

Safety and Occupational Health Specialist

A Safety and Occupational Health Specialist (SOH) for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration conducts safety inspections at work sites like restaurants or factories. These inspections look at how well businesses are obeying federal regulations about employee health and safety.

The inspector leads training sessions on health and safety for both employers and employees; looks at statistics and records that relate to safety issues; and investigates possible violations of the regulations and other employee health concerns. SOH specialists may be able to fine companies, depending on the kinds of violations they find. In many ways, SOH specialists have the same goal as food safety inspectors: to help employers provide safe workplaces and help employees protect themselves.

Being a Safety and Occupational Health Specialist requires a great deal of education and experience. Most jobs require a master's degree or more, with a major in occupational safety and health or a related field. People working toward becoming SOH specialists often look for jobs that include training employers and employees on workplace safety issues, developing policies on hazards and hazard prevention, and otherwise working with information involving employee health and safety. Although the Occupational Safety and Health Administration is the biggest employer of SOH specialists, many other governmental agencies and large businesses hire these professionals, too.

The Safety Audit

Is a particular operation safe? **Safety program guidelines** are based on existing safety practices and the insurance carrier's requirements. A safety program is designed to meet the specific needs of the operation. It also includes specific guidelines that are based on the geographic location, such as snow and ice removal, flood water drainage, or earthquake response plans.

The purpose of a **general safety audit** is to judge the level of safety in the operation. It is a safety inspection of facilities, equipment, employee practices, and management practices. A general safety audit identifies any areas or practices that might be hazardous to employees and guests.

The completed audit is in the form of a checklist. Any "no response" or blank space, which means that the inspector could not find the information, requires follow up. Regular safety self inspections can help make sure all employees are using correct safety practices throughout the operation. Figure 3.4 shows an example of a general safety audit. There are four general areas covered in a safety audit:

- **Facilities:** The building (exterior and interior) and major systems, such as electricity and plumbing. This includes outside areas, such as drive-thru windows, parking lots, and outdoor eating areas. Furnishings (such as booths, tables, and chairs) and fixtures (such as sinks, lights, and doors) are also considered to be part of the facility.

Yes	No	
FACILITIES		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do all exit doors open from the inside—without keys—to allow rapid escape when necessary?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) installed wherever equipment and floors may become damp from cleaning?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the cooling system in the kitchen achieve the industry standard of 85°F (29.4°C) or lower?
EQUIPMENT		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are machines properly guarded with covers, lids, and other devices?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are hot pads, spatulas, and other equipment provided for use with ovens, stoves, and other heat-generating equipment?
EMPLOYEE PRACTICES		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do employees make use of goggles, hair restraints, gloves, tampers, hot pads, safe knife storage devices, machine guards, and other personal protective equipment?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do employees lift boxes and equipment properly?
MANAGEMENT PRACTICES		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do managers follow all safety rules that apply to employees?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do managers introduce new employees to the safety program?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is senior management involved in creating safety policies?

Figure 3.4: The general safety audit is in the form of a checklist and covers facilities, equipment, employee practices, and management practices.

- **Equipment:** All equipment (cooking and cutting equipment, refrigerators, tools, vehicles, fire extinguishers, alarms, etc.) must meet legal standards for foodservice equipment. Two organizations that label appropriate equipment include the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) and Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Equipment must be maintained in acceptable working condition. If equipment needs repair, the employees who use the machine must tell the team and their supervisor. If the equipment poses a hazard, then the machine itself should be turned off. A certified technician is the only person qualified to repair equipment and decide that it is ready to be used again.
- **Employee practices:** Managers must train employees in safe practices, and then supervise them to make sure they use these practices on the job. Training includes proper use of work equipment. Employees using equipment incorrectly will lead to equipment problems and potential injuries.
- **Management practices:** The inspector evaluates how committed management is to protecting employees and guests.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Supplying good-quality tools, utensils, equipment, and protective clothing shows management's commitment to employee safety. Personal protective equipment, such as gloves and goggles, protects employees from potential hazards on the job. In addition, employees should not wear clothing or other items that can increase risk:

- Loose or baggy shirts that can get caught on machinery, catch on fire, or interfere with lifting
- Jewelry, especially necklaces and bracelets, that can get caught in machinery
- Scarves or neckties that can get caught in machinery or catch on fire

Cooks and other kitchen employees who work around heat can wear long sleeves to protect their arms and an apron or chef's jacket for added protection from burns. Dish-machine operators can wear water-resistant aprons and rubber gloves.

