

Common Health and Safety Risks in Convenience Stores

Risk assessments can help you prevent accidents, improve overall safety performance and, ultimately, save money. As an employer, it is important to carry out risk assessments for all work-related tasks your employees complete. In addition, you should also undertake risk assessments to ensure you have identified and minimized your business' specific risks. Simply using generic convenience store risk assessments will not suffice, since these will not identify many risks particular to your business.

Risk assessments are simple—just walk around all areas of your store, noting what might cause harm. Talk to your employees about their health and safety concerns. Study your store's accident log to see if there are any recurring accidents or near misses.

Armed with this information, you can build a risk management program that controls your store's risks, from the minor hazards affecting only a few people to the big ones affecting everybody.

Common Convenience Store Risks

Although the risks plaguing convenience stores can vary due to many factors, almost all convenience stores will experience these common hazards.

Slips and Trips

Any business with a physical location must contend with slips and trips. Spills, stock left on the floor, uneven surfaces and doorways wet with rain could all cause someone to slip or trip. Convenience stores that sell gas

face a considerable slip and trip hazard in the form of spilled gas or oil in parking lots.

To lower your risk of slips and trips, keep your store's floors in good condition—never let a spill linger on the floor. When cleaning up a spill, require that employees use "wet floor" warning signs. In wet weather, always place a door mat at the entrance to encourage good

Most convenience stores deal with the same general types of risks. Use this overview as a foundation for your store's risk management program.

housekeeping. You may need to revise stocking procedures to make sure employees do not place boxes in the aisles that could inadvertently trip someone.

Handling and Moving Stock

Although it may not seem like a dangerous risk, handling and moving stock can cause serious back injuries for employees who routinely lift large, bulky objects such as newspaper deliveries.

Train your employees in proper lifting techniques that take pressure off their backs. When loads are too large or heavy, instruct your employees to use a trolley. Also, devise a system for storing heavy or large loads at an accessible, appropriate height. Storing heavy goods on high shelves is dangerous and should be avoided.

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Robbery and Violence

Convenience stores are especially susceptible to robbery and violence due to a number of factors, including the high number of customers, the large amount of cash and the ability to exit and enter quickly.

Consider installing security cameras, alarms and other security measures to deter violence and robberies. Train staff in handling tense situations with customers or robbers, and establish an emergency procedure for everyone to follow in the event of a robbery or violence.

Working at Height

Climbing ladders to place stock on high shelves, and any other work tasks that involve working at height, can lead to bruising, fractures and back injuries.

It is your responsibility to lower risks of working at height by providing suitable equipment and education on how to use that equipment properly. Store frequently used items in an accessible area—working at height should be avoided at all costs.

Transport

Without safe procedures for managing vehicle deliveries, staff or members of the public may suffer severe or even fatal injuries if struck by a vehicle.

Establish systems to avoid transport-related injuries, such as designating a certain time of day for deliveries that does not coincide with your store's busier periods. Separate the areas where vehicles unload from where pedestrians walk—foot traffic and vehicle traffic should not share the same space, if possible. Instruct your employees in proper unloading procedures, such as not jumping off delivery vehicles or walking backwards.

Contact With Cleaning Chemicals

Cleaning is essential, especially in convenience stores that see a lot of foot traffic every day. But when your employees use cleaning chemicals, they risk skin irritation or eye damage. Even the vapors from chemicals such as bleach are dangerous.

Every employee should be trained how to properly use and store hazardous chemicals. Encourage employees to use protective gloves and take other precautions to lessen their chance of exposure.

Electrical Equipment and Installation

The threat of electrical shock from faulty equipment or a botched installation can happen anywhere at any time.

When conducting your risk assessments, look for any defective electrical equipment. Show your employees where the fuse box is located and how to turn off the electricity in an emergency.

Tailored Insurance Is Best

These risks are just a small sample of what your store faces. With comprehensive commercial insurance and thorough risk management guidance from Cluett Commercial Insurance Agency, Inc., your store can continue offering essential products to your customers while safeguarding your employees' health.