

# Maintenance priorities in catering

## HSE information sheet

### Introduction

This information sheet was produced by the Hospitality and Catering Industry Liaison Forum, which has members from trade and professional associations, unions and enforcement authorities. Members' associations are free to reproduce and distribute this guidance to catering establishments. The guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive.

This guidance is aimed at employers operating catering businesses. It highlights priority areas, based on accident experience.

Poor standards of maintenance are a major underlying cause of accidents in the catering industry. These accidents can be very costly, in financial terms and pain and suffering. Most accidents from poor maintenance involve equipment, but maintenance of the fabric of the building is also involved.

Good maintenance by competent staff ensures that equipment performs well and reliably, and helps prevent accidents.

### What the law says

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires employers to provide and maintain safe plant and equipment and to ensure a healthy and safe work environment. The requirement to maintain plant, machinery and equipment is also present in other regulations, including the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998, the Pressure Systems Safety Regulations 2000, the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 and the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989.

### Accidents

There are five main types of accident caused by poor maintenance in the catering industry:

- slips;
- exposure to hot or harmful substances;

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- electrical injury;
- fire and explosion;
- machinery accidents.

See Table 1 for guidance on how to prevent these types of accidents.

**Table 1** Preventing accidents by good maintenance

Accident category	Relevant factors	Prevention
Slips	Most slips are due to leaks and spillages, unsafe wet cleaning methods and not drying floors after cleaning.	Ensure that all equipment and receptacles are in good condition and inspected regularly. Have procedures in place for prompt repair of leaking equipment.  Clean up spillages immediately, dry floors immediately after cleaning and repair damaged areas.
Hot or harmful substances	The most common causes of accidents are poor equipment maintenance leading to leaks, exposure to hazardous cleaning materials and hot oil.	Inspect and maintain steam plant, dishwashing machines and other equipment.
Electrical injury	Faults in plugs or cables and poor maintenance of heated food trolleys are the most common factors leading to accidents.	Regularly check the condition of electrical equipment and fittings. Inspect and maintain electrical equipment and fittings (see Table 2).

Accident category	Relevant factors	Prevention
Fire and explosion	Poor or no maintenance of gas appliances accounts for almost all of these accidents.	Regular inspection and maintenance of appliances by competent people is essential. To help prevent fires, regularly clean ventilation filters and ducting.
Machinery accidents	Most machinery accidents are caused by incorrect cleaning and reassembly of slicing machines and poor maintenance of guards.	Ensure machinery and guards are periodically inspected and maintained. Replace guards following cleaning and maintenance. Check guards before use.

- planned maintenance;
- breakdown maintenance;
- inspections and tests.

### **Cleaning**

Cleaning is an essential task in all catering businesses. The following steps are the most important to prevent injury or ill health to staff:

- establish safe methods of cleaning, including high level cleaning;
- pay particular attention to the safe use of cleaning chemicals and materials;
- train and supervise staff;
- clean spills up immediately. If a liquid is greasy, make sure a suitable cleaning agent is used. Rinse detergent off floors. After cleaning, the floor can be wet for some time – dry it where possible. Use appropriate barriers to tell people the floor is still wet and arrange alternative bypass routes. If you clean the floor once a day, where possible do it last thing at night, so it is dry for the start of the next shift.

## **Managing maintenance**

Where premises and equipment do not belong to the caterer, for example in contract catering in a school, agree clearly between both parties who has responsibilities for maintenance.

In some cases, such as work on electrical and gas systems, there are specific legal requirements on the training and competency of the people doing the work.

During maintenance work, both the caterer and the maintenance contractor have safety responsibilities. The caterer should make sure the equipment is safe to work on, eg by keeping the surrounding area clear.

The contractor should make sure employees adopt safe systems of work and that they leave equipment and premises in safe working order.

When organising a maintenance programme, caterers should identify the equipment or elements of building fabric to be maintained, the work needed, the frequency of maintenance and the competencies of the people doing it.

Preparing the programme can usefully be linked to the health and safety risk assessment of all work activities.

## **Types of maintenance**

There are five types of maintenance to consider:

- cleaning;
- routine checks to detect wear and tear or damage;

### **Routine checks**

Check routinely for obvious visible wear, tear and damage to:

- machine guards;
- gas appliance controls;
- electric plugs, cables and appliances;
- ventilation systems;
- equipment causing leaks onto floors.