Employees can wear goggles or safety glasses to protect themselves from splashing chemicals or from food flying out of grinders, choppers, or mixers. In some states, safety glasses are required when deep-fat frying.

Shoes are an important part of personal protective equipment. Well-designed footwear helps prevent employees from slipping, tripping, or falling and protects their feet from falling objects or spills from hot water or food. Shoes should have the following qualities:

- Skid-resistant soles
- Low, sturdy heels
- Either no laces or laces that tie tightly
- Water, heat, and grease resistance
- Closed toes
- Nonporous material to prevent hot liquids or caustic chemicals from soaking through

Some employees, such as dishwashers and porters, can wear heat-resistant, knee-length protective aprons and snug-fitting gloves made from nonflammable materials. Others, such as cooks or bakers, wear standard aprons and use disposable gloves, side towels, and mitts, as needed. Some additional guidelines for chefs are listed below:

- They should never wear rubber or disposable plastic gloves when handling hot items as these can melt and burn hands.

- All mitts and gloves should be kept dry because wet materials can conduct heat quickly and cause steam burns.
- They should wear disposable gloves to handle food that is not too hot. Disposable gloves should never be washed or reused. Gloves that are too big will not stay on the hand, while those that are too small will tear and rip easily.
- Protective clothing and equipment should be checked frequently for worn spots, defects, or any damage that would make them less effective. Any damaged items should be replaced as soon as possible.

Figure 3.5 shows employees wearing correct and incorrect personal protective equipment.

[fast fact]

Did You Know...?

Each year in the United States, 2,000 workers have job-related eye injuries that require medical treatment. Flying particles account for 70 percent of eye injuries, and contact with chemicals accounts for 20 percent of eye injuries.

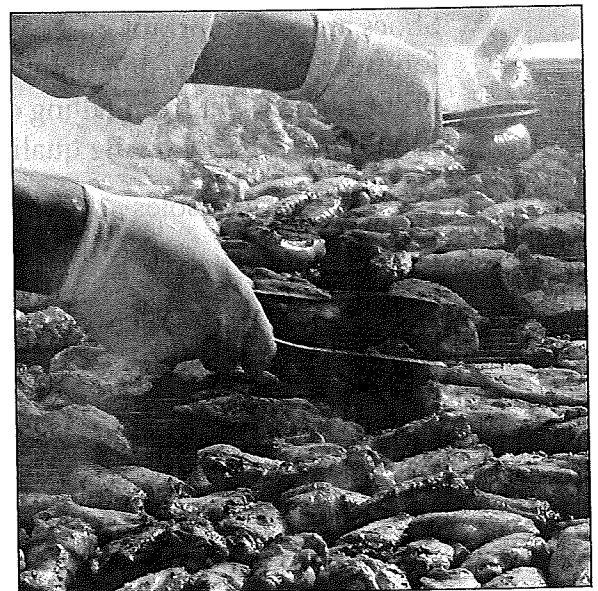
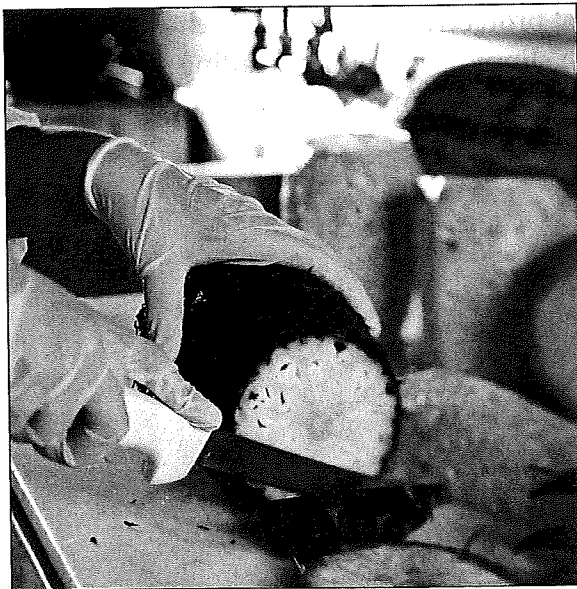


Figure 3.5: Employees wear personal protective equipment like gloves to protect themselves from potential hazards.

Finally, employees are responsible for using the equipment properly and wearing the protective clothing that management recommends or provides. In the most successful safety programs, employees recognize and deal with safety hazards themselves.

