,** “being more careful” is not enough to avoid injury or illness at work. The safest restaurant is one in which as many hazards as possible are eliminated through careful planning and good decision-making about how work gets done. The employer must take the lead and involve workers. Workers, especially new and younger employees, need regular training, mentoring, and practice to be able to play a role in keeping a safe and healthy workplace. Workers should develop skills to identify hazards and propose solutions.



# What is causing restaurant workers' injuries and illnesses?

## LUIS' STORY

Luis works at “The Honey Pig,” a busy Korean restaurant. The dining room seats 180 people. He works at the preparation table cutting vegetables and meat all day. He has to keep the cutting machine clean.

Monday afternoon, Luis rushed into work from his morning job as a janitor at a school. On that particular day, he had 10 orders of vegetable servings at once and found that his co-worker from the day shift didn't clean the vegetable cutting machine.

Luis tried to quickly clean between the machine's blades by reaching in with his bare hands to pull out some remaining pieces of vegetables. The machine was not unplugged, and because the turn-on button was very sensitive, he accidentally turned it on. The machine shredded his three middle fingers.

- Does this seem familiar?

Yes    No

- What causes the injuries of restaurant workers like Luis?

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# What is causing restaurant workers' injuries and illnesses?

## MS. KIM'S STORY

Ms. Kim has worked full time as a waitress at a Korean BBQ restaurant since she migrated to the U.S. five years ago. She is a single mother with two young kids.

Lately, she becomes tired very easily, gets lots of headaches and joint pain and feels fatigued. The restaurant has been very busy and there is a lot of pressure to work very fast. All of her friends said that she should go to the oriental doctor they are seeing for the same kinds of problems.

She has been spending more and more money on herbal medicine to reduce her pain; however, the pain on her shoulders, arms, and hands won't go away. All waitresses at the restaurant have been complaining that the trays are too heavy. The manager says that the restaurant is too busy and that there's nothing he can do.

- Does this seem familiar?

Yes     No

- What causes the injuries of restaurant workers like Ms. Kim?

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## What are job hazards?

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Anything at work with the potential to harm a worker either physically or mentally is considered a **job hazard**.

Some hazards in restaurants are easily **visible**. Restaurant workers can see that the hot stove or stone pot can potentially burn their hand or that the ham slicer can potentially cut their fingers. Some hazards are **less visible**. These are things that can cause workers to be injured or become ill that we do not think of as job hazards. We do not usually think that working too quickly may cause an injury, that chopping vegetables all day or lifting heavy objects may hurt workers' wrists and backs over time, or that using strong cleaning products every day may damage workers' lungs.

**Remember**, restaurant workers are exposed to many job-related hazards that may cause injuries and illnesses that in turn impact their lives, income, and family members. Restaurant employers also face financial challenges making health and safety improvements and complying with state and federal laws.

Restaurant workers and employers can develop skills to identify both the more **visible** and the **less visible** hazards in the workplace, come up with effective solutions, and communicate about ways to prevent injuries and illnesses.



**What is wrong with this picture?**

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# What are possible hazards in restaurants?

## RESTAURANT HAZARD CHECKLIST

The restaurant hazard checklist is a list of possible job hazards that can be found in a restaurant. It consists of three categories:

1. Objects that can be dangerous such as slippery floors, knives, and grills.
2. Tasks that can be dangerous such as heavy lifting and standing and cooking too long.
3. Poor working conditions such as no ventilation in a kitchen and lack of training.

**Instructions:** Use this list to go around your workplace or while meeting with your co-workers to check all the hazards that you believe you have in your restaurant. This checklist doesn't cover every hazard, but it will help you think about the most common ones. Use the blank lines to add any hazards that you think are important but not listed.

