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SMART DESIGN



Take heed of some necessary design features for a great restaurant rollout.

By Terrence H. Charles



No matter what type of dining concept you may be developing, every restaurant facility should keep in mind the safety of patrons and employees. In addition, restaurateurs should consider taking steps toward environmental health. The design of a commercial kitchen has a direct impact on the health and safety of the public. Identify the minimum environmental health requirements you need to operate, and incorporate them into the design phase. Addressing these items earlier rather than later can save you time and money.

Please note: This article addresses basic requirements that apply in most cases. Consult with building code and health department officials in the appropriate jurisdiction for specific information.

Cleaning Needs

Sinks are major components in restaurants and should be designated for

food preparation, cleaning or hand washing. For example, a one- or two-compartment sink with an attached drain board is necessary to clean meat and produce; in some cases, two separate sinks for meat and produce are required. A three-compartment sink with attached drain boards on both sides is necessary for cleaning pots, pans and utensils.

For hand washing, a restaurant likely needs two or more sinks. Hand sinks should be strategically located so they are approximately 15' (maximum) walking distance from any service area; this limits travel distances for employees.

Finally, a single mop sink is sufficient for a restaurant. Mop sinks are typically floor-based and supplied with hot and cold domestic water. The adjacent area should have mops, buckets and other cleaning agents for easy access.

Although not specifically required by health departments, automatic

Safety First

In addition to considering safety in your initial design phase, you'll need to keep safety at the top of your list throughout your time as a restaurant owner.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has set standards when it comes to your employees' rights to a safe work environment. The guidelines below were taken from the Principal Emergency Response and Preparedness Requirements and Guidance form. You can find the full version at osha.gov.

Design Requirements for Exits

- Make exit-route design permanent.
- Ensure that the number of exit routes is adequate based on the number of employees, the size of the building, its occupancy, and the arrangement of the workplace.
- Separate an exit route from other workplace areas with materials that have the proper fire-resistance rating for the number of stories the route connects.
- Ensure that exit routes meet width and height requirements.
- Ensure that doors used to access exit routes have side hinges and swing in the direction of travel (depending on occupancy and hazard areas).
- Design exit routes that lead to an outside area with enough space for all occupants.


Portable Fire Extinguishers

- Select and distribute portable fire extinguishers based on the class, size and degree of workplace fire hazards. Mount, locate and identify the extinguishers so they are readily accessible in an emergency and will not subject employees to potential injury.
- Provide only approved portable fire extinguishers.
- Maintain fire extinguishers. Maintenance includes monthly visual inspections, hydrostatic testing, annual internal examinations and all associated documentation.
- Ensure that the travel distance from employee to the nearest extinguisher is appropriate for the fire class.

Emergency Action Plans

Prepare a written emergency action plan. The plan does not need to be written and may be communicated orally if there are 10 or fewer employees. At a minimum, the plan must include:

- Fire and emergency reporting procedures
- Procedures for emergency evacuation, including the type of evacuation and exit routes
- Procedures for those who remain to operate critical operations prior to evacuation
- Procedures to account for employees after evacuation
- Procedures for employees performing rescue and medical duties
- Names of those to contact for further information or explanation about the plan



dishwashers are commonly used in restaurants and are often preferred over manual cleaning. Not only do they have short running cycles, making them efficient and economic, but dishwashers also reach extremely high temperatures to promote better hygiene and sanitation.

Refrigeration and Ventilation

Refrigeration equipment is a necessity for all restaurants. While health departments typically require one freezer and one refrigerator, many options are available to suit any restaurant's needs. For example, provided there is ample space and restaurant capacity, a walk-in refrigerator and/or freezer stores larger amounts of food with a longer shelf life, greatly reducing food costs.

An exhaust hood above the cooking line contains fans, filters and other components. The hood's purpose is to remove airborne grease, combustion products, smoke, odors, heat and steam through a combination of air filtration and evacuation. Most jurisdictions require that exhaust hoods be fitted with a fire suppression system. Note that exhaust hoods can be one of the larger and more costly pieces of restaurant equipment, but they are required more often than not.

Restrooms

Restrooms are an essential part of any restaurant establishment. If the restaurant is strictly a takeout establishment, then an employee restroom is sufficient; however, if a restaurant offers dine-in service, restrooms should be accessible to employees and patrons. The number of restrooms required is determined by the total occupancy count of the restaurant, and the restroom fixture count is divided into male and female restrooms, since unisex restrooms are rare. Other restroom requirements include soap, a means of hand drying and trash receptacles. Bear in mind that there are also handicap accessible requirements for restrooms, as well as entire restaurants.

Surface Areas

Health departments are also concerned about interior finishes in restaurant

service areas. Kitchen flooring, for instance, should be nonporous and easy to clean; quarry or ceramic tile works well in floor and cove base areas. Walls should be washable; glossy paint on drywall may work, but plastic wall panels or glazed ceramic tiles are better. Behind the cooking line, a stainless steel wall panel is best; it resists grease.

Like walls, ceilings above all kitchen areas should be washable. Regular ceiling tiles are inappropriate in commercial kitchens because of their porous quality and inability to withstand moisture. Typically, drywall with a gloss paint finish or special ceiling tiles are acceptable. Additionally, ceiling-mounted lights should have a protective shield—this prevents broken glass from appearing in the soup!

Trapping Grease

Grease traps or grease interceptors are plumbing devices used to catch kitchen grease and solids before they enter the municipal wastewater system. Most municipalities require them for any type of restaurant establishment because fats and oils are problematic for the municipal treatment facility.

Two major types of grease traps are used today: an interior application that sits adjacent to the sink or sinks and has a capacity of about 50 gallons; and an exterior grease trap, made of concrete and concealed underground with an approximate capacity of 1,500 pounds. Many jurisdictions now require a grease trap of 1,500 pounds minimum capacity, regardless of restaurant size. Because grease traps can be a relatively costly item, learn the local requirements in advance.

Even with increasing environmental health regulations for commercial kitchens, restaurateurs still have the freedom to incorporate any cooking equipment they need to accommodate their restaurant's goals. Good health and safety practices during the design phase will help make any restaurant concept a reality. 🚩



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