Emergency Plans

The purpose of an **emergency plan** is to protect workers, guests and property in the case of an emergency or disaster. For an emergency plan to work, all employees must understand it *before* there is an emergency. Good planning can prevent confusion, reduce fear, and minimize injury and loss during an incident.

Emergency plans are specific to each operation and should be posted in highly visible areas. The following considerations should all be part of your plan:

- Floor plans of the facility, noting first-aid stations, alarms, sprinklers, and fire extinguishers
- Evacuation routes
- Emergency telephone numbers for each type of emergency

The main parts of a safety plan are installing fire safety equipment, developing and posting evacuation routes, keeping exit routes clear, and training and drilling employees.

Encouragement and incentives motivate people much more strongly than punishment and criticism. Praise employees for following the right procedures. A recognition or award system, such as thanking them for offering safety suggestions, is another good way to encourage safety practices.

When violations or accidents occur, it can mean that the safety program needs improvement. People should only do jobs they have been trained for and are physically able to do. Update and retrain employees whenever major aspects of the operation change or when new pieces of equipment are purchased.

Accident Investigation

An **accident** is an unplanned, undesirable event that can cause property damage, injuries or fatalities, time lost from work, or disruptions of work. A **near miss** is an event in which property damage or injury is narrowly avoided. Any event that makes guests or employees less safe should be investigated and recorded—even if an actual injury did not occur.

In addition, each operation needs to have forms for reporting injuries or illnesses involving both guests and employees. **Accident investigation** involves eight steps:

1. Record information as soon as possible after the event occurs, ideally within one hour. Use OSHA-required forms as well as appropriate corporate or company forms.
2. Include a description of the event, the date, and two signatures on accident report forms.
3. Collect physical evidence or take pictures at the site.
4. Interview all people involved and any witnesses.
5. Determine as clearly as possible the sequence of events, the causes and effects, and the actions taken.
6. Submit reports to OSHA, the insurance carrier, lawyer, and corporate headquarters, as appropriate. Keep copies of all reports and photographs for your files.
7. Keep all employees informed of procedures and hazards that arise from the situation.
8. If they aren't already available, post emergency phone numbers in public places.

Figure 3.6 shows samples from OSHA of an employee injury and illness form.

OSHA's Form 301

Injury and Illness Incident Report

Attention: This form contains information relating to employee health and must be used in a manner that protects the confidentiality of employees to the extent possible while the information is being used for occupational safety and health purposes.

U.S. Department of Labor
Occupational Safety and Health Administration
Form approved OHS no. 121A-R15

This Injury and Illness Incident Report is one of the first forms you must fill out when a recordable work-related injury or illness has occurred. Together with the Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illness and the accompanying Summary, these forms help the employer and OSHA develop a picture of the extent and severity of work-related incidents.

Within 7 calendar days after you receive information that a recordable work-related injury or illness has occurred, you must fill out this form or an equivalent. Some state workers' compensation, insurance, or other reports may be acceptable substitutes. To be considered an equivalent form, any substitute must contain all the information asked for on this form.

According to Public Law 91-596 and 29 CFR 1904, OSHA's recordkeeping rule, you must keep this form on file for 3 years following the year to which it pertains.

If you need additional copies of this form, you may photocopy and use as many as you need.

Information about the employee

1) Full name _____

2) Street _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

3) Date of birth ____/____/____

4) Date hired ____/____/____

5) Male
 Female

Information about the physician or other health care professional

6) Name of physician or other health care professional _____
Facility _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

7) If treatment was given away from the worksite, where was it given?

Street _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

8) Was employee treated in an emergency room?
 Yes
 No

9) Was employee hospitalized overnight as an in-patient?
 Yes
 No

Completed by _____
Title _____
Phone (____) _____ Date ____/____/____

Information about the case

10) Case number from the Log _____ (The log is the one you fill out first.)

11) Date of injury or illness ____/____/____

12) Time employee began work _____ AM / PM

13) Time of event _____ AM / PM Check if time cannot be determined

14) What was the employee doing just before the incident occurred? Describe the activity, as well as the tools, equipment, or material the employee was using. Be specific. Examples: "climbing a ladder while carrying roofing materials"; "spraying chlorine from hand sprayer"; "daily computer key-entry."

15) What happened? Tell us how the injury occurred. Example: "When ladder slipped on wet floor, worker fell 20 feet"; "Worker was sprayed with chlorine when gasket broke during replacement"; "Worker developed soreness in wrist over time."