## DANGEROUS OBJECTS

### Hot objects

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ovens and boilers | <input type="checkbox"/> Grills and stove tops | <input type="checkbox"/> Deep fryers   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hot pots          | <input type="checkbox"/> Hot stone pots        | <input type="checkbox"/> Coffee makers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Microwave ovens   | <input type="checkbox"/> _____                 | <input type="checkbox"/> _____         |

### Sharp objects

- |  |   |                                       |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knives          | <input type="checkbox"/> Power slicers/grinders | <input type="checkbox"/> Broken glass |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food processors | <input type="checkbox"/> Box cutters/tools      | <input type="checkbox"/> _____        |

### Objects that can cause slips and falls

- |  |                                |  |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slippery floors           | <input type="checkbox"/> Cords | <input type="checkbox"/> Cluttered exits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clutter on floors (boxes) | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____           |

### Chemicals

- |  |                                     |  |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning products | <input type="checkbox"/> Pesticides | <input type="checkbox"/> Dish washing products |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____             | <input type="checkbox"/> _____      | <input type="checkbox"/> _____                 |

### Other

- |                                |                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|

# What are possible hazards in restaurants? (Continued)

## DANGEROUS TASKS

### Lifting and climbing

- Awkward lifting
- Heavy lifting (boxes, big pots)
- Awkward bending/reaching
- Climbing to reach things
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Repetitive movements

- Cutting/chopping
- Cleaning (mopping and sweeping)
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Other

- Cooking/standing for too long
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## POOR WORKING CONDITIONS

- Working long periods with no breaks
- Working too quickly
- Not enough staff
- Heavy workload
- Working in too hot of cold area
- Not enough work space
- Lack of training
- Poor air quality (smoke)
- Bad equipment/tools
- Not enough ventilation
- Working alone
- Working late at night
- Poor visibility from street
- Handling large amounts of cash
- No alarm system
- A dining room with too many tables
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** There are certain conditions in restaurants that are not commonly thought of as hazardous but that can become so in a busy environment, such as children running and purses on the floor. Also, if workers do not speak the same language, this communication barrier can become a safety hazard. It is important to consider any other issues that apply specifically to your restaurant and add them to this checklist.

# Where are the hazards?

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## HAZARD MAPPING

You could also identify hazards by getting together with your co-workers to do a **hazard map**. A hazard map is a simple floor plan of your workplace where you show problems you experience daily on the job that may be affecting your safety and health.

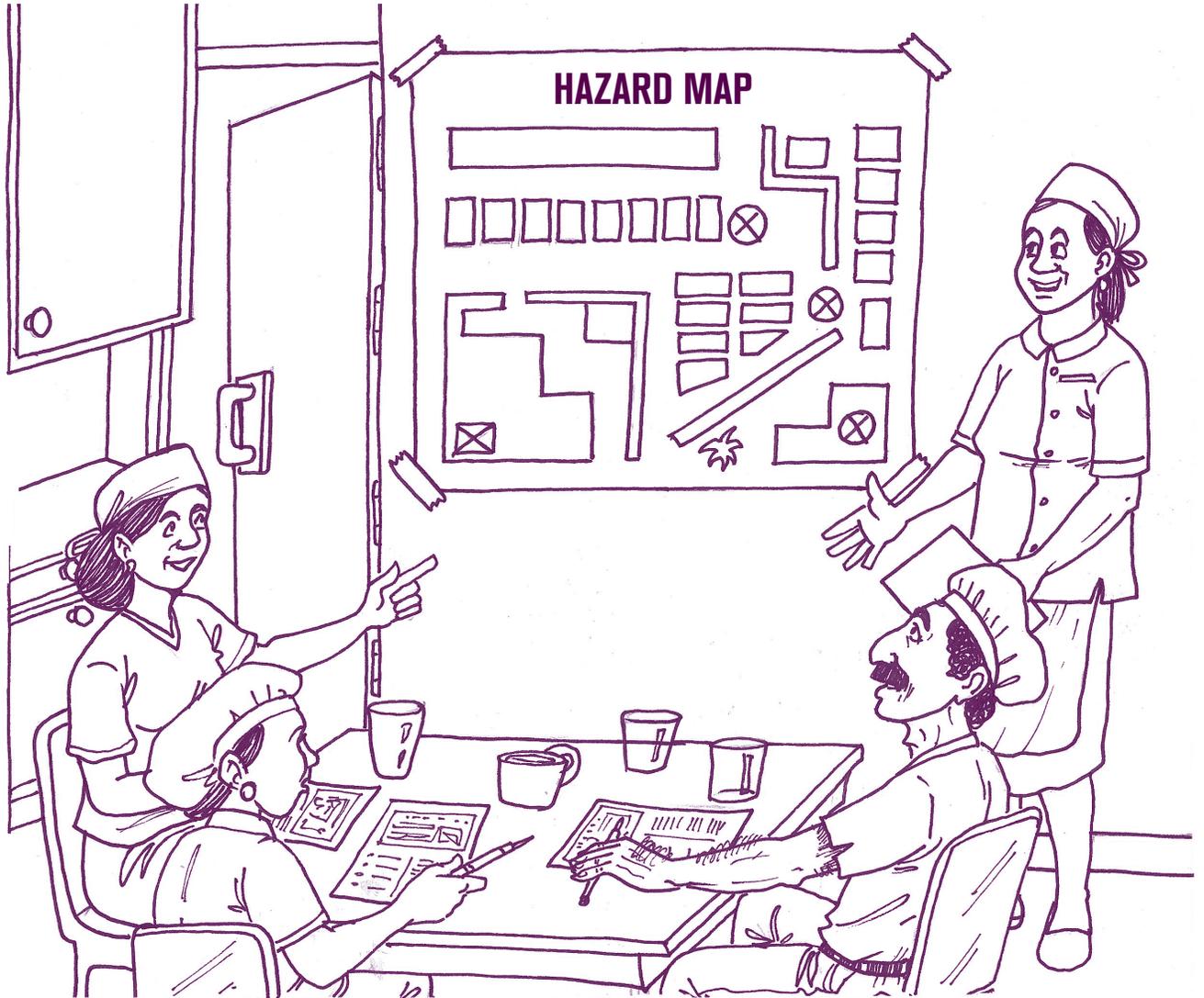
You can map the entire restaurant, an area or building, a particular job or process in the restaurant. The point of hazard mapping is to gather information from you and your co-workers about objects, tasks, and poor working conditions that can create problems.

