Restaurant Industry Safety Playbook



Whether it’s the sizzle of a fryer, the clatter of a full dining room, or the hum of e-bikes at the back door, restaurant work is fast, hot, and unpredictable. Every shift blends sharp tools, slippery floors, open flames, crowded spaces, and high emotions. And behind every plated entrée or boxed-up order is a team that deserves to go home safe.

This **Restaurant Industry Safety Playbook** is built for **restaurant owners, safety professionals, managers, and supervisors** — whether you operate a single café, a multi-unit chain, or a national brand. We’ve designed it to support all roles across your business:

- **Back-of-House (BOH):** Line cooks, prep chefs, dishwashers, kitchen managers
- **Front-of-House (FOH):** Servers, hosts, bussers, bartenders
- **Delivery Personnel:** Drivers, cyclists, runners — whether third-party or in-house
- **Leadership:** General managers, shift supervisors, area directors

Why This Playbook?

Restaurants have some of the highest **injury and illness rates** of any service industry. According to WorkSafeBC and OSHA data:

- Slips, trips, and falls are the **#1 cause of injury** in restaurants, accounting for more than 40% of lost-time claims.
- Burns, lacerations, repetitive strain, and chemical exposures are daily risks — especially in understaffed or rushed kitchens.
- Front-of-house staff face increasing rates of **harassment, aggression, and emotional stress**, especially in high-volume or late-night operations.
- Delivery drivers and cyclists deal with mobile distraction, weather extremes, and traffic collisions — often with minimal training or PPE.

These aren’t just numbers. They’re preventable injuries that cost time, morale, money, and — too often — reputation.

What’s Inside?

This Playbook includes **9 structured modules**, each blending real-world case

examples, step-by-step strategies, and practical templates or tools you can implement immediately. Topics include:

1. **The Business Case for Safety:** How to turn risk reduction into productivity, retention, and brand value.
2. **Hazard Identification & Risk Assessment:** Mapping every job task — from knife work to crowd control to e-bike deliveries.
3. **Control Strategies:** Engineering, administrative, and PPE controls, tailored to restaurant workflows.
4. **Culture & Leadership:** Boosting visible safety leadership and frontline participation.
5. **Training & Competency:** Role-based training plans, microlearning, and on-the-job signoffs.
6. **Incident Management & Learning:** Near-miss reporting, root-cause investigations, and embedding lessons.
7. **Metrics & Improvement:** Using safety KPIs, maturity models, and PDCA cycles.
8. **Emerging Risks:** From psychosocial burnout to lithium-ion battery fires and climate resilience.
9. **Safety Talks:** Three 2,000-word, ready-to-read scripts for supervisors — covering spill prevention, winter slips, and mobile distractions.

How to Use It

- **Download and share the full Playbook** with your area managers, safety leads, or corporate training team.
- **Use each module independently** — whether you're building a safety culture from scratch or leveling up an existing program.
- **Print or read aloud the Safety Talks** for pre-shift huddles, new hire onboarding, or refresher sessions.
- **Adapt tools and templates** to fit your operation — each checklist, risk map, or RCA method can be scaled to suit.

What You'll Achieve

With this Playbook, you'll be equipped to:

- Reduce incidents and workers' comp costs
- Improve compliance with provincial/state health & safety standards
- Support a stronger safety culture and happier team
- Keep customers confident, investors assured, and regulators off your back

And most importantly, you'll make safety **something that isn't just talked about — it's done**, every shift, every role, every meal.

Next Up: Module 1 — Aligning Safety with Business Goals, where we'll connect the dots between safety, brand protection, retention, and your bottom line.

- **Module One**

Module Two

- **Module Three**
- **Module Four**
- **Module Five**
- **Module Six**
- **Module Seven**
- **Module Eight**
- **Module Nine**

- **Module One**

Module 1: Aligning Safety with Business Goals in Restaurants

Safety in restaurants isn't just about compliance — it's about operations, morale, and brand. A safe restaurant is more productive, more profitable, and more appealing to both customers and staff. But to make safety a core driver of your business, it needs to be woven into every part of your strategy — from hiring and training to menu design, customer service, and delivery.

1.1 The Business Case for Safety

Let's start with the hard truth:
Injuries in the restaurant industry cost more than just a claim. They affect:

- **Productivity:** Injured employees lead to missed shifts, schedule gaps, and slower service.
- **Turnover:** Unsafe workplaces push out top talent — and increase the cost of recruitment and onboarding.
- **Guest Experience:** Staff under stress or distraction are more likely to make mistakes that affect quality and service.
- **Reputation:** A viral photo of a slip on a greasy floor or a video of a server carrying 12 plates down a cluttered path can undo years of goodwill.
- **Legal Liability:** Fines, investigations, and lawsuits cost far more than prevention.

ROI of Safety Investments:

- According to the National Safety Council, every $1 invested in workplace
- safety returns $4–$6 in improved productivity, retention, and risk

reduction.
- A restaurant group in Ontario reported a 25% drop in claims after implementing a daily floor inspection program — saving $38,000 in premiums in one year.

1.2 Safety as a Brand Advantage

More customers are choosing restaurants based not just on food or price — but on values. That includes:

- How you treat your workers
- Whether your kitchen practices are safe and clean
- How you respond to incidents or emergencies
- How you support diversity, inclusion, and respect in the workplace

Public-facing safety culture = customer loyalty.

- Chain restaurants that openly share their safety and sanitation practices (e.g., QR codes linking to food safety protocols or behind-the-scenes videos) have seen improved online reviews and staff pride.
- Quick-service restaurants with strong training programs report faster onboarding, fewer customer complaints, and higher order accuracy.

1.3 Aligning with Operational Priorities

Restaurant safety can support — not slow down — key operational goals:

Operational Goal	How Safety Helps
Speed & Efficiency	**Safer workflows = fewer disruptions and smoother shift transitions**
Staff Retention	**Employees stay where they feel protected and respected**
Cost Control	**Fewer claims, fines, and emergency repairs**
Quality Control	**Focused, well-trained teams make fewer errors**
Guest Satisfaction	**Happy, uninjured staff give better service**

1.4 Safety as Part of Leadership DNA

Top-performing restaurants don’t silo safety. They:

- Set safety KPIs at the **executive level** (e.g., incident-free shifts, claim costs per location)
- Include safety questions in **management performance reviews**
- Make safety part of **daily line-ups** and **weekly ops meetings**
- Share safety success stories — just like they share sales goals

Example:
A U.S.-based franchise with 40+ locations introduced a “Safety Snapshot” at every Monday manager meeting: a 3-minute update on last week’s incidents, near misses, and corrective actions. Within six months, they cut claims in half —

just by making it visible.

1.5 Connecting Safety to Risk Appetite

Every restaurant has a different risk tolerance. Fine dining, late-night pubs, fast casual, ghost kitchens — they all carry different exposures.

Ask:

- How much risk are we willing to take with equipment maintenance?
- How fast are we willing to onboard new hires before verifying competency?
- What's our tolerance for repeat minor injuries (burns, slips, cuts)?
- Are we managing delivery risk or outsourcing it without oversight?

Your safety plan must match your risk appetite. That means defining **acceptable vs. unacceptable risks**, and making sure your policies reflect that balance.

1.6 Engaging Stakeholders

To embed safety deeply, every level of the business must buy in:

Who	Role in Safety
Owners & Executives	**Set vision, allocate budget, champion safe culture**
General & Shift Managers	**Model behaviors, enforce rules, coach staff**
Supervisors & Team Leads	**Conduct inspections, lead safety talks, report issues**
Employees	**Follow procedures, speak up, support each other**
Customers (indirectly)	**Influence reputation and expectations for a safe, respectful space**

1.7 Building the Business Case: A Quick Checklist

Want buy-in from leadership? Use this 5-point checklist to connect safety with business priorities:

Benchmark Current Costs: Total claims, lost days, turnover, guest complaints
Highlight Preventable Events: Past slips, burns, or equipment damage that cost real money
Show Case Studies: Internal or industry examples of cost savings through prevention
Align Metrics: Tie safety outcomes to business KPIs (retention, cost per hire, revenue per seat)
Propose a Pilot: Suggest a small-scale intervention (e.g., anti-slip floor mat program or safety huddles) and measure results

1.8 Module 1 Summary

Safety in the restaurant industry isn't a cost center — it's a growth lever. When you align safety with business goals, you improve operations, protect your people, retain your best staff, and build a brand customers trust.