Staff need to be trained in what to look for, what needs inspection and how to report faults.

### **Planned maintenance**

You may need to routinely service some appliances to ensure their continued safe operation. This must be done by competent personnel, such as appropriately qualified service engineers.

### **Breakdown maintenance**

Safety-critical repairs must be carried out only by a competent person using the correct components. It is important that functional and safety tests are made before putting equipment back into use.

Sub-standard, temporary repairs to keep equipment in use may cause accidents and could contravene health and safety legislation.

## Inspections and tests

Periodic thorough examination is legally required for such things as steam/pressure appliances and hoists.

For thorough examination, inspection and test intervals for these and other items, see Table 2. Examinations and tests have to be done by someone who is competent. Engineering inspection companies are usually used for steam and pressure plant, hoists etc, and Gas Safe Registered Engineers for gas equipment, though in factories use of Gas Safe accreditation to prove competence is not currently a legal requirement.

## Asbestos

Asbestos was extensively used as a building material in the UK from the 1950s through to the mid-1980s. It was used for a variety of purposes and was ideal for fireproofing and insulation. Any building built before 2000 can contain asbestos.

Asbestos materials in good condition are safe unless asbestos fibres become airborne, which happens when materials are damaged, for example, during building repair, maintenance and refurbishment.

Workers who carry out repair and maintenance work such as cutting or drilling into walls, ceilings or partitions; repairing boilers and laying cables are most likely to disturb asbestos.

If you own, control or manage premises containing asbestos you will have a duty to manage asbestos. Further information on managing asbestos can be obtained from the HSE publication *Manage buildings? You must manage asbestos*.

## Food safety

You must think about food safety implications when selecting, installing, using, maintaining and cleaning any catering equipment. Your local environmental health officer (EHO) can give you advice about this.

**Table 2** Thorough examination, inspection and test intervals

Equipment	Recommended inspection interval
Gas appliances  Pressure cookers, pressure fryers, steam pans, steam pipes, water boilers and other steam-raising pressure plant, eg some coffee/espresso machines	Every 12 months.  According to written scheme of examination set by a competent person.
Electrical appliances (apart from high risk areas such as kitchens)	<b>Portable</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ User check before use for damage to outside of equipment and its lead and plug.</li> <li>■ Formal visual inspection by a trained person, every 12 months.</li> <li>■ Combined inspection and testing by an electrically competent person, every 1-5 years.</li> </ul>

Equipment	Recommended inspection interval
Electrical appliances (in kitchens)	<p><b>Fixed</b></p> <p>Inspection and testing 5-yearly, as recommended by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET).</p> <p>Because of the more demanding environment, the IET recommends more frequent inspections for catering equipment in kitchens.</p> <p>For example, if portable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Formal visual inspection, every 6 months.</li> <li>■ Combined inspection and test, every 12 months.</li> </ul> <p>Greater detail is beyond the scope of this summary table, and you should get advice from a competent electrician. All installations are different and it may be possible to reduce the frequency of inspections, based on initial results.</p>
Electrical circuit	As advised by a competent electrician.
Lifting equipment, eg hoists and lifts (Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998)	After installation and then at least every 6 months, if it is for carrying people and 12 months otherwise; or in accordance with an examination scheme drawn up by a competent person.
Fire alarm/fire-fighting equipment	As advised by the fire authority. Annual maintenance of fire extinguishers and alarm equipment with weekly alarm tests are the usual periods.

## Further information

For more information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit [www.hse.gov.uk/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/). You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

HSE's website provides information, as well as a number of free leaflets and information sheets, that will be useful to help manage risks and comply with legal requirements. In particular:

- *Health and safety made simple: The basics for your business* [www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/index.htm)
- *Maintaining portable and transportable electrical equipment* HSG107 (Second edition) HSE Books 2004 ISBN 978 0 7176 2805 6 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg107.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg107.htm)
- *Manage buildings? You must manage asbestos* Leaflet MISC807 HSE Books 2008 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/manageasbestos.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/manageasbestos.pdf)
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- The electricity pages at [www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/index.htm)

**This document contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.**

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