### Two easy steps to map out hazards in the restaurant:

1. In groups, using a big sheet of paper or cardboard (a flattened box), draw a floor plan of the workplace or a particular area noting different sections, major pieces of equipment, and major steps of the work process.
2. Then, indicate the different hazards that could cause injuries to workers in the restaurant (having completed the previous hazard checklist can help you at this point).

You will need 4 markers: black, red, green, and blue. Use the:

- Black marker to draw the floor plan of the restaurant and big pieces of equipment
- Red marker to show dangerous objects (knives, ovens, slippery floors)
- Green marker to show dangerous tasks (repetitive movements, heavy lifting)
- Blue marker to show poor working conditions (not enough ventilation, lack of training)

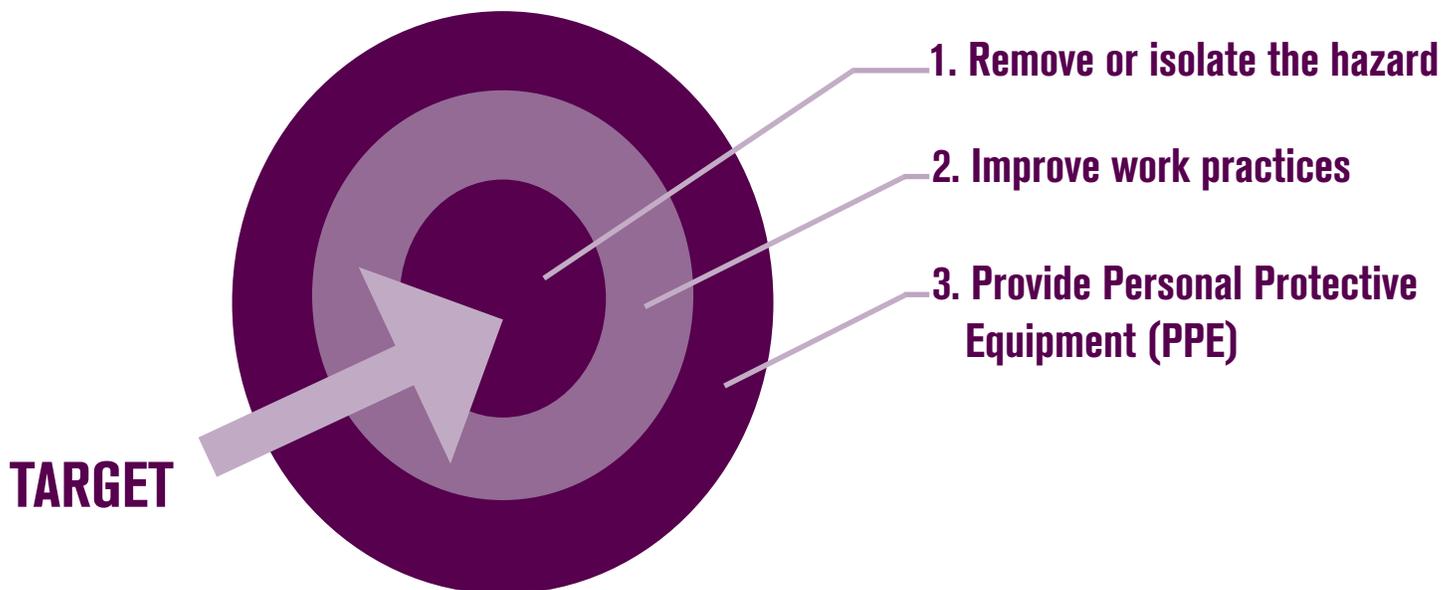


## How are hazards controlled?

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Once workers have identified some hazards by using the checklist and/or the hazard map, it is necessary to come up with solutions or ways to control them.

The ways to control hazards are grouped into three categories according to their effectiveness, though they should be used together to provide the most effective protection for workers. The best way to prevent injuries is to **isolate or remove the hazard** altogether so it can't hurt anyone. A workplace change that accomplishes this has hit the bull's