

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Hart Research Associates
DATE: March 16, 2015
RE: Key Findings from a Survey on Fast Food Worker Safety

On behalf of the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (National COSH), Hart Research Associates conducted a survey among a national sample of 1,426 adults who work in a fast food restaurant (including 1,091 who work in the kitchen at least some of the time). The survey explored workplace safety conditions at the nation's fast food restaurants, and this memo highlights the survey's key findings.

1. The vast majority of fast food workers have been injured on the job—most of them seriously and repeatedly. Burn injuries are especially prevalent.

- Fully 87% of fast food workers have suffered some type of injury in the past year, including 78% who suffered *multiple* injuries.
- Four in five (79%) fast food workers have been burned on the job within the past year. Fully 73% of these burn victims (or 58% of all fast food employees) suffered *multiple* burns in the past year.

Frequency of Workplace Injuries among Fast Food Workers

	Occurred in Past Year %	Occurred Multiple Times in Past Year %
Burned	79	58
Cut	67	42
Hurt while lifting or carrying items	34	16
Injured by a fall on a wet, slippery, or oily floor	23	8
Assaulted	12	5
Injured in another way	29	14
ANY INJURY	87	78

- As expected, kitchen workers are the most likely to be burned on the job—84% have been burned in the past year, three-quarters of whom were burned multiple times (or 64% of all kitchen workers). But even among workers who do *not* do food prep or work in the kitchen, 61% have been burned in the past year.

2. Workers say the biggest reasons for on-the-job burns are under-staffing and pressure from managers to work too fast.

- Forty-six percent (46%) of recent burn victims say that either pressure from managers to work more quickly than is safe (36%) or having too few employees to handle the workload safely (29%) was the primary culprit in their burn injury—one in five (20%) burn victims report that *both* were contributing factors.
- More than a quarter (28%) of burn victims cite either missing or damaged protective equipment (19%), or broken or damaged kitchen equipment (17%) as reasons for their burns.
- Burns occur in numerous ways: 54% of burn victims were burned on the fryer, 46% on a grill, 39% handling hot liquids, 39% using the oven, 37% using other hot equipment, and 11% using caustic cleaning chemicals. Workers outside the kitchen are most likely to be burned while handling hot liquids.

3. Many fast food workers report potential dangers in their work environment. More than a third report that their restaurant does not even have a properly equipped and accessible first aid kit.

Serious hazards include missing or damaged kitchen and safety equipment, lack of training, and slippery floors. The biggest problems, however, are under-staffing and pressure from managers to work more quickly than is safe. Fully 54% of fast food workers say that one or both of these two issues is a *serious* problem at their restaurant.

Health and Safety Problems at Fast Food Restaurants			
	Total Serious Problem	Very Serious Problem	Fairly Serious Problem
	%	%	%
Too few employees to handle the workload safely	44	27	17
Pressure from managers to work more quickly than is safe	39	24	15
Broken or damaged kitchen equipment	37	24	13
Wet, slippery, or oily floors	36	23	13
Not enough training to do the job safely	34	21	13
Missing or damaged personal protective equipment like gloves, goggles, or aprons	29	19	10

- More than one-third (36%) of fast food workers report that their store is missing a basic tool of injury preparedness: a stocked, accessible first aid kit. In addition to the 8% who say their restaurant does not have a first aid kit at all, 19% say that the kit in their store is missing important items such as Band-Aids or burn cream, and 14% say the kit is located in a place inaccessible to employees such as a manager's office or a safe.

- As a result of these safety problems, fast food employees say their employer could make the job safer (51%) rather than that it is not realistic for the employer to improve safety (27%) by a ratio of almost two to one.

4. In addition to frequently maintaining unsafe conditions, fast food restaurants often are failing to provide proper treatment when injuries do happen, with many actually attempting to treat burn injuries with condiments rather than burn cream.

- Many workers are receiving inappropriate and ineffective treatment for their burn injuries. Nearly half (45%) of burn victims report that they were not always given appropriate treatment for their burns. This figure rises to 62% in restaurants that lack an accessible and properly stocked first aid kit.
- The restaurants in which workers were burned but failed to receive proper treatment (which employ 36% of all fast food workers surveyed) appear to have widespread health and safety problems. Workers in these restaurants report all types of injuries at a higher rate than the overall sample: 82% have been cut, 58% have been hurt while carrying or lifting items, and 36% have been injured by a fall. Three in five (62%) say having too few employees to handle the workload safely is a serious problem, and the same proportion report pressure from their employer to work more quickly. Seventy percent (70%) say their job could be made safer, compared with just 17% who say safety conditions are adequate.
- Incredibly, one-third (33%) of all burn victims say that their manager suggested wholly inappropriate treatments for burns, including condiments such as mustard, mayonnaise, butter, or ketchup, instead of burn cream.

Survey Methodology:

Interviews were conducted online. Respondents were recruited with Facebook ads posted nationwide, targeted to produce a proper geographic and demographic representation of fast food workers. Respondents were screened to ensure that they are currently employed at a fast food restaurant in a non-managerial position, and are age 18 or older. The final sample was weighted to ensure that it was demographically representative of the nation’s fast food workforce.

Demographic Profile of Respondents			
Gender		Race/Ethnicity	
Men	44%	Caucasian	54%
Women	56%	Hispanic/Latino	20%
		African American	20%
		Other	6%
Restaurant Type		Age	
Burger	69%	18-19	20%
Chicken	14%	20-24	39%
Sandwich	10%	25-29	18%
Pizza	10%	30+	23%
Other	13%		