In the next module, we'll break down how to systematically **identify hazards and assess risks** in every area of your restaurant — from kitchen to bar to delivery zone.

Let's make every shift safer — and smarter.

- **Module Two**

Module 2: Hazard Identification & Risk Assessment in Restaurants

If Module 1 made the business case for safety, this module gives you the tools to map your risks — because you can't fix what you don't see. From sizzling kitchens to slippery dining rooms, hazards hide in plain sight. This module walks you through how to uncover them systematically using job-task analysis (JTA), qualitative and quantitative risk scoring, and specialized tools like bow-tie analysis and failure mode and effects analysis (FMEA).

2.1 Understanding the Restaurant Hazard Landscape

The restaurant environment is uniquely dense with hazards:

- **Back-of-House (BOH):** Burns, cuts, strains, chemical exposure, equipment failure
- **Front-of-House (FOH):** Slips, harassment, crowd control, emotional stress
- **Delivery:** Vehicle collisions, mobile distractions, exposure to violence or weather
- **Management & Admin:** Ergonomic injuries, psychosocial stress, legal exposure

These risks vary by operation type (e.g., quick service vs. fine dining) and shift (e.g., morning prep vs. late-night bar close). To manage them, you need a structured, repeatable process.

2.2 Job-Task Analysis (JTA)

Start by mapping every role in your restaurant and breaking down their daily tasks.

Example: Line Cook

Task	**Subtasks**	**Hazards**
Prepping ingredients	**Chopping, blending, mixing**	**Cuts, repetitive motion**
Cooking hot foods	**Grilling, frying, sautéing**	**Burns, splashes, fire**
Cleaning station	**Scrubbing, chemical use**	**Slips, chemical exposure**

Do this for every major role: dishwashers, hosts, servers, delivery drivers, barbacks, shift leads. Use forms or digital templates to capture:

- What the task involves
- What tools/equipment are used

- What can go wrong
- Past incidents or close calls associated with it

2.3 Hazard Mapping

Once tasks are mapped, develop a **Hazard Map** of your space. This is a floor plan with hazard zones identified.

Sample BOH Hazard Map

- **Grill Station:** High burn risk, grease splash zone
- **Dish Pit:** Wet floor, chemical risk, repetitive strain
- **Walk-In Cooler:** Cold exposure, slip hazard at threshold
- **Dry Storage:** Ladder use, trip hazard from open boxes

Use color codes or heat maps to visualize intensity and overlap. This gives you a clear spatial reference for training, inspections, and control planning.

2.4 Risk Scoring: Qualitative + Quantitative

Assign a **Risk Score** to each hazard by rating:

- **Likelihood (L):** How often does it happen?
- **Severity (S):** What happens if it does?

Then apply: **Risk = L × S**

Hazard	Likelihood (1–5)	Severity (1–5)	Risk Score	Priority
Fryer splash burn	**4**	**4**	**16**	**High**
Trip in dry storage	**3**	**2**	**6**	**Medium**
Knife laceration	**2**	**4**	**8**	**High**
Customer aggression	**1**	**5**	**5**	**Medium**

Focus resources first on **high-risk, high-frequency** hazards.

2.5 Bow-Tie Analysis for Complex Hazards

For more serious or complex risks (e.g., gas leaks, active aggression, fryer fires), use **Bow-Tie Analysis**:

- The “knot” is the incident (e.g., fire)
- Left side = causes (poor maintenance, oil overfill)
- Right side = consequences (burns, evacuation, lost revenue)
- “Barriers” sit on both sides to prevent the causes and mitigate outcomes

This is a visual and powerful way to engage teams and plan layered controls.

2.6 Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA)

Use **FMEA** when you want to drill into **how things fail** — like with new equipment, complex prep lines, or delivery routing tools.

For each step, list:

1. **Failure Mode** – What could go wrong?
2. **Effect** – What would happen?
3. **Cause** – Why might it happen?
4. **Detection** – How likely are we to catch it before failure?
5. **Risk Priority Number (RPN)** = Severity × Occurrence × Detection

Use this to prioritize maintenance, training, or technology improvements.

2.7 Special Focus: Psychosocial & Ergonomic Hazards

Not all hazards are physical. Restaurants are high-stress environments with:

- **Emotional strain:** Handling rush hours, angry customers, or tipping issues
- **Cognitive overload:** Multitasking across orders, allergies, drink timing
- **Ergonomic stressors:** Repetitive motions (chopping, serving), awkward postures (reaching, stooping)

Include these in your risk assessments – particularly for retention and long-term disability prevention.

2.8 Involving the Whole Team

Hazard ID is a team sport. Involve:

- **Managers:** During pre-shift walks and inspections
- **Frontline staff:** In hazard mapping and reviewing risk scores
- **Safety committees:** To review trends and assign priorities
- **Vendors:** Especially if they're installing or servicing equipment

Use participatory walkthroughs – get staff to point out what's unsafe in their space.

2.9 Module 2 Summary

Hazards in restaurants aren't always obvious – until someone gets hurt. That's why systematic job-task analysis, risk scoring, and mapping are essential. When you map risk proactively, you stop playing defense – and start building a culture where every hazard has an owner and every fix has a plan.

Next up: Module 3 – Control Strategies, where we'll translate those risk maps into specific actions, upgrades, and protections using the Hierarchy of Controls.

- **Module Three**

Module 3: Control Strategies for Restaurant Safety

Applying the Hierarchy of Controls to Kitchen, Front-of-House & Delivery Risks

Once you've mapped your restaurant's hazards and assigned risk scores, the next step is to implement **controls**. But not all controls are equal. A warning sign

doesn’t carry the same power as redesigning a workstation to eliminate the hazard altogether.

This module walks you through the **Hierarchy of Controls** — from most effective to least — and shows how to apply it across common restaurant scenarios.

3.1 Understanding the Hierarchy of Controls

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defines the control hierarchy as:

1. **Elimination** – Remove the hazard entirely
2. **Substitution** – Replace it with something safer
3. **Engineering Controls** – Isolate people from the hazard
4. **Administrative Controls** – Change how people work
5. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** – Protect the individual

Let’s explore how each of these plays out in real restaurant settings.

3.2 Elimination

The gold standard of safety: removing the hazard altogether.

Examples:

- **BOH:** Replace fryers with air fryers or oven-based processes to eliminate hot oil burns
- **FOH:** Eliminate server-carry trays if robotics or food runners can safely handle large loads
- **Delivery:** Remove in-house delivery if you shift to third-party services with strong OHS practices

Challenges:
Elimination often requires redesigning workflows or accepting operational trade-offs. But it’s worth considering when injury patterns repeat.

3.3 Substitution

When you can’t eliminate a hazard, replace it with a safer alternative.

Examples:

- Switch from **caustic degreasers** to enzyme-based cleaners
- Use **cut-resistant gloves** instead of standard cotton gloves in prep
- Replace heavy glassware with **lightweight polycarbonate** versions
- Use **induction burners** instead of open flame cooktops where possible

Tip: Evaluate new suppliers and equipment with substitution in mind. Ask: “Is there a safer version of this tool, process, or chemical?”

3.4 Engineering Controls

This is where safety meets design. Engineering controls physically separate the hazard from the person.