eye. Sometimes such changes are not possible and it is necessary to come up with other solutions to protect workers, such as **improving safety practices** (second ring), or providing **personal protective equipment** or clothing (outer ring).



## How are hazards controlled? (Continued)

**1. Steps to remove or isolate the hazard.** These are changes to the workplace, such as adding windows for more ventilation, or to the way the work is done, such as installing self-cleaning ovens. They also include substituting cleaning products that are non-toxic, installing guards on machines that have sharp or hot parts, or using carts to deliver food. What hazards are eliminated by making these changes?

What would remove the hazard in Luis' case? (Refer to page 9 for Luis' story).

**Remember,** when trying to come up with changes that would remove the hazard, the idea is that it would not depend on people to follow procedures or to do the right thing, such as when workers are told to use push sticks with the chopping machine. What about purchasing machines that cannot be turned on by accident?

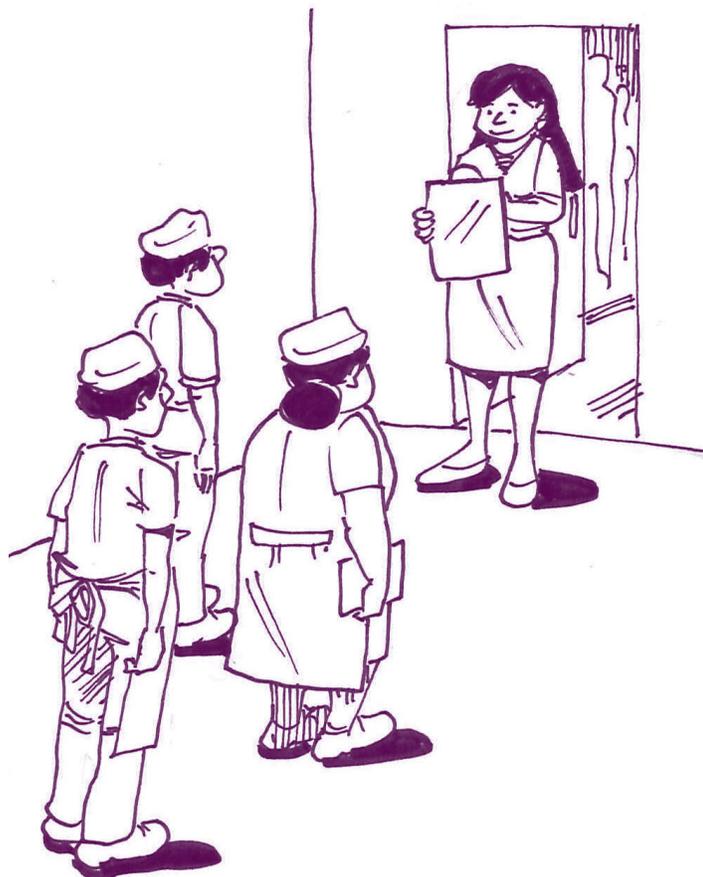


## How are hazards controlled? (Continued)

**2. Steps to improve work practices.** These include written safety rules and procedures and the supervision and training that help implement and maintain such safety policies. These policies can include rotating workers, increasing the number of breaks or requiring good housekeeping.

