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Effective Safety Management Practices of an Outsourced Catering Group in a Hospital Kitchen of a Tertiary Care Hospital

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ABSTRACT

Providing a safe working environment is the responsibility of every employer. To accomplish workplace safety goals, properly managed safety program is very important to show the commitment to safety by the management. This article briefs on the systems followed by the out sourced catering group to ensure a safe working environment for their employees in hospital patient food service kitchen.

Keywords: Workplace Safety, Risk Assessment, Incident Reporting, Hospital Kitchen Safety.

1. INTRODUCTION

Safety begins with a proper safety plan. Occupational safety is to provide a safe working environment to their workers working. It is the employer's responsibility to protect the health, safety, and welfare of their workers. The work safety plan put in place by the employer should be strictly followed by all the employees. Food service industries have become one of the important areas of employment across the world such as hotels, restaurants, hospital kitchens, school canteens etc. Irrespective of the type of industry the employees work, everyone wants to go home safe every day and similarly, the employees also prefer to work in a very safe environment.

Providing safe working environment is the prime responsibility of the employer which in turn brings in workers comfortability and confidence in their work. Creating a safety work culture where everyone should be safe shows the commitment of the employer towards their employees. Safety precautions must be strictly followed by all the employees to ensure their personal safety as well as other employee's safety. It is always possible that where there is more work to be delivered the number of incidents will always be on the higher side though every system is in place.

Hospital food service kitchens are one of the busiest kitchens. The hospital kitchen prepares healthy, safe and hygienic food to the patients. The workload for the hospital kitchen workers is always on the higher side. This is because of the volume and the number of dishes varieties cooked to meet the individual requirements of the patients.

The most common injuries that are found in the hospital kitchen are

- Knife injuries such as cuts and lacerations
- Hot water injuries such as boils
- Injuries caused while Walking on slippery floors such as slipping over
- Steamer area injuries such as scalding etc.
- Injuries caused by lifting heavy trays or utensils
- Repetitive movement injuries such as strains & sprains.
- Injuries sustained while delivering meals to patients.

The hospital food service is managed by a professional catering group. The usual practice is that the outsourced catering manager will take care of Health, Safety Environment Quality (HSEQ) aspects. However, due to the size of the operation, it was felt that an exclusive HSEQ executive from the outsourced group could be a better option. This article briefs on the various factors looked into by the out sourced catering group to ensure safe working environment for their employees.

2. CREATING A PLAN TO PROMOTE WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

The first step is to perform a risk assessment to identify the workplace hazards and to take appropriate steps to completely eliminate or minimize workplace hazards.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is a systematic process of evaluating and forecasting the potential risks/hazard in the workplace.

Why is Risk Assessment done?

A risk assessment will enable the employer to very critically evaluate and provide an insight of the potential risks that prevail in the work place. Risk assessments performed is to ensure employees safety.

How to do a Risk Assessment?

The Five-step risk assessments are



A. Identifying Hazards: We need to understand the difference between a ‘hazard’ and ‘risk’. A hazard is something which has the potential to cause harm. Hazards are identified by different techniques such as walking round the workplace and noting down things that might pose risk. The key element is talking to the staff and learning from their knowledge and experience and actively listen to their concerns and opinions.

B. Analyzing who might be harmed and how: Once the hazard is identified, there is a need to analyze who might be harmed and how.

C. Evaluates the risk and decides on control measures: Once the hazard has been identified and deciding who might be harmed and how; now the action plan is to find out the ways to protect the employees from harm.

E. Records the findings: All these hazards identification, identifying who might be harmed and the control measures taken should all be documented.

F. Review the assessment and update when necessary: The risk assessment performed should be performed periodically to find out whether everything is in the right place, and it should be updated as and when necessary.

G. Training Employees: The second important step is to train the employees. For any quality initiative to succeed, employees must receive training in the process and need to be retrained frequently. HSEQ provides day to day training on various aspects of HSEQ to the staff.

3. TYPES OF TRAINING

- Tool Box Training
- Chat Section Training

Tool Box Training: Toolbox talk is an effective informal group discussion that focuses on a particular safety issue. Tool box topics are used to promote safety culture among the employees.

Chat Section Training: Chat section is a formal training provided to all the employees with specific emphasis on a particular topic in great detail.

4. BEHAVIOR BASED SAFETY OBSERVATION (BBSO)

A behavior-based safety observation is a safety observation to relate the behavior of the employees with the conditions or facilities available. This is to ensure whether the employee is following the training received. These observations pave the way to provide immediate feedback to the employees of what is going right and what is not and the same is documented.

The aims and benefits of BBSO are

Aims

- To interfere and reinforce safe behavior if there are going to be any deviations
- To ensure safe behaviors are enforced and at-risk behaviors are eliminated
- Paves way to recognize both safe and at-risk behavior
- Finally, it is not a fault finding exercise; it is to take care of the employees.