Examples:

Area	Engineering Control
Kitchen	Splash guards between fryer and grill
Dish Pit	Anti-fatigue mats with beveled edges
Walk-In	Automatic door-closer with internal lighting
FOH	Anti-slip stair treads on dining-level transitions
Delivery	Lockboxes for safe food drop-offs

Pro tip: Maintenance matters. An engineering control that isn't cleaned, calibrated, or inspected regularly can become a hazard itself.

3.5 Administrative Controls

These controls change how people interact with hazards — through procedures, scheduling, signage, and supervision.

Examples:

- Rotate prep and grill cooks every 90 minutes to reduce repetitive strain
- Implement "call and confirm" systems before deep cleaning walk-ins
- Enforce knife storage policies (blades up, not down)
- Schedule mid-shift safety huddles to reset focus during rush hours
- Use color-coded systems for allergen handling or chemical storage

These controls require training, discipline, and reinforcement — but they often fill the gaps where engineering is cost-prohibitive.

3.6 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE is your **last line of defense**, not your first.

Common PPE in Restaurants:

Job Role	Recommended PPE
Line Cook	Non-slip shoes, cut-resistant gloves, apron
Dishwasher	Chemical gloves, face shield
Server	Non-slip shoes, back support belt (if lifting)
Delivery Driver	Reflective vest, weather-proof gloves

Key Takeaway: PPE works best when:

- It's job-specific
- Workers are trained on fit, care, and limits
- It's maintained and replaced regularly
- It doesn't introduce new hazards (e.g., fogged goggles)

3.7 Matching Controls to Risk

Use a layered approach. For high-risk tasks, apply multiple controls.

Example: Deep Fryer Safety

- **Elimination:** Use air fryer (if possible)
- **Substitution:** Switch to low-splash oil
- **Engineering:** Install oil-splash guard
- **Administrative:** Create “Hot Oil Transfer” SOP
- **PPE:** Provide arm guards, gloves, face shields

This layered approach increases safety and resilience — because no single control is failproof.

3.8 Cost-Benefit Snapshot

Control Type	Initial Cost	Ongoing Cost	ROI Example
Engineering	**$$$**	**$**	**Anti-slip flooring = 70% fall drop**
Administrative	**$**	**$$**	**SOPs & shift rotation = fewer claims**
PPE	**$**	**$$**	**Gloves = 40% fewer cuts**

Bottom line: The most effective controls aren’t always the most expensive — just the most thoughtful.

3.9 Module 3 Summary

Control strategies bring your risk assessments to life. By applying the Hierarchy of Controls — from elimination to PPE — you create real, visible protections that reduce injury, boost confidence, and build trust. Whether it’s a simple glove upgrade or a redesigned cleaning routine, every layer matters.

In the next module, we’ll focus on **building a safety culture** — one that empowers every employee to care about safety as much as you do.

Here is **Module 4: Building a Safety Culture in Restaurants**.

- **Module Four**

Module 4: Building a Safety Culture in Restaurants

From Compliance to Commitment — Making Safety Everyone’s Job

You’ve identified hazards. You’ve mapped controls. But even the best systems fail without people buying in. A true safety culture is what turns rules into habits and procedures into shared values.

In the restaurant world — where turnover is high, speed is prized, and stress is constant — building a safety culture means going beyond policies. It's about leadership, participation, reinforcement, and accountability, woven into daily service just like prep, plating, and cleaning.

This module shows how to make safety a visible, personal, and continuous part of your restaurant's DNA.

4.1 What Is a Safety Culture?

At its core, safety culture is what your team does when nobody's watching.

It's the difference between:

- **Wearing non-slip shoes because they're required** vs. **because you've seen a co-worker fall**
- **Reporting a near miss** vs. **shrugging it off to avoid "drama"**
- **Following the SOP** vs. **improvising to save 10 seconds**

Strong safety cultures are built on **four pillars**:

1. **Leadership Commitment**
2. **Employee Involvement**
3. **Reinforcement and Feedback**
4. **Learning and Accountability**

4.2 Leadership Commitment: Walk the Talk

Your team mirrors what management prioritizes.

Action Steps:

- **Pre-Shift Safety Talks:** Daily 3-minute refreshers on key hazards
- **Visible Leadership Walkthroughs:** Managers do regular safety rounds, not just QA checks
- **Rapid Follow-Up:** Address reported issues within 24 hours — nothing kills culture faster than silence
- **Safety KPIs:** Track and reward leading indicators (e.g., near misses reported) in the same breath as food costs and service time

Example: When a regional manager joins a shift and starts by inspecting the dish pit matting, it signals that safety matters just as much as food temp logs.

4.3 Employee Involvement: Listen, Empower, Respect

Culture isn't a top-down mandate. It's co-created.

Engagement Strategies:

- **Safety Champions:** Designate peer leaders in each department to lead huddles or track checklists
- **Suggestion Boards:** Make it easy to submit ideas or spot hazards (digital or physical)
- **Participatory SOP Updates:** When revising procedures, include the people doing the task
- **Recognition Programs:** "Caught Being Safe" shoutouts, peer nominations, team

pizza for incident-free months

Why it matters: People take care of what they help build. If they own it, they protect it.

4.4 Communication: Keep It Fresh, Clear, and Two-Way

A wall of posters or a dusty binder doesn't change behavior.

Tips for Powerful Communication:

- **Change the Medium Often:** Use break room posters, text alerts, kitchen whiteboards, shift meetings, training apps
- **Keep Messages Actionable:** "Use two hands when emptying fryer oil" is better than "Be careful"
- **Storytelling > Rules:** Share real incidents from your own or other locations — it makes the risk real
- **Invite Feedback:** "What should we improve about our cleanup SOP?" creates dialogue and trust

4.5 Peer-to-Peer Accountability

Culture grows strongest when co-workers look out for each other.

Examples:

- A server reminds another to wipe up a spill instead of walking by
- A cook adjusts a grill station mat after noticing someone trip
- A dishwasher flags an unlabeled chemical jug during the pre-close check

Encourage:

- Speaking up without punishment
- Appreciating interventions instead of resenting them
- Framing feedback as protection, not policing

Pro Tip: Role-play "how to intervene respectfully" during training to build confidence and reduce defensiveness.

4.6 Positive Reinforcement & Recognition

Fear-based cultures don't last. People need to feel safe **to be safe.**

Build a Recognition Loop:

Action	**Recognition**
Reporting a hazard	**Instant thank-you + name in log**
Using proper lifting	**Manager shoutout during huddle**
Spotting a PPE defect	**Gift card draw or crew lunch**
Leading a safety huddle	**Certificate or time-off reward**

Even simple “thank yous” in the moment go further than policy documents ever will.

4.7 Corrective Action vs. Discipline

Mistakes happen. The question is: do we fix systems or blame people?

Shift the mindset:

- From: “Who messed this up?”
- To: “What allowed this to happen — and how do we prevent it again?”

Coaching Models Work Best When:

- Expectations were clear
- The behavior was unintentional
- A system flaw contributed (e.g., confusing SOP, broken tool, understaffing)

Use progressive discipline only for repeat, willful violations — never for first-time safety issues unless egregious.

4.8 Cultural Assessments: Are You There Yet?

Want to measure your culture? Ask:

- Do staff report hazards without fear?
- Do they intervene when a co-worker skips PPE?
- Are near misses logged and learned from?
- Do leaders prioritize safety visibly and often?

Use anonymous surveys, focus groups, or third-party assessments to get the full picture.

4.9 Module 4 Summary

Culture is the multiplier. The same controls and SOPs work twice as well in a team that watches each other’s backs. Building a safety culture isn’t a one-time campaign — it’s a mindset shift backed by leadership, trust, recognition, and follow-through.

Next, we’ll cover **Module 5: Targeted Training**, where you’ll design role-specific onboarding and refreshers that actually stick — whether you’re training a new line cook, a server with three years of experience, or a closing shift lead.

- **Module Five**

Module 5: Targeted Training for Restaurant Safety

Role-Based, Real-Time, and Reinforced

Training isn’t just about onboarding — it’s about building muscle memory that lasts through every lunch rush, dinner shift, and deep clean. In the restaurant industry, where teams juggle heat, blades, spills, slips, stress, and service —

all while on their feet — **targeted, practical, and recurring training** is what keeps people safe.

