Restaurant & Food Services

Advancing priorities through research and partnerships

Improvements through partnerships and research
The National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) is a partnership program to promote innovative research and improve workplace practices. Unveiled in 1996, NORA is a framework for guiding occupational safety and health research and interventions throughout the Nation. NORA stakeholders collaborate to identify critical workplace issues in industry sectors. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) convened a number of these partners to develop the National Services Agenda, which includes safety and health goals for the Food Services Industry. Groups such as employers, employee organizations, government agencies, and food services associations can build partnerships to implement these goals and help ensure that food services work environments are safe for all employees.

Who works in the food services industry?
The food services industry employs nearly 9.5 million workers in the U.S. The industry has four major groups: full services restaurants, limited-service eating establishments, special food services and drinking places. Approximately 80% of the 425,000 food services firms are small businesses that employ fewer than 20 people. Many youth workers obtain their first jobs in this industry.

What are the important health and safety issues in food services?
- Sprains, strains, bruises and contusions from slips, trips, and falls
- Cuts and lacerations from knives and other tools
- Heat burns from hot oil, steam, hot water and hot surfaces
- Ergonomic hazards from repetitive motion, bending, lifting, and pushing carts
- Workplace violence and elevated homicide risks
- Occupational stress due to workloads, limited rest breaks, and prolonged standing

In addition to the sources above, exposures to chemicals, biological materials, and smoke are prevalent in many food services facilities.
How can you help improve safety and health in the food services industry?

Small businesses may not have occupational safety and health professionals on staff, yet they can reduce injury and illness risks by obtaining safety and health information and adopting recommended practices. Most franchisors, trade associations, workers’ compensation insurance groups and state health or labor departments are excellent resources for safety and health program materials. Comprehensive injury and illness prevention programs are recommended to reduce the risks for occupational injury, illness and death.

You can:

- Identify and evaluate hazards and adopt hazard controls and safe work practices to prevent work-related injuries and illnesses.
- Lead a work group to address priority issues to help inform employers and policy makers about hazards and interventions.
- Assist in the design of an effective system to track occupational injuries and illnesses in the food services industry.
- Represent a partner organization to work on a goal implementation plan.
- Provide input to the NORA Coordinator on the implementation of goals (noracoordinator@cdc.gov) and suggest important issues to consider for future goals.

What are the Sector Goals for Food Services?

The NORA Services Sector Council developed strategic goals for the Food Services Industry to address priority workplace safety and health issues. The Council will ensure progress and track accomplishments through 2016. Partnerships are needed to achieve these goals to reduce work-related injury, illness, and death among food services employees:

- Promote the development of comprehensive occupational safety and health programs for restaurants and other food service establishments.
- Reduce the frequency of workplace violence events in restaurants, drinking establishments, and food delivery services.

Restaurants and other food establishments may address these goals to ensure a safe work environment through: (1) effective communication of safety practices; (2) adoption of safe designs for facilities and systems; (3) proper use of personal protective equipment; and (4) support of worker wellness programs.

Where can I find safety and health information for the food services industry?

Many groups have developed extensive and freely available training materials specific for the food services industry.


References

4 U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Youth Worker Safety in Restaurants, www.osha.gov/SLTC/youth/