



**S**AFETY  
**S**OLUTIONS &  
**S**UPPLY



# Occupational Safety in Microbreweries

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## INTRODUCTION

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An organization is responsible for ensuring that it minimizes the risk of harm to the people that may be affected by its activities (e.g., its workers, its managers, contractors, or visitors), and particularly if the organization engages them to perform those activities as part of their “occupation.”

The Occupational Health and Safety Act’s primary objective is to ensure that safety at work is achievable in every organization, big or small. By complying with this act, you can address issues that may pose a danger to your employees well before any untoward incidents occur.

When people think fondly of breweries, three important things may come to mind: kegs, beer, and happiness. And ultimately, that’s exactly what brewers want the consumer to walk away with— a positive, enjoyable experience, sampling and purchasing good beer. However, many people underestimate the amount of hard labor that goes on behind the scenes or the vigilance required to maintain a safe work environment in the day-to-day operations of beer making.

Craft breweries have experienced nearly four times as many safety violations as larger breweries in recent years, according to a Reuters analysis of federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) data. Breweries carry a high risk of injury, with safety concerns ranging from routine slips and falls and unsecured kegs to caustic chemicals used in a confined space and improper use of personal protective equipment.



*As a brewer, you have a responsibility to your employees and customers to uphold the highest safety standards.*



## TOP HAZARDS AND HOW TO REDUCE RISK FOR THE BREWING INDUSTRY

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The cheapest claim for a brewery is the one that never happens. The best way to keep your insurance premiums low over the long term is to minimize the impact of claims on your business. While risk cannot be 100% removed from operating a brewery, there are various ways a brewer or owner and their employees can control their risks and reduce the frequency and severity of claims.

There are many financial benefits to managing your risk and having a focus on safety at your brewery. These include; saving money (reduce the quantity, severity, and financial impact of injuries), reduced insurance and workers comp costs, less equipment downtime, minimizing product loss, improving brand equity, more effective work procedures, and sustainability for a business.

The top hazards in breweries are similar to those in the general manufacturing industry. **Below are some of the top risks, as well as how you can control their impact on your business:**

01

**Ergonomics** – repetitive motion, lifting, awkward postures.

**How to manage:** automate processes (hoists, conveyors, keg robots), two-person lifts, lift training for employees.

02

**Walking and Working Surfaces** – wet floors, trip hazards, improperly stacked items.

**How to manage:** clean up spills immediately, monthly walk-throughs looking for hazards, keep aisles, stairs, and platforms clear from clutter.

03

**Fall Protection** – elevated work platforms, stairways.

**How to manage:** handrails, 4" toeboard, slip-resistant reads on stairs.

04

**Powered Industrial Trucks** – forklifts, pallet trucks, etc.

**How to manage:** written and documented training, daily inspections, never load outside rated capacity.

05

**Keg Safety**

**How to manage:** never alter safety devices, systems connected to kegs should have pressure regulator, only use kegs from your brewery, inspect kegs (Sankey valve, steel ball, and o-ring).

06

**Thermal Hazards**

**How to manage:** steam and hot water pipe insulation, label hot surfaces, written procedures for employees, long sleeves and pants, safety goggles, and gloves.

One of the best ways to manage your risk is to get your employees involved. Forming an employee lead safety committee can help get your company culture's focus to be safety-oriented. Use committee meetings to identify and fix hazards proactively, discuss accidents and near misses, develop recommendations, and assign actions. Your insurance broker can attend these meetings, make suggestions, and help with ways to implement procedures.

It is recommended that brewery operators report, track, and investigate accidents and near misses, document progress, and identify on the job hazards and solutions to mitigate them.

## **SAFETY PROCEDURES (AND SUPPLIES) FOR ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING**

Safety risks are abundant in breweries, from caustic chemicals to the hazards that come with handling hot water and glass. Accidents can be prevented with the proper use of protective gear.

Wearing proper personal protective equipment (PPE) is not merely a suggestion for employees; it should be required. Build a culture where employees are in the practice of wearing the proper gear every time they perform routine tasks.

**Here is a list of products you should be supplying and have on-hand for all employees working within the brewery:**



**Eye Protection:** protects against hot water, chemical splashes/spills, glass breaking while bottling.



**Ear Protection:** protects against noise from the bottling/canning and racking equipment; also protects against noise-induced hearing loss from driving or working near loud forklifts and trucks.



**Protective Helmets:** must be worn where falling object hazards are present, such as near conveyor belts carrying bottles or in a warehouse where kegs are stored.