This module outlines how to design and deliver role-specific safety training that sticks, scales, and supports a zero-injury culture.

5.1 The Case for Role-Based Safety Training

Generic safety videos don't cut it in a fast-paced kitchen or dining room.

Why tailored training matters:

- **Line cooks** need training on burns, cuts, and pace-of-service under pressure
- **Servers** need it on trip hazards, lifting trays, handling hot plates
- **Dishwashers** face wet surfaces, sharp tools, and chemical exposure
- **Hosts & FOH** deal with customer interactions, allergens, and front-door slips
- **Delivery drivers** manage mobile distractions, urban driving, and late-night security
- **Supervisors** need to coach, inspect, and lead safe behaviors across teams

Each role faces unique risks. Your training should reflect that.

5.2 Training Lifecycle: Onboarding to Refreshers

1. Orientation / Onboarding (Day 1–7)

Deliver baseline safety expectations through:

- **Live walk-throughs** of the space
- **Demonstrations** of equipment and tasks
- **Checklists** with sign-offs for critical topics
- **Job shadowing** under a trained peer

Onboarding must include:

Area	Key Topics
Kitchen staff	Knife handling, burns, slips, cleaning chemicals, PPE use
Dish team	Sharps disposal, splash protection, ergonomic lifting
FOH	Spills, allergen protocol, lifting trays, customer aggression
Delivery	Defensive driving, weather conditions, lone-worker security
Managers	Incident response, hazard reporting, coaching safety behaviors

2. Probation Checkpoint (30 Days)

Assess retention and compliance:

- **Quiz or checklist review** (e.g., where's the eyewash? how do you report a hazard?)
- **Observation** during a typical task (e.g., safe grill clean, mop spill

procedure)
- **Feedback session** to clarify gaps

This checkpoint is crucial — it allows correction before bad habits set in.

3. Annual Refreshers

Use blended learning: combine e-learning with short, scenario-based in-person sessions.

Ideas:

- 15-minute "micro modules" before shift (e.g., "Grease Trap Cleaning: Avoiding Ammonia Burn")
- Refresher on **slip-trip-fall controls** at season change
- Roleplay drills for **chemical exposure or fire evacuation**

5.3 Microlearning & Just-in-Time Training

Attention spans are short. Kitchens are loud. That's why **bite-sized training works best**.

Use formats like:

- 3-minute videos on staff app
- QR code posters linking to "how-to" videos (e.g., "how to wrap a knife safely")
- Pre-shift huddles with 60-second safety tip (e.g., "3-point contact on ladders")
- Pop quizzes built into scheduling software or POS log-ins

Example: Before a winter weather shift, your app delivers:
"Today's delivery tip: Assume every step is slick — walk like a penguin, not like a chef."

5.4 Competency-Based Sign-Offs

Don't assume someone is "trained" just because they watched a video.

Competency = observed, correct, repeatable performance

Build **task-specific sign-off sheets** for:

- Cleaning fryer oil
- Carrying full tray up stairs
- Using the Hobart dishwasher safely
- Conducting allergen cross-contamination checks
- Proper use of cut-resistant gloves and slicers

Format:

Task	Date Observed	Observer Initials	Comments

Task	Date Observed	Observer Initials	Comments
Use of mandolin slicer	Jan 2	AB	Used hand guard consistently

5.5 Cross-Training & Job Rotation

Cross-training enhances safety:

- Reduces repetitive strain by rotating tasks
- Broadens hazard awareness (e.g., FOH staff learn dish pit wet zones)
- Builds empathy — team members understand each other's challenges
- Fills gaps when someone is injured, reducing risk of overwork

Example Schedule:

Day	Cook A	Cook B
Mon	Grill	Prep
Tue	Prep	Fryer
Wed	Fryer	Grill

This keeps tasks fresh and injuries lower.

5.6 Supervisor-Led Toolbox Talks

The best training is **peer-delivered, conversational, and grounded in your kitchen**.

How to run a 5-minute talk:

1. Pick one real incident (burn, cut, slip, etc.)
2. Describe what happened
3. Ask: "What could have gone wrong here?"
4. Rehearse the correct procedure
5. End with: "What should we watch out for today?"

Use these as part of your **Module 9 Safety Talks** or build your own based on recent trends.

5.7 Tracking & Documentation

Training records protect your people — and your business.

Use digital systems or spreadsheets to log:

- Completion of onboarding
- Date of last refresher
- Competency sign-offs
- Certifications (e.g., WHMIS, First Aid, FoodSafe)
- Disciplinary actions or retraining triggers

Make sure records are:

- Easy to retrieve (for inspections or audits)
- Updated regularly
- Linked to roles, not just individuals

5.8 Training KPIs to Track

Metric	Target
% of staff with up-to-date onboarding	**100%**
Average time to complete incident retraining	**<48 hours**
Number of safety talks delivered/month	**≥4**
% of tasks with competency sign-offs	**≥90%**

Use these to spot trends and adjust your program.

5.9 Module 5 Summary

Training isn't an event — it's a cycle. When you tailor it to the actual risks of each role, use short and repeatable formats, track performance, and involve supervisors, your people don't just *learn* safety — they live it.

In **Module 6**, we'll dive into **Incident Management & Learning Systems** — including how to capture near misses, conduct root-cause analysis, and make sure every injury or close call leads to smarter operations.

- **Module Six**

Module 6: Incident Management & Learning Systems for Restaurants

From Near Miss to Culture Shift

Even with smart training and strong controls in place, things will go wrong. A server slips on a wet floor. A prep cook cuts their hand on a mandoline. A dishwasher feels dizzy after mixing bleach and degreaser. In restaurants — where pace, pressure, and multitasking are constants — near misses and incidents are inevitable.

What separates safe restaurants from unsafe ones isn't how often incidents happen. It's how they respond. This module shows you how to turn every incident into a learning moment that prevents the next one.

6.1 Why Capture Every Incident — Even "Almosts"

A "near miss" is an event that didn't cause harm this time — but easily could have.

Example:

A server carrying a tray slips but catches themselves. No injury. But the cause — leaky ice bin, blocked drain, slippery floor — remains.

Ignoring it means the next person might not be so lucky.

Benefits of capturing near misses:

- Identify hazards before they escalate
- Show staff you take safety seriously
- Track trends over time
- Build a feedback loop for improvement

6.2 Making Reporting Easy and Stigma-Free

If reporting a spill or a near miss is hard, embarrassing, or leads to blame, people won't do it.

Best practices:

- **Anonymous options:** Let staff report via QR code, app, or suggestion box
- **Instant feedback:** "Thanks, we've logged your report" confirms their effort is seen
- **Open-door policy:** Train supervisors to respond with curiosity, not criticism
- **No-blame framing:** Focus on what went wrong in the system, not who to blame

Sample signage:
"Close Call? Tell Us — So It Doesn't Happen for Real. No Blame. Just Fix It."

6.3 Triage: Prioritizing Response by Risk

Not every event needs a full investigation — but serious or repeat events do.

Suggested Triage Levels:

Priority	Example	Response Time
Critical	**Deep fryer fire, chemical splash to eyes, broken walk-in cooler door**	**Investigate within 4 hrs**
Significant	**Laceration needing stitches, trip over cords, slip near front entry**	**Investigate within 24 hrs**
Routine	**No-injury near misses, unreported hazards discovered later**	**Review at weekly safety meeting**

Use a simple **incident log** to track these with fields like:

- Date/time
- Location
- Role involved
- Type (cut, slip, chemical, etc.)
- Immediate actions taken
- Follow-up status

6.4 Root Cause Analysis (RCA): Ask Why Until You Know

Don’t stop at “server slipped” or “cook cut themselves.” Ask *why?* Then ask *why* again — until you get to the real cause.