16) What was the injury or illness? Tell us the part of the body that was affected and how it was affected; be more specific than "hurt," "pain," or "sore." Example: "strained back"; "chemical burn, hand"; "carpal tunnel syndrome."

17) What object or substance directly harmed the employee? Example: "concrete floor"; "chlorine"; "radial arm saw." If this question does not apply to the incident, leave it blank.

18) If the employee died, when did death occur? Date of death ____/____/____

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 22 minutes per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Persons are not required to respond to the collection of information unless it displays a current valid OSHA control number. If you have any comments about this notice or any other aspect of this data collection, including suggestions for reducing the burden, contact the Office of Management and Enterprise Services, Paperwork Reduction Project (3020-0047), Washington, DC 20503. Do not send the completed form to this office.

Figure 3.6: OSHA's Form 301 is one of the first forms you must fill out when a recordable work-related injury or illness has occurred.

Evacuation

A variety of emergencies, both man-made and natural, may require the evacuation of the workplace. These emergencies include fires, explosions, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, toxic-material releases, civil disturbances, and workplace violence. Employers may want their employees to respond in different ways to different threats. An evacuation plan must identify when and how employees are to respond to different types of emergencies. A disorganized evacuation can result in injury, confusion, or property damage.

To protect employees and guests if there is an emergency, a well-designed emergency plan should be ready in advance, and employees should have training and practice with it. Place fire, police, and emergency rescue team telephone numbers on every phone, and post copies of the floor plan marking escape routes, exits, and assembly points in a variety of locations.

Plan **evacuation routes** to give everyone at least two ways out of the building to a safe meeting place. Make sure everyone knows the routes, exits, and meeting points. Keep routes and exits clear and unlocked. Do not use them for storage or trash. Knowing and practicing emergency safety procedures will help everyone remain calm if an incident should occur. Figure 3.7 is of an example of an evacuation route.

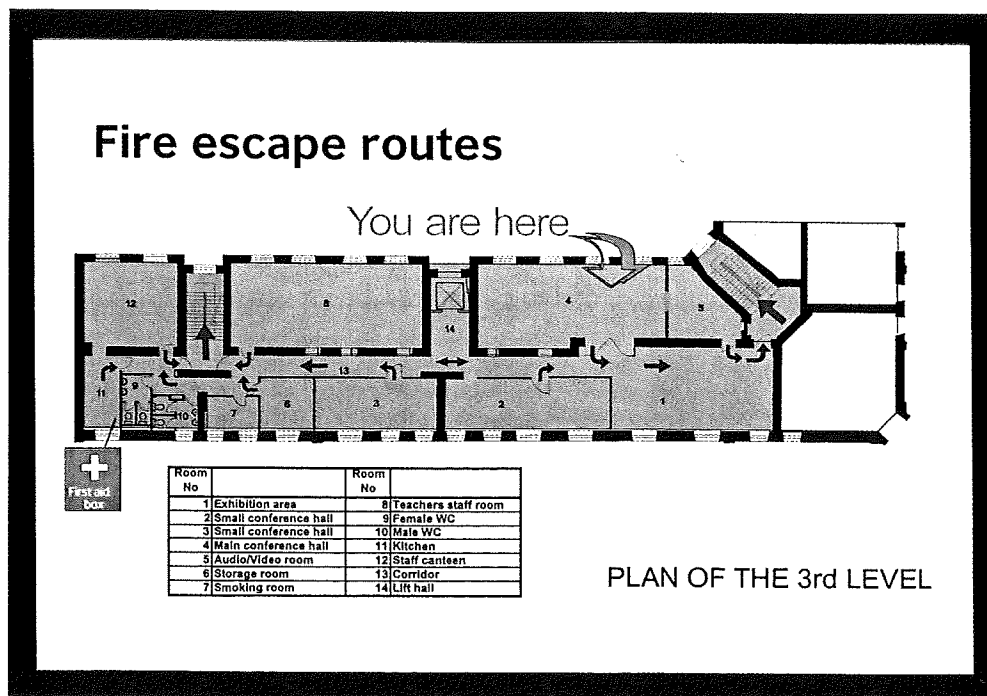


Figure 3.7: Fire escape routes depict all appropriate paths and exits.

