



Safety alert 06/2011

Worker injured while cooking food in a microwave oven

The purpose of this safety alert is to highlight the dangers associated with cooking food in a microwave oven and suggest possible control measures to assist industry to manage the risk.

Background

In October 2010, a worker at a fast food outlet received severe burns as they removed hot food from a microwave oven. The container used was a plastic 6 litre microwave container, appropriate for reheating and advertised as part of a food storage system. However, it was not an appropriate container for cooking frozen peas for 10 minutes.

The plastic container became very hot and flexible producing a funnel effect when removed from the microwave oven. The contents poured down the front of the worker who received third degree burns to the chest requiring skin grafts. The worker was not wearing personal protective equipment.

A written procedure for cooking in the microwave oven was available. However, the worker was only told what to do and what they were told was not a safe way to complete the task.

Contributing factors

- A written procedure for cooking in the microwave oven was not provided to the worker and verbal instruction was inadequate.
- The container provided was not suitable for the task.
- The packet of frozen peas provided to the injured worker did not include cooking instructions. Note: Frozen peas generally do not require water to be added when cooking in a microwave oven as they are full of water.
- There was no personal protective equipment provided to protect the worker from heat hazards.



Microwave burn sustained by worker that required skin grafts

Action required

1. A risk assessment on all tasks must be done by the employer or person in control of the workplace.
2. Workers must be trained in using safe work procedures.
3. Cooking instructions provided by the supplier or manufacturer of frozen products must be included in the safe work procedure and understood by workers.
4. Appropriate microwave-safe containers must be provided for cooking.
5. Personal protective equipment such as full length PVC apron, oven mitts or pot holders along with industry specific clothing should be worn to protect a worker's chest area, legs, body and hands.

Further information

Further information relevant to the hospitality industry can be obtained from WorkSafe's website www.worksafe.wa.gov.au by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email safety@commerce.wa.gov.au

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