For simple events:
Use the **5 Whys** technique.
Example:

1. Why did Sam cut their hand? → The knife slipped
2. Why? → The cutting board slid
3. Why? → It wasn’t anchored
4. Why? → No grip pad under it
5. Why? → We ran out and no one restocked

For serious events:
Use a **Fishbone Diagram** or **TapRooT®-style map** to examine:

- Equipment
- People
- Processes
- Environment
- Training
- Communication

Involve the people closest to the task — they know what actually happens, not just what the SOP says.

6.5 Corrective Actions: SMART and Tracked

“Be more careful” is not a corrective action. Good corrective actions are:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Achievable**
- **Relevant**
- **Time-bound**

Hierarchy of Control Applied to Restaurant Hazards:

Control Type	**Example**
Elimination	**Remove broken slicer from use**
Substitution	**Replace hazardous degreaser with a safer one**
Engineering	**Install anti-fatigue mats or cut-resistant gloves**
Administrative	**Add slip-cleanup logs every 2 hours**
PPE	**Mandate safety goggles during chemical handling**

Track with a dashboard:

- Who owns the action?
- Due date?
- Completed?
- Verified?

Review status at each weekly safety huddle or manager meeting.

6.6 Embedding Lessons into Training and SOPs

A “one-and-done” fix is never enough. The next step is to **spread the learning**.

Tools for embedding lessons:

- **Safety Bulletins:** “What happened, what we fixed, what you need to do” (1 page max)
- **Toolbox Talks:** Turn major incidents into 5-minute discussion topics
- **Update SOPs:** If the fix requires a procedural change, update it officially and retrain
- **E-Learning Refreshers:** Add incident scenarios to online modules
- **Scenario Role-Plays:** Have teams practice how to respond to similar events

6.7 Closing the Loop with PDCA

Every incident is part of your **Plan–Do–Check–Act** cycle.

1. **Plan:** Identify trends (e.g., repeated slips in dish pit)
2. **Do:** Install matting, retrain staff, adjust workflow
3. **Check:** Monitor if incident rate drops over 2–4 weeks
4. **Act:** Lock in the solution – or try another if it didn’t work

Sample Metrics to Track:

Indicator	**Target**
Near misses per month	**≥2 per staff member**
Incident follow-up completion	**100% within 7 days**
Repeat event rate	**<10%**
Staff confidence in reporting (survey)	**≥90% positive**

6.8 Building a Culture of Learning

If every incident is treated as a lesson – not a liability – you unlock continuous improvement.

What this looks like in action:

- A server tells their manager, “I almost dropped a hot plate – the gloves don’t fit.” The manager orders smaller sizes and logs the event.
- A dishwasher logs a near slip during close. The fix? A 9pm floor squeegee routine added to the checklist.
- A line cook reports two minor hand cuts in one week. The response? A fresh demo on glove use, and mandatory cuts-training for new hires.

Small changes. Big outcomes.

6.9 Module 6 Summary

Incident management isn't about paperwork — it's about people. When you make reporting easy, investigate the "why," fix the root cause, and embed the learning, you move from reaction to prevention. Over time, this builds trust, strengthens systems, and prevents injuries.

Next: In **Module 7: Safety Metrics & Continuous Improvement**, we'll show you how to track leading and lagging indicators, use dashboards that matter, and evolve your safety program as your restaurant grows.

- **Module Seven**

Module 7: Safety Metrics & Continuous Improvement

What Gets Measured Gets Managed — And Improved

You can't fix what you don't track. And in a restaurant — where incidents can go unnoticed, and safety culture can slip under pressure — having the right metrics in place makes the invisible visible.

But numbers alone won't create change. This module shows you how to use **leading and lagging safety indicators**, monitor them through easy-to-understand dashboards, and drive continuous improvement through the **PDCA cycle** (Plan–Do–Check–Act). With the right rhythm, your safety program won't just react to problems — it will evolve with your team and your operations.

7.1 Understanding Leading vs. Lagging Indicators

Lagging Indicators: What Already Happened

These are outcome-based metrics — important, but backward-looking.

Metric	Description
Total Recordable Incident Rate (TRIR)	**Injuries per 100 workers/year**
Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate (LTIFR)	**Injuries causing missed shifts**
Workers' Comp Claims	**Costs and frequency**
Equipment Damage	**E.g., dropped fryer baskets, broken slicers**
Insurance Premium Trends	**Increases or rebates tied to claims**

Lagging metrics tell you how bad it's been — but not how safe you are now.

Leading Indicators: What You’re Doing to Stay Safe

These are proactive, behavior-based, and under your control.

Metric	Target
Near misses reported/month	**≥2 per team member**
Safety talks delivered	**≥1 per week per team**
Pre-shift safety huddles held	**≥90% of scheduled shifts**
Corrective actions closed on time	**≥90%**
PPE availability checks	**100%**
Training completion %	**100% within deadlines**

Leading indicators predict whether safety is improving — even before an injury occurs.

7.2 Choosing Metrics That Matter

Don’t drown in data. Track what drives action and aligns with your restaurant’s size, goals, and risk profile.

Kitchen-Focused Metrics

- Frequency of burns or cuts
- PPE compliance checks
- Number of “unsafe behaviors” observed/corrected per week
- Temperature-logged injuries (e.g., oil splash, oven burns)

FOH & Dining Room Metrics

- Slip/fall reports in customer areas
- Allergens tracked via POS or server training
- Reports of customer aggression or incident de-escalation needs
- Number of trip hazards removed per week

Delivery-Focused Metrics

- Vehicle incident reports
- Late-night route check-ins
- Equipment check completions
- Weather-related risk assessments

7.3 Building a Safety Dashboard

Dashboards don’t need to be fancy — just **visible, updated, and reviewed regularly.**

Example Format (Monthly Review):

Metric	April	May	June	Trend
Near misses reported	8	15	13	
First-aid incidents	3	2	1	
Safety talks delivered	3	4	5	
Corrective actions on time	75%	92%	100%	
Safety training % complete	83%	100%	100%	

Post in:

- BOH break area
- Shift manager station
- Digital staff app

Review in:

- Weekly leadership meetings
- Monthly all-staff huddles
- Quarterly OHS committee reviews

7.4 Using PDCA: The Engine of Continuous Improvement

Let’s break it down.

PLAN

Identify a problem based on your metrics or observations.

Example:
Burn injuries are up in the dish pit.

Ask:

- What’s causing this?
- Who’s involved?
- When and where is it happening?
- What’s our desired outcome?

DO

Implement a fix.

Example:
Add neoprene gloves for all dishwashing and run a training talk on safe pot rinsing.

CHECK

Monitor results.

- Are burns down?

- Are gloves being worn?
- Do dish team members feel safer?

ACT

Adjust the solution or standardize it.

- If it worked, make it permanent – update SOP, reorder gloves monthly
- If not, try another approach – change training, try different PPE, adjust station layout

This cycle never ends – it's how safety improves day by day.

7.5 Bonus: Measuring Culture, Not Just Compliance

Hard data is great. But culture drives behavior.

Culture Metrics:

- % of staff who say they feel safe at work (via quarterly anonymous survey)
- % who know how to report a hazard
- % who believe reporting won't get them in trouble
- **% of peer-to-peer safety observations logged**

Want a shortcut? Ask your crew:
"What's something unsafe you've seen in the past week?"
If no one answers, you have a culture problem – not a data gap.

7.6 Module 7 Summary

Safety performance isn't just about whether people got hurt. It's about whether you're managing risk *before* someone does. With clear metrics, easy-to-read dashboards, and an active PDCA cycle, your restaurant can evolve from reactive to proactive – from checking boxes to changing behaviors.

Next, in **Module 8: Anticipating Emerging Risks**, we'll look at how modern restaurants are preparing for the next wave of hazards – from delivery app distractions to rising heat waves to burnout on the line. The risks are shifting. Let's get ahead of them.

Here is **Module 8: Anticipating Emerging Risks in the Restaurant Industry**.