Benefits

- Provides an opportunity to all the colleagues to understand that they need to contribute towards workplace safety.
- It acts as a constant reminder of workplace safety to lower incident rates.
- It enables to identify the employees who require more training.

Incident Reporting

Even though there is every system in place, incidents cannot be totally eliminated. Hence it becomes extremely important to have an incident reporting mechanism. Incident report or accident report is a form that is used to fill the unusual event that had taken place. The purpose of incident reporting is to document the exact details of occurrence to take corrective/preventive actions.

5. ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS (RCA)

It is the problem-solving methodology used to identify the root causes of problems. Root Cause Analysis is a useful process to understand the nature of the problem and troubleshoot the problems. It facilitates to find out the negative events that are occurring. Lastly, finding solutions to address the root cause of the problem.

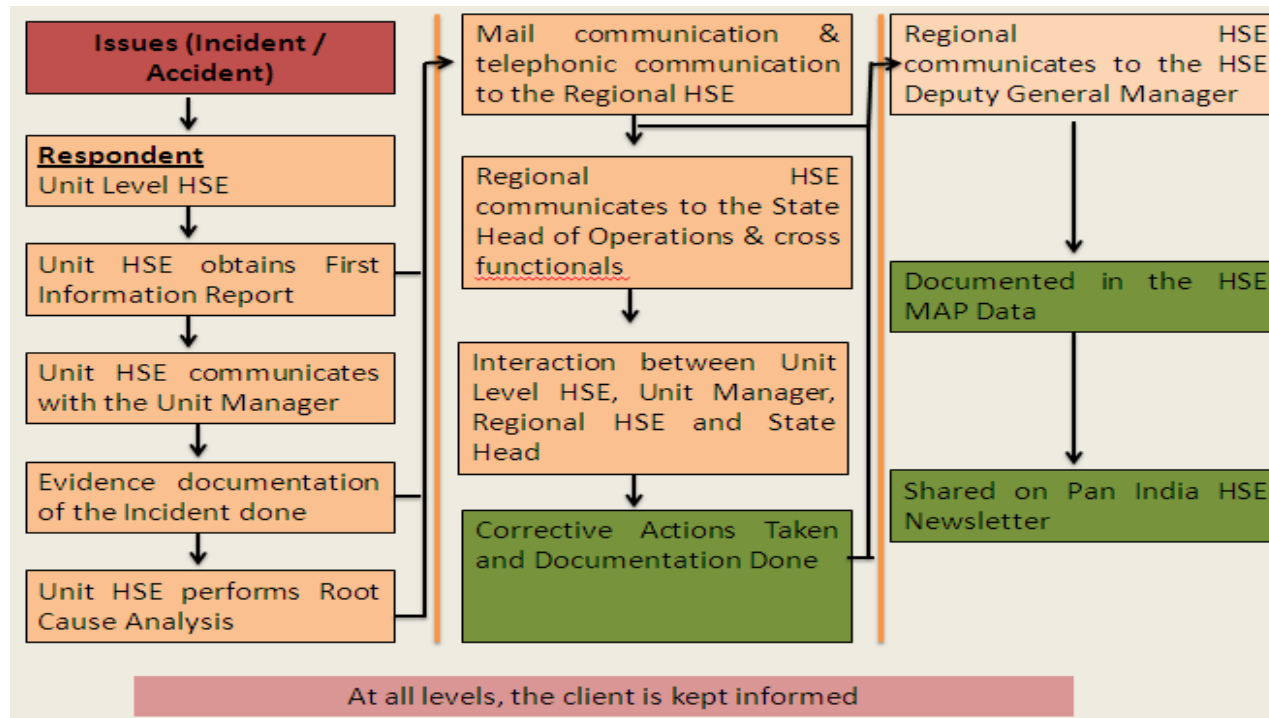
Near Miss: A near miss is nothing but an accidental event that did not result in injury, illness, or damage – but had the potential to do so. HSEQ executive encourages employees to report to the management about any incidents that they come across small or big in the appropriate boxes available to take preventive or corrective actions.

Audits

Regular safety audits are carried out to ensure that the safety programmes and procedures are working well. It also provides an opportunity to find out whether the employees and management are continuously engaged in safety programs. It also paves the way to find out whether the incidents are documented properly and whether the number of incidents/accidents has come down. Also enables to discover and identify potential hazards. Safety audit and inspections have shown to reduce the number of accidents.

Reporting to the Hospital Administration (client): Any incidents / near miss incidents captured by the outsourced vendor is escalated to the hospital administration (client). Root cause analysis report is also shared with the client.

The Effective Incident Escalation Model by the Outsourced Catering Group



6. CONCLUSION

Providing a safe working environment is the responsibility of the employer. To accomplish workplace safety goals, properly managed safety program is very important to show the commitment to safety by the management. This article briefs on the safe systems of work followed by the out sourced catering group to ensure a safe working environment for their employees. It also emphasizes the importance of training and retraining of employees on safety-related aspects and the need for proper documentation to ensure a safe working environment.

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