Food and Beverage Servers – Fact Sheet



WHAT DOES A SERVER DO?

The duties of servers, table wait staff, hostesses, bus-boys, and other food and hospitality personnel vary according to the workplace. The following is a general summary of duties these people have in common:

- Greet customers.
- Take orders and relay them to kitchen and bar staff.
- Pay attention to customers' special menu and dietary needs or restrictions, when applicable.
- Carry and serve food or drinks to customers.
- Determine method of payment, and prepare bills.
- Work with computers and other electronic devices.
- Clean up tables or kitchen.

What are some health and safety issues of servers?

Work environments such as restaurants, hotels and bars, where food and beverages are served, present a unique set of hazards.

The main health and safety issues for servers include:

- Exposure to cleaning products and other chemicals.
- Musculoskeletal injuries from standing for long hours, working in awkward positions, or performing repetitive manual tasks.
- Lifting or carrying heavy trays or other objects.
- Risks of burns from dishes, meals or drinks that are hot.
- Noise exposure.
- Slips, trips and falls.
- Stress.
- Dealing with difficult or potentially violent customers.
- Bullying
- Long hours of work or extended work days.
- Working alone, including working alone with money.
- Cuts from handling broken glassware.
- Fire or other emergencies
- Shift work
- Exposure to common viruses such as colds and seasonal influenza

What are some preventive measures for a server?

- Learn safe lifting techniques.
- Take breaks.
- Establish good hygiene practices.
- Wash your hands before eating, drinking or smoking, or after going to the toilet, and at the beginning and end of the day.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment and apparel for the task.
- Wear shoes with non-skid soles.
- Learn how to use equipment and tools safely.
- Learn how to deal with workplace stress.
- Maintain good housekeeping practices.
- Learn how to deal with violent customers and other situations.
- Learn and follow the organization’s violence and harassment prevention policy and procedures.
- Keep a first-aid kit/box within easy access.

Participate in Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) education and training. Follow labels and read the safety data sheet (SDS) for any hazardous product you use and follow recommended safety precautions.

What are some good general safe work practices?

- Practice safe lifting techniques.
- Follow company safety rules.
- Know how to report a hazard and near miss.
- Follow good housekeeping procedures.
- Work safely with chemicals according to recommended practices.
- Select the correct personal protective equipment. Use, maintain and store it according to manufacturer’s recommendations.
- Keep a mobile phone or other alternative means to contact a designated person when working alone.
- Use hand washing to reduce the risks of common infections.

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