- **Module Eight**

Module 8: Anticipating Emerging Risks in Restaurants

From Reacting to Predicting – Staying Ahead of Tomorrow's Hazards

Restaurant safety isn't static. While cuts, slips, and burns remain top concerns, new risks are emerging – many tied to technology, climate, staffing patterns, and even customer behavior. This module helps you stay ahead by scanning for future hazards, adjusting your controls, and building flexible systems that can evolve with your operation.

8.1 Why Anticipate?

Emerging risks often hide beneath the surface. They may not appear in your injury log — yet. But they're growing fast and can quickly disrupt service, staffing, or safety.

Examples:

- A line cook collapses from heat stress during a heatwave
- A dishwasher is injured after mixing incompatible chemicals
- A server is verbally harassed by an angry customer filming for social media
- A delivery driver is hit while reading app updates on their phone

Anticipation lets you **plan instead of panic**.

8.2 Tech-Driven Hazards: Apps, Screens, and Automation

Delivery Apps and In-App Distraction

Drivers for DoorDash, Uber Eats, and Skip the Dishes often juggle live orders, chat pings, and real-time re-routing — all while driving.

Risks:

- Distracted driving
- Speeding to meet delivery estimates
- Fatigue from excessive hours or "stacked" app jobs

Controls:

- Train drivers to use hands-free navigation only
- Set clear limits on delivery zones and shift hours
- Encourage breaks every 2–3 deliveries
- Monitor for repeated near misses or route complaints

Screen Fatigue and Repetitive Stress

Digital order screens, POS systems, and tablets require constant tapping and scanning.

Risks:

- Wrist and finger strain
- Eye fatigue from screen glare
- Distraction during peak rush

Controls:

- Rotate screen-intensive roles
- Adjust brightness and angle
- Provide wrist rests and anti-glare shields
- Add microbreaks into workflow (20 seconds every 20 minutes)

8.3 Environmental & Climate Risks

Extreme Heat and Cold

Kitchens are already hot. Add rising outdoor temperatures, poor ventilation, and PPE — and heat stress becomes a real threat.

Signs of trouble:

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Fainting

Prevention:

- Install cooling fans or mobile ACs
- Enforce hydration breaks every hour
- Provide breathable uniforms
- Educate on early heat illness symptoms

Winter Considerations:

- Slip risks at entrances
- Cold stress for outdoor hosts or patio runners
- Delivery team hazards on icy sidewalks

Indoor Air Quality & Ventilation

COVID made air flow a top priority — but poor ventilation also leads to:

- Heat stress
- Grease buildup
- Smoke exposure
- Carbon monoxide risks (from appliances or HVAC malfunction)

Controls:

- Routine HVAC maintenance
- Use CO detectors in all kitchens
- Encourage open windows or extra exhaust where feasible

8.4 Chemical Hazards in Evolving Products

Many “green” or ultra-concentrated cleaners are still hazardous — especially if mixed incorrectly.

Emerging issues:

- New degreasers with proprietary blends
- Eco-friendly sanitizers with reactive bases
- Staff confusing unlabeled refill bottles

Response:

- Require SDS access and training for every chemical
- Label all secondary containers
- Train on proper mixing, PPE use, and emergency response
- Store incompatible chemicals separately (e.g., acids vs. bleach)

8.5 Psychosocial Hazards: The Pressure Behind the Line

Burnout is a safety issue. So is chronic understaffing. And customer aggression? It’s rising.

Burnout and Overload

Signs:

- Increased absences
- Irritability
- Mistakes on the line
- Withdrawing from teammates

Interventions:

- Limit back-to-back doubles
- Provide 10-minute rest breaks (and enforce them)
- Offer EAP or mental health resources
- Train managers in supportive leadership

Violence and Harassment

Restaurants are public spaces. Your staff may face:

- Verbal abuse
- Aggression over delays
- Social media confrontations
- Sexual harassment

Solutions:

- Create a clear anti-harassment and de-escalation policy
- Train staff on verbal conflict defusion
- Install panic buttons or alert systems (for solo workers)
- Support any worker who reports an incident — publicly and privately

8.6 Preparing for the Next Disruption

AI, Robotics, and “Ghost Kitchens”

- AI order-taking introduces new tech-to-human failure points
- Ghost kitchens (delivery-only) centralize risk in high-speed production
- Robotics may displace workers — or require new safety SOPs

Recommendations:

- Evaluate new tech with a “Safety First” lens
- Involve workers in any automation shift
- Update your hazard assessments as tasks change

8.7 Tools for Staying Ahead

1. **Quarterly Hazard Scan**
   Review new tasks, chemicals, customer behaviors, or tech — what’s changed?
2. **Crew Feedback Forums**

   Ask: “What feels riskier than it did 6 months ago?”
3. **Supplier Safety Reviews**
   New cleaning product? New equipment? Ask for safety info up front.
4. **Manager Check-In Prompts**
   During huddles: “Any new frustrations or hazards we’ve missed?”
5. **Joint Health & Safety Committee (JHSC) or Reps**
   Use them to review emerging risk trends regularly.

8.8 Module 8 Summary

Restaurants are evolving. So are the risks. Whether it’s heat stress, digital distraction, chemical confusion, or burnout on the line — your ability to anticipate what’s coming next is what keeps your people safe. Build in feedback loops, scan for changes, and keep your controls flexible. Safety isn’t just about avoiding yesterday’s injuries — it’s about preventing tomorrow’s.

Up next: **Module 9 — Safety Talks**, where we deliver three ready-to-read, 2,000-word scripts for your supervisors to use in team huddles — each one targeting a high-risk issue in the restaurant industry.

- **Module Nine**

Module 9: Safety Talks for Restaurants.

Safety Talk #1: “Burns, Boils & Hot Surfaces”

For BOH team, read aloud by supervisor — approx. 2,000 words

“Alright, everyone — circle up. I want to take ten minutes to talk about something that every one of us faces in the kitchen, every single shift: heat. Whether it’s a fryer splash, a pan handle, a steam burn, or a grill flare-up, burns are one of the top injuries we see. And the thing is — almost all of them are preventable.”

A Real Story From the Line

“Let me tell you what happened in one of our sister locations last summer.

Jason was working sauté on a slammed Friday night. It was 34°C outside, even hotter in the kitchen. He was in the zone — calls flying in, orders building up. He grabbed a sauté pan from the flame, went to deglaze it with white wine, and boom — flame shot up. Startled, he jolted and dropped the pan onto his arm. Boiling liquid hit his forearm and wrist. First- and second-degree burns. Off for two weeks. And that’s not even the worst part.

When we investigated, it turned out he was using a wet towel as a mitt. Why? Dry towels were all in the laundry bin. That’s all it took — a soaked towel acting like a steam trap — to turn a normal move into a serious injury.”

Why Burns Are So Common — and Dangerous

Let’s talk about what makes heat injuries such a persistent threat in restaurants:

- **Multiple sources**: We're not just dealing with one heat source. It's ovens, grills, fryers, salamanders, steamers, dish pits, pan handles, soups, and even heat lamps.
- **Cumulative exposure**: Being hot all shift makes your body slower to react. You're more likely to make a mistake.
- **Complacency**: When you've worked the line for a while, grabbing a hot tray or reaching near the fryer starts to feel "normal" — until the day something unexpected happens.
- **Crowded kitchens**: Tight line spaces + sharp turns = bumping into hot surfaces or colliding with someone holding a boiling pot.

Three Types of Burns You Need to Know

1. **Thermal Burns** — from direct contact with hot pans, ovens, grills, or steam.
2. **Scalds** — from hot liquids or steam; especially common at dish stations or when draining pasta/soups.
3. **Contact Burns** — from lingering against a hot surface without noticing — like leaning on a salamander shelf or reaching across a pan handle.

Each type requires a slightly different prevention approach.

