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No Reservations

No Reservations **is a monthly newsletter published by RQA Inc. for the restaurant industry.**

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Proper Use and Storage of Chemicals

Restaurants need to use chemicals to properly operate their facilities. They must have access to hand soap, sanitizer, various cleaning chemicals, and sometimes pesticides. All though chemicals can be beneficial to the operation of the restaurant they can cause serious harm and sometimes fatal results if they are not properly used, stored, and disposed. Due to recent events regarding injuries associated with the improper use of chemicals in restaurants that have been nationally publicized, this may be a good opportunity to review proper handling and use of chemicals inside a restaurant.

Once management decides that a chemical is needed in their facility, they must validate that it is approved for use inside the restaurant. After the chemical has been properly validated, the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for that chemical must be available to management and staff. Typically, food facilities designate a special MSDS binder where all of the MSDSs are stored. It is generally recommended to have a table of contents that lists the MSDSs in alphabetical order. It is also recommended to highlight the common name of each chemical and the first aid section on each MSDS for easy reference in the event of an emergency.

Every food facility should have a chemical safety policy that declares that it is of the upmost importance to maintain the safety and welfare of all guests, employees and contractors that enter their facility. The policy should state that only restaurant approved chemicals are permitted for use in and around the facility, and no chemical can be brought in for use of any kind without permission from ownership. In the policy, it should state the importance of proper use, storage, and disposal of the approved chemicals used in the facility. Training of the staff must also be described in the policy. In this section, it is important to designate the trainer(s) and who will receive the training and when the training must be completed. It is recommended that management have the staff provide their signature that they have read and received training of how to properly use, store, and dispose chemicals. In the training, it should be strongly stressed that the staff should never mix chemicals. Mixing chemicals may result in dangerous substances that may be harmful or sometimes fatal. Please keep in mind that a major component of proper training is the supervision of the staff and providing appropriate feedback when there are opportunities for improvement and/or complementing them on a job well done.

All chemicals must be properly labeled. If bulk containers of chemicals are purchased with the intention of dispensing the chemicals into smaller containers (i.e. spray bottles), the smaller containers must be properly labeled with the common name of the chemical, where the chemical was manufactured, and all the applicable hazards associated with that chemical. In many instances, the chemical supplier will issue color-coded stickers with all the applicable safety information on the sticker that can then be affixed to the smaller containers. The color-coded labels are helpful in quickly identifying substances, especially in facilities where multiple languages are spoken.

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The storage of the chemicals must be separate from food, food contact equipment, utensils, linens, and single-use articles to prevent the potential for cross contamination. There should be designated storage areas for the bulk containers of chemicals. If possible, access to this area should be locked or under surveillance. The staff must understand that when they are using chemicals they must do so in a way that will not contaminate the food and food contact surfaces. They must be careful not to set down the containers in restricted areas. To help prevent this issue from occurring, management can designate predetermined storage areas of the bulk and smaller containers and identify those areas during training. Remember, there are many different types of chemicals that come in the form of white powders that may resemble salt, sugar, flour, etc.; and it is critical that staff not mistakenly use them as such. Medicines for personal use are considered chemicals as well, and they must be properly handled. To prevent misuse, personal medications must be labeled and stored in accordance with the requirements stated for poisonous or toxic materials. Proper labeling and storage of medicines is necessary to ensure that they are not accidentally misused or otherwise contaminate food or food-contact surfaces.

Once the chemical containers are empty or the chemical is no longer needed, the disposal of the container and/or unused chemical must be addressed. It is important to read the label for proper instructions for disposal because some chemicals may be considered hazardous waste and may require special requirements for disposal. This is particularly important with pesticides. The use of pesticides should be left to the professionals. It is the responsibility of the restaurant to ensure that when they hire a pest control operator (PCO) to service their facility, the company and technicians are licensed and insured. Using a licensed PCO has many benefits. First, they have been trained on what chemicals to use for identified pests and how they are required to be applied. Second, they take the chemicals with them. That way the restaurant doesn't have to worry about storage and disposal issues.

To prevent accidental injuries or fatalities it is critical that every restaurant develop a chemical safety plan. The plan should have a mission statement and address the proper purchase, storage, use, and disposal of the chemicals used in the facility. Remember, this can only be achieved through proper training and supervision of all staff.

Three Restaurants, Salt Lake City, UT. August 2014

The Salt Lake County Health Department closed three eateries last week for "presenting an imminent public health hazard."

Restaurant #1 was cited for 71 health violations on Aug. 8.

Citations included having an unclean meat cutter and other appliances; moldy bok choy in the walk-in cooler; insufficient refrigeration capacity; duck thawing at room temperature in a sink; cooked beef, chicken, shrimp and dumplings being kept on a counter at incorrect temperatures; and storing noodles in a laundry basket. The notice also said a skateboard was used to hold a wok.

Restaurant #2 was closed Aug. 6 after inspectors found 52 health violations.

The alleged infractions included having cooked tamales and meat not cooled to 41 degrees within 6 hours; having an unclean corn chopper and tamale maker, along with a reach-in cooler unable to hold potentially hazardous foods at or below 41 degrees; cooked corn, tamales, meat, chicken, rice and macaroni salad held at too high of a temperature; boxes of chicken stored on the floor; potentially hazardous food thawing in standing water; and using a shoelace to repair a three-compartment sink.

Authorities closed Restaurant #3 on Aug. 7. Inspectors found six health code violations, largely involving the establishment's lack of water and inadequate water-tank capacity.

All three restaurants may reopen when the violations are fixed and inspectors deem them safe for customers.

http://m.sltrib.com

Mexican Restaurant, Chicago, IL. August 2014

The taqueria was closed for one day by the Chicago Department of Public Health. The health inspectors found a myriad of violations in multiple inspections following a food poisoning claim, including "30 live roaches" in the building, an "employee who wiped his 'face, nose then immediately went on to handle ready to eat tortillas,'" and "raw pieces of beef on lettuce." The restaurant closed on Thursday and reopened on Friday.

In business since 1962, this restaurant is one of the highest-regarded taquerias in perhaps the best area for Mexican food in Chicago. All violations were corrected before reopening.

http://chicago.eater.com

Pizza Restaurant, Los Angeles, CA. August 2014

The Ventura County Environmental Health Division performed an inspection at the facility. The result of the inspection showed evidence of a rodent infestation, and multiple violations cited for unsanitary conditions. The facility was ordered closed. A re-inspection was conducted the following day and the facility was allowed to reopen.

http://www.ventura.org

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