

This leaflet aims to provide guidelines on safety and health at work for employers and employees of small retail shops.

The hazards listed below are some common causes of workplace accidents. While assessing potential hazards at the workplace, attention should be paid to the following items as well as other situations where accidents may arise.

There are corresponding preventive measures for each of the hazards. Appropriate arrangements should be made having regard to the actual situation of the shop.

1. Slip and Trip

To reduce slip-and-trip accidents, the first step is to keep the shop clean and tidy:

- keep passageways, work areas and staircases clean and tidy. No odds and ends should be left on the floor;
- clean up wet spots on the floor, in the elevator and on the passageway immediately;
- put up warning signs near wet floor;
- maintain the floor in good condition and fix uneven surfaces as soon as possible.



2. Fire

Fire can result in serious consequences, not only causing loss to property, but also resulting in casualties. To prevent fire, control the source of ignition and avoid storage of excessive flammable materials in the shop. In case of fire, employees should raise alarm quickly and evacuate at once:

- no smoking in indoor workplace;
- clear garbage regularly;
- ensure that fire escapes are free from obstruction and exit doors are unlocked;
- provide suitable and adequate fire extinguishers; The extinguishers should be maintained and checked regularly;
- inspect electrical systems regularly by a competent electrician;
- provide employees with information on emergency escape procedures.



3. Manual Handling Operations

Improper lifting or moving of a heavy load may cause injuries. Before lifting and handling materials, pay attention to the weight and shape of the object, the employee's capability, the location of the object and whether the employee will twist the waist, etc.:

- use mechanical aids (e.g. a trolley) to avoid lifting and handling whenever practicable;
- store goods in proper positions so that employees can take them easily without twisting the waist or over-stretching the body;
- avoid storage of goods above shoulder height. Otherwise, a secure ladder, steps or a working platform should be provided for access;
- do not store goods on an upper floor or floor where access is inconvenient, unless the shop is equipped with safe transport facilities;
- provide safety guidelines and training on manual handling operations for employees.



4. Machinery

Most accidents involving machinery are caused by inadequate experience of operators or removal of protective guards of machines:

- provide adequate training for employees to enable proper use of machinery;
- do not use a machine if its dangerous parts (e.g. blade or mixer arm) do not have proper guards;
- turn off the power supply before cleaning or repairing machines;
- inspect goods lifts regularly by a competent person.



5. Use of Chemicals

Handle chemicals with care as some chemical cleaning agents such as bleaching agent or caustic soda (sodium hydroxide) can cause serious skin or eye injury or dermatitis. Mixing of certain cleaning agents may also result in release of toxic gas:

- follow the instruction on the container labels when using chemicals;
- provide adequate personal protective equipment such as eye protectors, gloves and aprons for employees;
- do not mix bleach with other cleaning agents.

6. Electricity

Electricity can cause shock, burns and fire:

- every electrical installation should be properly installed by a competent electrician;
- switchboards providing power supply should be installed with Residual Current Circuit Breakers (RCCBs) to protect persons against electric shock;
- the RCCB should be tested regularly using the self-test design;
- electric cable and appliance should be checked regularly by a competent electrician. Damaged cable and mal-functioning appliance should be taken out of service and repaired immediately.

7. Welfare Facilities

- Keep the temperature of the workplace at optimum levels.
- Ensure potable water is made available to employees at easily accessible locations.
- Provide clean toilets and cleansing facilities, preferably with cold and hot water supply.
- Allow employees to be seated while at work whenever practicable.



8. Walk-in Freezers

- The door of walk-in freezers should be so designed that it can be opened from the inside with clear and legible instructions posted at prominent locations inside the freezer.
- Proper gloves should be provided for employees to avoid direct skin contact with frozen food.
- Employees should be provided with proper clothing for health protection against cold environment.

9. References

- Guidance Notes on Fire Safety at Workplaces
- Beware of Fall at Work
- Guide for Safety at Work – Safe Use of Electric Plugs
- Guidance Notes on Manual Handling Operations



Enquiries

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You can also obtain information on the services provided by the Occupational Safety and Health Council through hotline 2739 9000.

Complaints

If you have any complaints about unsafe workplaces and practices, please call the Labour Department's occupational safety and health complaint hotline at 2542 2172. **All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence.**

Safety and Health at Work in Small Retail Shops



Occupational Safety and Health Branch
Labour Department
<http://www.labour.gov.hk>



OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH COUNCIL
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