Top Burn Scenarios in Our Kitchen

Let's walk through five high-risk areas:

1. The Fryer Zone

- **Hazard**: Oil splatter, boil-over, basket drops
- **Controls**:
    - Lower food **gently** to prevent splash
    - Never fill baskets above capacity
    - Keep basket handles dry — wet handles cause slipping
    - Use proper gloves — not a kitchen towel — for filtering or draining

Did you know? Fryer oil can reach **190°C** — enough to cause full-thickness burns in under **1 second**.

2. The Oven Line

- **Hazard**: Grabbing hot trays or racks without proper protection
- **Controls**:
    - Only use **dry, insulated gloves or mitts** — never dish towels
    - Store mitts **within arm's reach**
    - Open oven doors **slowly and sideways** to avoid face heat blast
    - Use **verbal cues** when pulling trays: "HOT BEHIND!"

3. The Dish Pit

- **Hazard**: Scalds from steam and hot rinse cycles
- **Controls**:
    - Let steam **fully vent** before reaching into sanitizing sink
    - Keep PPE dry — wet gloves conduct heat
    - Post clear signage showing water temperature thresholds
    - Use ladles or tools when draining hot water — not your hands

4. The Sauté/Grill Station

- **Hazard**: Flare-ups, grease fires, hot handles
- **Controls**:
  - Keep **alcohol-based deglazers** capped and away from flame
  - Label or color-code hot pans and handles
  - Wipe grease from burners to avoid sudden flare
  - Keep a **class K fire extinguisher** accessible

5. The Line Itself

- **Hazard**: Congestion leads to accidental contact
- **Controls**:
  - Set "hot zones" with red tape or signage
  - Require "behind!" and "hot coming through!" callouts
  - Prohibit horseplay or unsafe shortcuts

Your PPE Is Not Optional

Let's make one thing clear — oven mitts, fry gloves, steam-proof dish gloves — these are not "nice-to-haves." They are **PPE**: Personal Protective Equipment.

If you can wear a glove, wear it.
If you're not sure if it's hot, treat it like it is.
If the mitts are missing or dirty, stop and ask — we'll replace them.

Responding to a Burn

Even with controls, accidents can still happen. Here's what to do:

1. **Cool the burn immediately** — Under cool (not cold) running water for 10–15 minutes.
2. **Do NOT** use butter, oil, ice, or home remedies.
3. **Cover with clean, dry dressing** — Preferably non-stick or sterile.
4. **Report it immediately** — Don't "tough it out."
5. **Document** — What, where, when, how it happened — so we can prevent it in future.

Management's Role

We're committing to:

- Stocking and maintaining proper PPE
- Providing first-aid burn kits
- Rotating stations to reduce fatigue
- Replacing broken heat shields or insulation
- Listening when someone says, "That felt unsafe."

Team Pledge

"Let's make a deal. If you see a hot hazard — say something. If you're unsure whether a pot, pan, or plate is safe to handle — ask or test it first. And if your gear's missing, speak up. No one here is expected to take the heat alone. We work hot — but we work smart."

Safety Talk #2: "Slips, Trips & Dining Room Disasters"

For all restaurant staff – BOH, FOH, and managers. Supervisor-led script. Approx. 2,000 words.

"Good morning, team. Before we dive into today's prep or shift assignments, I want to hit pause and talk about something that may seem simple – but causes more injuries in restaurants than knives, fire, and lifting combined: slips and trips. Whether you're on the line, in the dish pit, walking a drink to a table, or carrying takeout to a customer's car – it only takes one wrong step to end up on the floor or worse."

A Real-Life Incident to Start

Let's start with a true story from one of our locations last year.

One of our servers, Lina, was walking through the dining room with a full tray of drinks. A child had just spilled a bit of lemonade under the table, and nobody had reported it yet. As Lina stepped near the booth – boom – down she went. She fractured her wrist and was off work for seven weeks. That booth was closed off for the night, we had to deal with a WCB report, and we even got a complaint from the guest whose child caused the spill.

Could that have been prevented? Absolutely.

The Facts on Slips and Trips in Restaurants

- **Slips and trips are the #1 injury cause** in food service across Canada and the U.S.
- These injuries often involve:
    - Spilled liquids
    - Grease on kitchen floors
    - Cords, mats, and uneven surfaces
    - Poor lighting or visual distractions
- The **average lost time** from a slip injury is **14 days**
- They account for **35–45% of all workers' compensation costs** in foodservice businesses

And let's not forget – if a **customer** slips, it becomes a liability and PR nightmare.

Where the Risks Are

Let's break it down by zone:

Back of House (BOH)

Common Slip Hazards:

- Greasy floors near fryers or sauté stations
- Wet dish pit floors
- Spilled sauces or soups
- Condensation from coolers or freezers

Trip Hazards:

- Floor mats bunched up
- Mop buckets or brooms left out

- Hoses or electrical cords

Front of House (FOH)

Common Slip Hazards:

- Drink spills under tables
- Melting ice cubes or lemon slices
- Wet entryways from rain/snow
- Cleaning products not fully dried

Trip Hazards:

- Uneven flooring or transition lips
- Extension cords for seasonal lighting
- Purse straps or backpacks in the aisle
- Runners or mats curling up at the corners

Outside / Delivery Zones

Slip Hazards:

- Rain puddles near curbs
- Icy sidewalks
- Oil or vehicle fluid spills near takeout lanes

Trip Hazards:

- Delivery carts
- Raised thresholds
- Unlit stairs or back exits

What Makes This Worse in Restaurants?

1. **Speed** – We move fast during service, which cuts down reaction time.
2. **Distraction** – We're focused on the food, the guest, or the order, not our feet.
3. **Loads** – We carry trays, pans, boxes – blocking our view of hazards.
4. **Complacency** – We step over spills or clutter without addressing it.

Six-Step Slips & Trips Prevention Strategy

1. Clean as You Go – No Exceptions

- If you spill it, clean it.
- If you see it, wipe it.
- "That's not my station" is not a valid excuse.

All staff – BOH, FOH, dish, or delivery – are empowered to grab a mop or broom when needed. If you're not sure what to use (grease spill vs. water), ask.

2. Use the Right Tools

- Keep separate mops for **kitchen grease** and **FOH spills**
- Use **wet floor signs** every time
- Store brooms, buckets, and mop heads neatly after use – never "leaned" in

traffic zones

3. Floor Mats: Friend or Foe

- Ensure mats:
  - Are **low-profile** (no rolled edges)
  - Are **non-slip backed**
  - Are **clean** (grease-soaked mats slide more easily than bare floor)
- Replace worn or curling mats immediately

4. Footwear Matters

- Non-slip shoes aren't a suggestion — they're essential PPE in restaurants.
- Look for:
  - Rubber soles with fine tread
  - Enclosed toes
  - Water-resistant material

If your shoes are slick, worn, or not rated for kitchen work, talk to a manager. We'll help find the right pair.

5. See It? Say It.

- Build a culture where hazards are **reported immediately**, not later
- If you can't clean it, **mark it and notify**
- Encourage customers to let staff know about spills too — especially during high traffic times

6. Illuminate Your Path

- Dim lighting might look cool, but it can hide hazards.
- Keep transition areas, stairs, delivery access points, and storage closets **well lit**.
- Replace burned-out bulbs right away — don't wait for "next week's inspection."

Manager-Specific Actions

Managers — we have a big part to play:

- **Inspect high-risk zones** (dish pit, fryer, host stand) **twice per shift**
- Rotate wet mopping into **slower times** — not mid-service
- Use the Safety App to track recurring hot spots
- Ask your team during pre-shift: "Any floor hazards right now?"

You set the tone — if you step over a spill, so will they. If you grab a mop, they'll follow suit.

Don't Forget About Guests

Your safety culture also protects your guests.

