

PLAYING IT SAFE: IDENTIFY AND PREVENT THREATS TO GROCERY STORE AND C-STORE SAFETY

Grocery stores and convenience stores (C-stores) have a variety of safety issues that can become serious problems for owners. From slips and falls to cuts and burns, grocery and C-stores are constantly at risk for lost productivity and profit. It's important for grocery store and C-store owners to take steps to mitigate these threats to prevent financial loss as well as damage to their store's reputation.

Recognizing Slip and Fall Risks

According to the National Floor Safety Institute (NFSI), slips and falls account for more than 1 million hospital emergency room visits each year and are the leading cause of workers compensation claims.¹ If a customer were to slip, fall and sustain an injury while at your grocery or convenience store, you could have a very costly claim on your hands.

Grocery stores and even C-stores are rife with slip and fall dangers, especially in larger stores where consistent monitoring can be difficult. While it isn't possible to completely eliminate threats, there are measures you can take to safeguard your customers, your employees and your store's reputation.

**SLIPS AND FALLS ACCOUNT
FOR MORE THAN 1 MILLION
HOSPITAL EMERGENCY
ROOM VISITS EACH YEAR**



1. Same-Level Slip and Fall Statistics, http://www.nfsi.org/the_costs.php (as, accessed July 17, 2013)

1. Identify the problem

Look to your past incident reports or history to see if you can track and trend your incidents. This will help you identify problem areas (e.g., specific departments, outside, entrances, bathrooms, etc.) and create a plan of action to minimize risks.

2. Control the environment

Walk-off mats at store entrances are helpful in capturing debris and absorbing water before customers enter the store. However, to ensure mats don't become a hazard, make sure they are properly maintained. Regularly wash and dry mats, and then go over them with an extractor to remove excess water. Flatten out curled up edges and replace worn-out mats. Consider adding mats to the produce area where moisture may be present.

3. Display safety signs

Make sure any slip, trip or fall threats are clearly marked. Use wet floor signs only when the floor is actually wet — you run the risk of having these signs ignored if they are out on a daily basis. Warn customers of areas where they will need to step up or down. Make sure steps and stairs are well lit.

4. Clean floors on regular basis

Implement a regular cleaning schedule, including removal of debris or foreign objects off the floor (especially in the produce area), sweeping and mopping. Mopping should be done at nonpeak times during low visitor traffic. Only spot-mop when necessary, and always use appropriate signage. Develop a sweep log identifying the timing for employees to walk all the aisles to look for slip, trip and fall hazards. For example, each department should inspect their aisles every 15 to 30 minutes, which establishes a pattern of proactive hazard identification.

Preventing Cuts and Burns

Proper knife use is an important aspect of grocery store safety. Employees use knives and other cutting tools to open boxes, separate bindings from raw materials and slice seafood, meat and poultry. Unsafe knife practices can lead to serious, preventable injuries. Most knife injuries occur while using dull knives, so always ensure knives are sharp. Train employees to use the proper knife for the job, such as using an automatic retractable safety knife for cutting boxes instead of a kitchen knife.

Cuts in grocery stores often occur in the meat department when butchers are not using cut-resistant gloves and are not following machinery safety practices. Stores need to employ a consistent safety policy enforcing the use of cut-resistant gloves (for example, gloves made out of Kevlar). These gloves often get dirty and have to be replaced, which can be costly.



The best way to circumvent this issue is to first put on a latex glove, then the Kevlar glove, and finally another latex glove, protecting both your employees' hands and the glove.

Bakery employees are also at risk for on-the-job injuries. Boiling water, hot oil and hot ingredients can scald bakery workers, and hot surfaces can cause moderate to severe burns. Implement a strict policy that employees wear heat-resistant gloves with a steam shield inside and forearm guards.

Society's team of loss control experts, association partners and agents can help grocery and C-store owners ensure they have the proper practices and policies in place — right down to the smallest details — to minimize safety hazards. With extensive experience in insuring grocery and convenience stores, Society can provide policyholders with a custom plan that fits their needs. Get in touch with a Society agent today by visiting www.societyinsurance.com to learn more about how to best protect your business.

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