What would be a good work practice in Luis' case?

**Remember,** when trying to come up with changes in the workplace as well as with safety rules, it is important to include workers in the process. Would it work to have rules that allow workers to clean up and set up before they are given orders for the day? What about setting up schedules that overlap? Would it help to train all workers by using cases such as what happen to Luis?



## How are hazards controlled? (Continued)

**3. Provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).** PPE is equipment or clothing that workers can put on their bodies to create a barrier between them and the hazards when hazards cannot be removed or there can't be a change in work procedures. PPE is worn on the body and protects workers from the hazard.

What kind of PPE could Luis use?

**Remember,** workers sometimes hesitate to wear PPE because it can be uncomfortable and interfere with their ability and ease in doing their job. This leaves them unprotected and can lead to accidents and injuries. Would it work to buy Luis some cut resistant gloves?



## How are hazards controlled? (Continued)

Here is another example:

One of the main hazards that restaurant workers have identified is **excessive chopping and cutting**. This is a form of repetitive motion that causes long-term injuries. To control the hazard:

1. The cutting and chopping can be done with a machine that has a good safety guard.
2. Work practices could be put in place by cutting back hours for this task and rotating workers. This would allow each worker to only do this job for 2 hours instead of 8 hours a day.
3. No PPE can be used in this case to prevent repetitive motions.



## How are hazards controlled? (Continued)

### In summary:

- The goal should be to come up with changes that remove or isolate the hazards and do not depend on people to follow procedures that need to be enforced. Procedures can be hard to keep up when restaurants get busy. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is the last resort because it requires proper maintenance and it must fit the worker, and it depends on the worker remembering to use it and use it correctly.
- Many times it takes steps at all levels to protect workers. Once a change has been implemented, it is important to re-evaluate the situation to confirm that the hazard is no longer present or that other hazards have not been created.
- Training is necessary to keep workers aware and involved whenever a safety rule will be put in place or a change will be implemented.



## Hazard identification and control worksheet

Now try to come up with a combination of measures to reduce the three hazards you identified in the hazard mapping activity. Remember that you always aim to **remove or isolate the hazard** first. If that is not possible, try to come up with a combination of measures to reduce the hazard like **improving work practices** and then using **personal protective equipment (PPE)**.

HAZARDS	SOLUTIONS
	Remove or isolate the hazard:
	Improve work practices:
	Provide personal protective equipment:
	Remove or isolate the hazard:
	Improve work practices:
	Provide personal protective equipment:
	Remove or isolate the hazard:
	Improve work practices:
	Provide personal protective equipment:

## Next Steps

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Restaurant workers and employers need to work together to prevent injuries and illnesses and improve productivity and the overall functioning of their workplace. Workers are in an important position to identify hazards and to suggest solutions. Managers may provide the resources and have the decision-making power to implement the changes that will keep workers from being injured or becoming ill. The following are things restaurant workers and their employers can do to protect everyone's health:

### What can workers do?

- Report hazards and injuries to their manager or employer immediately.
- Practice using the hazards checklist and hazard mapping.
- Suggest the best solutions to the hazards present in their workplace.
- Participate in safety and health training.

### What can workers ask management to do?

- Set up safety meetings to listen to workers' concerns.
- Set up and support a safety committee that would take on the task of identifying hazards and coming up with solutions.
- Provide health and safety training for all workers.

### Key points to remember:

- A job hazard is anything that can potentially harm workers physically or mentally.
- Some job hazards are more obvious because we know they are dangerous, and some are not, such as things that can harm workers over a longer period.
- Workers are in an important position to identify hazards and to suggest solutions. Managers may provide the resources and have the decision-making power to implement the changes that will keep workers from being injured or becoming ill.





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