An effective plan for evacuation does several things:

- Marks each route with signs and lights
- Provides emergency lighting (battery-powered)
- Makes sure that all exit doors open outward without keys
- Confirms that exit steps and ramps are marked, kept clear, and repaired as needed
- Selects one person responsible for checking remote areas (such as walk-in refrigerators, dry storage, and janitorial closets) to make sure everyone is evacuated

Developing and Maintaining an Evacuation Route

When planning evacuation routes, make sure there are at least two routes, using separate exit doors. Take into account where employees and guests will be and how big the facility is. This will help design a plan that moves people along the evacuation route and out of the building as quickly as possible. Consider anything that might slow the evacuation. For instance, guests with strollers or wheelchairs may need more time to leave the building. Plan a meeting place away from the building where staff can gather once evacuated. Table 3.3 outlines the five basic steps to maintaining evacuation routes.

Table 3.3: Five Basic Steps to Maintaining Evacuation Routes
1. Mark each route clearly with signs and lights. See Figure 3.8.
2. Provide additional battery-operated lights along the way; these will work in the event of a power outage.
3. Make sure that keys are not required to open any exit doors from inside the building; replace any locks that do require keys.
4. Keep all doors, staircases, pathways, and ramps that will be used in an evacuation clear of obstructions. See Figure 3.9.
5. Assign a staff member (one person for each shift, accounting for days off) to ensure that no other employees or guests are in out-of-the-way areas, like basement kitchens, storerooms, and bathrooms.



Figure 3.8: Mark each evacuation route with signs and lights.

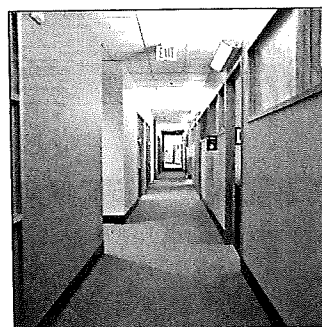


Figure 3.9: All doors, staircases, pathways, and ramps that will be used in an evacuation must be clear of obstructions.

Remember that no matter how well planned an evacuation route may seem on paper, it is worthless unless all employees know the plan. Make sure to train all staff on how to evacuate the building, and consider conducting practice drills to confirm that everyone knows and understands what to do in an emergency.

OSHA has an *Evacuation Plans and Procedures* tool available online that covers evacuation suggestions and recommendations for most emergencies.

Each employee should be trained in emergency plans and procedures during employment orientation. In addition, the company should run both scheduled and surprise emergency drills during the year.

Summary

In this section, you learned the following:

- Restaurants and foodservice operations are responsible for providing a safe environment and ensuring safe practices for their guests and employees.
- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is the federal agency that creates and enforces safety-related standards and regulations in the workplace.
- The Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) requires that all employers notify their employees about chemical hazards present on the job and train employees to use these materials safely.
- Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) describe hazards of the chemicals in a restaurant or foodservice operation. Each product has its own MSDS.
- General safety audits give an overview of the levels of safety in a restaurant or foodservice operation. Safety audits cover facilities, equipment, employee practices, and management practices.
- Accident reports are important because they signal that the safety program may need improvement.
- An emergency plan in a restaurant or foodservice operation protects property, workers, and guests in the case of an emergency or disaster.
- Protective clothing and equipment protect employees from potential hazards on the job.

Section 3.1 Review Questions

- 1 What is a liability?
- 2 What is the purpose of an MSDS?
- 3 What is the best way for managers to get employees to comply with safety standards?
- 4 What is a general safety audit and why is it important?
- 5 Flory Doyle of EcoSure believes that one of the biggest investments and assets a foodservice operation has are its employees. How does a general safety audit help to protect that investment?
- 6 Why should Linda update the restaurant's emergency evacuation plan?
- 7 When an on-the-job injury occurs, what information must a restaurant or foodservice operation report to OSHA? Why is this information necessary?
- 8 Take a look around your school's kitchen. Does it appear to meet the basic safety requirements? Create a list reflecting your idea of a complete safety inspection. If possible, conduct the inspection.

Section 3.1 Activities

1. Study Skills/Group Activity: Classroom Audit

Work with two other students to conduct a general safety audit of your classroom, your home, or another part of your school, as permitted. Present a brief oral report on your findings to the class.

2. Activity: Classroom Emergency Plan

Develop an emergency plan for your classroom. During a class discussion, compare your ideas with those of your classmates.

3. Critical Thinking: Employee Safety and Risk Training

You are the general manager for a small restaurant with about 75 seats and 15 employees. Develop a plan for employee safety and risk training. Your plan should include at least six steps.