

Make Good Use of Your Post-holiday Lull

Most restaurants find it relatively quiet after the busy holiday season — a good time to take stock and see what might make your operation run more smoothly. Do you need to look at staffing, scheduling, menu and décor changes? Do you need to change suppliers? Don't forget to include a review of your health and safety activities.

Having a basic health and safety program will make it easy for you to assess your workplace health and safety needs. If you already have a written program, this would be a good time to review and update it. If you don't, this is a good time to develop one. Either way, here's a list of basic program elements for you to review.

Ensure a safe workplace – Review your first-aid records to help identify common causes of injury, and develop safety plans for hazards you hadn't previously identified. Meet with your supervisors and employees to review their health and safety responsibilities, and be clear what your expectations are. This especially important if you've had staff turnover during the year.

Inspect for safety – Check your records to confirm periodic inspections of equip-

ment and work areas. If you don't have records, consider developing simple forms to remind supervisors and employees to make regular inspections.

Train your staff – Review training records to ensure that new employees received general orientation as well as specific training for their assigned duties. If you don't have records, try to find ways to track training activities. Ask employees who have taken on new responsibilities or equipment during the year if they felt adequately prepared. Check their knowledge and understanding. Consider developing written procedures to help staff with tasks that they seem unsure about or don't do often enough to remember easily.

Communications – Ask your staff if they felt they had opportunity throughout the year to raise safety issues and make suggestions. Consider including time for safety issues as part of other regular meetings you may have.

Track accidents – Check to see that injuries and near misses over the past year were investigated, even those where the causes seemed obvious. First aid records should show how injuries occurred. To help pre-

vent similar accidents in the future, you might prepare written procedures for tasks or activities associated with frequent injuries or near misses.

Keep records – Like other parts of your business, having written records will help your business run efficiently. Review your forms and record keeping systems, and ask your staff for suggestions and ideas on ways to make record keeping easier.

Ensure safety is part of your business – Include safety issues in your everyday business. For example, when you review your inventory system, schedule time for general clean-up of storage and work areas and removing clutter around aisles, stairs, doorways and shelves. Consider reorganizing storage areas and workflow activities to improve productivity as well as safety.

Those are the basics. For more information or help with your health and safety program, contact the Small Business Service Centre at: email, smallbiz@wcb.bc.ca phone, 604-276-3100 in the Mainland, or toll-free elsewhere to 1-888-7233. It's a call worth making. ☞

By Terri Holizki, WCB Industry Services Manager, Small Business

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