- Wipe spills **immediately**, even if it interrupts service
- Avoid overfilling drinks — especially for kids or elderly guests
- Use coasters or trays with grips for full glasses
- Place mats by the front door in rainy seasons, and check hourly

- Clear bags, strollers, and chairs that block aisles

Quick Role-by-Role Checklist

Line Cooks
□ Wipe grease from around fryers and grill after each rush
□ Check floor mats before shift
□ Report leaks under coolers or prep sinks

Dishwashers
□ Use squeegee to keep floors dry
□ Hang up hoses properly
□ Wear waterproof non-slip shoes

Servers/FOH
□ Scan your section for spills every table visit
□ Announce “wet spot” or “spill in aisle” to teammates
□ Carry trays with two hands and full visual line of sight

Hosts/Managers
□ Greet guests while scanning entry for hazards
□ Check wet floor signs are in place when needed
□ Rotate spill checks into front walk and patio

Wrapping Up: Our Shared Responsibility

Let’s say it loud and clear: **If it’s wet, wipe it. If it’s clutter, clear it. If it’s unsafe, report it.**

This team isn’t just serving great food — we’re creating a safe place to work and dine. That starts from the ground up.

Today, make a commitment: Every shift, every step, stay alert, stay safe. One less spill, one less injury, one more reason guests keep coming back.

Safety Talk #3: “Mental Fatigue on the Line”

For all roles — BOH, FOH, and leadership. Supervisor-led script. Approx. 2,000 words.

“Alright team — take a breath, grab some coffee, and let’s circle up for something a little different today. We’ve talked a lot about cuts, slips, burns — all the physical risks in this place. But today I want to talk about something we *can’t* see: mental fatigue.”

The Invisible Risk That Causes Real Accidents

We’ve all had those moments: the fourth double in a row, the seventh order backed up on the line, or that Friday night rush where you realize you haven’t had water — or even sat down — in eight hours.

That’s not just “being busy.” That’s mental fatigue. And in a kitchen or dining room, it’s dangerous.

Let me tell you about a real incident.

A line cook at a sister location, let’s call him Joe, was on his sixth consecutive closing shift. Short-staffed, slammed every night, and sleeping maybe five hours a day. On his last shift of the week, he misread a ticket, used peanut oil in a “nut-free” order, and the guest went into anaphylactic shock. Thankfully, the team responded fast, the EpiPen was on hand, and the guest recovered — but Joe was devastated. He broke down in the office.

This wasn’t a “lazy” employee. It was a fatigued one. And the cost? A guest’s health, Joe’s confidence, and a massive brand liability.

What Is Mental Fatigue, Really?

Mental fatigue isn’t just feeling “tired.” It’s a condition where your brain is so overworked, under-rested, or stressed that it starts to make mistakes — without you realizing.

Key symptoms:

- Shorter attention span
- Slower reaction time
- More memory slips or “zoning out”
- Trouble prioritizing or multitasking
- Emotional reactivity (snapping, withdrawing, crying)

In restaurants, these symptoms often show up as:

- Ticket mistakes
- Burned or dropped orders
- Missing allergy flags
- Mishandled equipment
- Overlooked hazards (wet floors, blocked exits, sharp knives left out)

Top Causes of Fatigue in Restaurants

1. **Long, irregular shifts**
    - Working open-to-close or “clopens” (close then open next day)
    - Inconsistent shift schedules disrupt natural sleep
2. **Heat & dehydration**
    - BOH often exceeds 90°F in summer, causing body stress
3. **Noise and sensory overload**
    - Loud kitchens, busy dining rooms, constant bells, timers, and shouting increase stress hormone levels
4. **High emotional labour**
    - FOH staff often manage guests’ moods, complaints, and demands while hiding their own stress
5. **Short breaks or skipped meals**
    - Going 6–10 hours without food or hydration is shockingly common in kitchens
6. **Understaffing and high ticket loads**
    - When short-staffed, everyone overextends

How Fatigue Creates Safety Risks

Let’s connect the dots to real safety:

Fatigue Symptom	Resulting Safety Risk
Poor focus	Cuts, burns, missed allergens, wrong orders
Delayed reaction time	Slips, falls, delayed fire extinguisher use
Irritability	Verbal conflict, mishandling guests
Memory lapses	Skipped sanitizer steps, uncapped knives

Even experienced staff are not immune. Fatigue doesn't care about seniority — it's physiological.

What Can We Do About It?

Let's break it down into team, supervisor, and individual actions.

As a Team: Look Out for Each Other

- **Buddy checks:** If someone looks "out of it," ask — "You good?"
- **Back each other up:** If someone's in the weeds, offer help before they hit a breaking point.
- **De-stigmatize breaks:** Encourage your teammates to eat and drink. Don't treat taking 10 as weakness.

As Supervisors: Build Recovery into the Schedule

- **Avoid "clopens"** unless absolutely unavoidable. Rotate fairly.
- **Limit shift stacking** — three doubles in a row is too much.
- **Schedule breaks:** Not just legally — but practically. Enforce it.
- **Monitor performance dips:** If someone's making repeated mistakes, don't just correct them — ask about sleep and stress.
- **Flex roles:** If a hothead cook is mentally burned out, assign them prep for a shift to recover their focus.
- **Use hydration stations:** A cold jug of lemon water near the line can go a long way.

As Individuals: Recognize and Respond

1. Know your signs.
Ask yourself:

- Have I been snapping at teammates?
- Do I feel foggy or disconnected?
- Am I forgetting simple things?

2. Fuel your body.

- Eat slow-burning carbs and protein during breaks — cookies and coffee aren't enough.
- Hydrate — try for 1 liter per 4 hours of shift.

3. Take your breaks.

- Even 5 minutes of quiet or stepping outside resets your nervous system.

- Breathe. Stretch. Reset.

4. Speak up if you're unsafe.

- You're not "weak" for saying, "I can't safely do the fryer tonight."
- Fatigue-based mistakes harm everyone.

Managers: Watch for These Fatigue Red Flags

Behavior	**Possible Response**
Employee zoning out repeatedly	**Offer break or reschedule task**
Verbal outbursts or shutdowns	**Pull them aside — don't escalate**
Clumsy handling of tools	**Reassign to low-risk tasks temporarily**
Consistent errors at end of shift	**Reevaluate schedule load**

Have a conversation — not a confrontation. Fatigue is not an attitude problem. It's a risk exposure.

Crisis Fatigue: The Burnout We Don't Talk About

Post-pandemic, many of us are carrying emotional fatigue from:

- Grief and loss
- Economic pressure
- Staff shortages
- Endless "pivoting" in operations

This chronic stress leads to:

- Lower morale
- Higher turnover
- Safety mistakes that feel "unexplainable"

Leadership must address burnout proactively — not after an incident. Host mental health check-ins. Offer access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). Bring in wellness resources if available.

Key Takeaways

Let's review:

- **Mental fatigue is a real safety hazard.** It impairs attention, reaction, judgment, and memory.
- **All roles are at risk** — not just line cooks or FOH.
- **Supervisors must prevent fatigue**, not just respond to it.
- **A supportive culture beats burnout.** It's everyone's job to check in and care.

Today's Commitment:

Let's start simple. Before you go back to work today, do one of these:

- Check in with your hydration — have a glass of water.
- Take your scheduled break — fully.
- Ask a teammate if they're okay.
- Let me (your supervisor) know if you're hitting your limit.

Because we're not just here to push plates — we're here to protect people. And that starts with a clear head, a focused mind, and a workplace that sees safety as more than just steel-toes and spill signs.

Thanks, team. Let's do good work — and safe work — together.

Additional Resources

Restaurant Safety Video Loop

Prevent Slips, Trips and Falls Restaurant Safety Meeting Kit

Preventing Burns and Scalds: Restaurant Safety Meeting Kit

Preventing Cuts from Knives — Restaurant Safety Meeting Kit

Safety for Restaurant Delivery Drivers Meeting Kit

WHY THIS GUIDE?

Human tone: Written like a chat over coffee, not a courtroom sermon.

Legal clarity: Key legislative references are embedded for quick scanning.

Actionable insights: Stories, examples, and clear next steps.