**Protective Footwear:** protects against hot water or chemical spills, broken glass dropped kegs, etc. It also reduces the risk of slips and falls on sometimes wet and slippery brewery floors.



**Safety Aprons and Gloves:** to handle chemicals and protect against splashing and hot water.

## SAFE HANDLING OF PACKAGED GAS AND CHEMICALS

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Packaged gases and caustic chemicals are a major component in brewing - there should never be a second thought about the seriousness of working in close quarters. These supplies can be dangerous if not properly handled.

Brewers often work in confined spaces – from cleaning and servicing fermenters to grain silos, safeguards like entry procedures and training must ensure workers are safe in confined spaces. **Here are some tips for keeping your employees safe:**

- ▶ Label chemicals, especially any that are hazardous.
- ▶ Proper ventilation is essential when using chemicals. Consider your ventilation needs, particularly in small spaces or even in refrigeration systems where ammonia is used.
- ▶ Don't overlook maintenance and cleanliness of cylinders. Monitor gas pressure routinely to avoid any major incidents and make sure to use a lockout/tagout system to mark tanks or lines that are shut down for service.

## DEVELOP SAFETY PROTOCOLS IN PREPARATION FOR OSHA INSPECTIONS

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One major item to prepare for is an unannounced visit from an inspector from a local, state, or federal regulatory agency. For instance, OSHA regularly inspects hazardous workplaces without advanced notice. OSHA inspectors are looking to see that regulations are being followed and help employers and workers reduce on-the-job hazards to prevent workplace injuries.

One of the first items an OSHA inspector will want to cross off the list is looking for an organized, clutter-free workspace. Cords, equipment, and any other miscellaneous items should be cleared from walkways, and like your chemicals, everything should be clearly labeled.

Another big risk to avoid is injuries due to improper keg storage. For the heavier equipment in the brewery, make sure your racks are sturdy and that you are stacking kegs properly.

To fully prepare for an OSHA inspection, **follow a few essential tips from The Brewer's Association:**

Select a company representative to work directly with your OSHA compliance officer before and during the inspection. This can typically be a safety director or management-level employee who is familiar with the brewery's responsibilities and rights in the event of an OSHA inspection, as well as your safety programs and records.

**Have written records accessible for:**

- ▶ Hazard assessments are used to develop appropriate controls for employee protection and your customers if you have a public storefront.
- ▶ Written safety programs specific to your current brewery operations
- ▶ Employee training and documentation
- ▶ OSHA illness and injury record keeping logs for the last five years
- ▶ Compliance and OSHA standards documents

## STAY COMPLIANT

Remember to stay up-to-date and in line **with other relevant regulations:**

ALCOHOL REGULATIONS	MANUFACTURING PRACTICES	ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
Any business that produces or sells alcohol must follow national and state laws and any local rules and regulations.	In adherence to federal, state, and county regulations and standards, set up sourcing and production standards and quality management practices.	By regulations in your area, plan to manage wastewater, waste disposal, and air emissions to stay compliant.

## CONCLUSION

Occupational safety is a system of preservation of life and health of workers in the workplace, has a wide range of areas in the social and labor sphere, and requires the strengthening of public attention to improving working conditions and preventing occupational injuries and occupational diseases. Technicians in daily work solve the issues related to improving technology, improving the reliability of technical systems (equipment, machinery, etc.), workers' safety and life, etc.

Workplace inspections serve a critical role in fulfilling this objective and maintaining a safe, productive work environment where your business can flourish. These are planned walk-through activities carried out in the work premises to examine various factors critically. Some of the aspects that may be covered are materials, buildings, equipment, and so on, which may pose a danger.

Staying on top of regulations and requirements can save you from expensive fines, employee injuries, and possible closure of your business. If you invest in proper safety materials and stay focused on your employees' safety and training, your up-to-code brewery will be set for smooth operations.

**Contact Safety Solutions and Supply to learn more about how your organization can create a cost-efficient safety program tailored to your company's workplace needs.**

## ABOUT SAFETY SOLUTIONS AND SUPPLY

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**Safety Solutions and Supply** specializes in the development and support of safety-management systems, provides accredited instructional safety programs to employees, and assists with the selection and sales for a wide range of protective equipment.

## SOURCES

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314 East Canal Street | Mulberry, Florida 33860

866-537-2262 | [www.solutionsinsafety.com](http://www.solutionsinsafety.com)

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