

Legal Health & Safety

Out of sight – but never out of mind

Risk management is essential for cellar work, where the potential dangers can include exploding gas cylinders and unguarded cellar hatches

CELLAR HEALTH and safety is of paramount importance, and staff working below stairs should have necessary protective equipment, such as aprons for changing barrels, safety boots, gloves, and hard hats when working in low-ceiling rooms.

Possibly the biggest threat comes from CO₂ gas cylinders, and all staff should be trained on how to connect, disconnect and store them. Full cylinders not in use should be locked or chocked together. Empty cylinders should also be chocked together.

Cylinders connected and in use should be chained or restrained. The reason for this soon becomes apparent should one go off with a bang – due usually to a valve or washer failure – and starts bouncing around the cellar. Anyone in the room should leave within seconds as the escaping gas quickly deprives the air of its oxygen content. It makes sense to invest in a CO₂ monitoring system for confined spaces – and to keep the cellar temperature at a constant 12 to 14 degrees.

Hazards are also present when manually handling, moving or stacking barrels. Remember that on delivery day the dray is obliged to help staff stack and rack them, and many drays have their own risk assessments. If that is the case, be advised what that assessment is and make sure it is adhered to.

Cellar stock rotation is also important, so why not rotate on dray day?

Staff should always be aware of risks from electrical installations, hoses and water, while chemicals



Cellar hatches present the risk of serious injury if left unguarded

used in cellars can be another source of danger, so COSHH (control of substances hazardous to health) risk assessments should be studied. Ideally chemicals should be stored in plastic-lid boxes, well away from food.

Food should not be kept in the cellar, though if it is necessary to temporarily do so then ensure it is stored in a refrigerator. Items such as citrus fruit and mushrooms are notorious for “turning” beer.

Fungicidal paint

Cellar walls and ceilings must be kept scrupulously clean. Painting with a fungicidal paint is most effective, as yeast, which is prominent in real ale, will badly affect surroundings.

Ice machines, too, can bring problems when kept in cellars. These machines should be isolated and thoroughly cleaned inside and out every week, and scoops need to be housed in a container in a diluted Milton and water liquid that must be changed on a weekly basis. Be sure to read the manufacturer's instructions for ice machines. The ice itself should be stored in small food-grade bags and used within four weeks.

Finally, always be aware of slips, trips and falls on wet floors, cellar steps and, most importantly, unguarded cellar hatches – particularly those situated behind the bar. Unless either a barrier or a chain securely protects the hatch then the potential of a serious injury is ever-present – and with it the risk of costly litigation. ■

Health & Safety Legal



Edited by Venners

www.thepublican.com/business toolkit

Venners is the UK's largest independent licensed trade stock auditing company. Established in 1896, it has a wealth of experience in liquor and food stocktaking and

auditing, compliance audit, food safety, health & safety and inventory services. Among other things it helps large corporate businesses and individual operators to increase margins

and control their stock and gross profit. It offers a genuine national service using only its own employees. Pictured is food safety manager Stuart Knill.

Q&A

Can I let my dogs roam in pub garden?

Q I serve a lot of food outdoors during the summer. I have two large friendly dogs that normally roam around the area where customers are eating. Am I breaking any rules by allowing them to do this?

A You are not, but some house rules might best be applied in such cases. Be aware that some customers may feel uncomfortable eating if a dog is looking longingly at their food! Well-behaved dog owners and their dogs are generally welcome in most places outside. Normally I would suggest that in such areas dogs should be on a lead and under control.

File under: 15 Outside the premises September 15, 2008

Must I report this to Health & Safety?

Q My cellar man is off work sick having strained his back moving kegs. He is only part-time but has now been off for two weeks. Someone in the bar told me I should report this to the Health & Safety Executive under RIDDOR rules. Should I?

A You should inform the health and safety department of your local council within 10 days of the accident. However, you may find that they are not overly concerned. If it is a serious accident they should be informed immediately and may wish to see what has happened, how it happened and what can be done to prevent it in the future.

RIDDOR is a book of forms concerning employees that have had an accident at work and are subsequently off work as a result for more than three days.

File under: 13 Health and Safety September 15, 2008

Advice needed on moving hot food

Q We run barbecues from our pub garden. There is a fair distance between the kitchen and the garden area and someone mentioned to me that we should be giving more thought to how we transport hot and cold food, especially with regard to hot food and the safety of our staff. Can you advise?

A Hot food can rapidly cool as it is being transported from one area to another and it could be worthwhile covering the food with foil or domes.

It is difficult to provide further comment on the matter without being aware of the distances and conditions involved.

From a safety point of view, when staff are taking items from one place to another you must ensure that the pathway is as clear as possible; perhaps another member of staff could lead the way if they are not too busy.

Alternatively, you could look into finding a different route to the barbecue area.

File under: 13 Health and Safety September 15, 2008

Index

- 1 In court
- 2 Types of licence
- 3 Licence applications
- 4 Running a bar
- 5 Permitted hours
- 6 Extensions
- 7 Music/entertainment
- 8 Betting and gaming
- 9 Trading standards & measures
- 10 Employment law
- 11 Food and hygiene
- 12 Property law
- 13 Health and safety
- 14 Signs and notices
- 15 Outside the premises
- 16 Children and young people
- 17 Landlord and Tenant Act

If you have a legal query write to: Legal Advice, The Publican, Ludgate House, 245 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 9UY

Get electrical testing down PAT

THE THINGS we take most for granted – such as televisions and other appliances that are not hard-wired – are potentially some of the most dangerous.

If there has ever been an electrical accident on your business premises, then you'll appreciate how important it is to ensure that all electrical appliances are risk-free. This is where portable appliance testing (PAT) comes to the fore.

Some equipment defects can be found by a visual check, for example hazards caused by a defective plug, cable damage or signs that the equipment is in poor condition.

However, visual inspections will not identify all dangerous faults so a PAT test is required to reveal less obvious electrical defects such as insulation problems, earth continuity and resistance and overload conditions. Detailed test records are essential and the only effective method of proving that appropriate measures have been taken to avoid accidents.

One of the first things fire officers or health and safety inspectors ask to

see during an inspection visit are PAT records. Along with the safety benefits, an added bonus of PAT records is that they can also form part of an asset register.

Many companies within the hospitality industry have testing carried out annually and use it as a system of replacing electrical goods, usually after three years.

NIECC-registered electricians are generally extremely reliable in carrying out the tests. A word of caution though – some testing companies charge for each item tested on site and in a multi-bedroom venue the cost could come as a shock. Always ascertain the fees before the test is carried out.

In today's "where there's a blame, there's a claim" culture it is more important than ever to ensure your site is as safe as possible for staff and the public.

www.thepublican.com/business toolkit



Detailed testing will prove that accident prevention methods have been used