



Workplace Adjustments **During Extreme Heat Conditions**

Protect Your Team. Maintain Operations. Reduce Risk.

Extreme heat can quickly turn commercial kitchens into hazardous work environments, increasing the risk of heat-related illness, employee fatigue, and reduced productivity. By making a few operational adjustments, restaurants can help keep employees safe while maintaining efficient operations.

Immediate Actions

MAXIMIZE KITCHEN VENTILATION

- + Proper ventilation is your first line of defense against excessive kitchen temperatures.
- + Run all kitchen exhaust hoods and makeup air systems at full capacity.
- + Verify that exhaust and makeup air systems are operating properly.
- + Clean grease filters if airflow is restricted.
- + Start hood systems before cooking equipment is turned on and keep them running after equipment is shut down to remove residual heat.

REDUCE HEAT AT THE SOURCE

Every piece of cooking equipment adds heat to the kitchen.

- + Turn off fryers, ovens, broilers, salamanders, and other equipment when not in use.
- + Consolidate cooking onto fewer appliances during slower periods.
- + When possible, use induction burners, microwaves, or combi ovens, which generate less ambient heat than traditional equipment.

ADJUST FOOD PREPARATION

Small menu changes can significantly reduce kitchen temperatures.

- + Feature more cold dishes, salads, sandwiches, and low-cook menu options.
- + Complete batch preparation during cooler morning hours.
- + Minimize menu items requiring long oven or grill cook times during peak heat.

IMPROVE AIRFLOW

Better airflow helps remove heat more efficiently.

- + Position portable fans to move air toward exhaust hoods—not directly at cooking flames.
- + Keep HVAC supply and return vents clear of obstructions.
- + Keep exterior doors closed whenever possible to prevent hot outdoor air from entering the building.

PRIORITIZE HYDRATION

Hydration is essential to preventing heat-related illness.

- + Place cold water stations near work areas.
- + Encourage employees to drink water consistently throughout their shift—not just during scheduled breaks.
- + Consider providing electrolyte beverages for employees working extended shifts in high temperatures.



Staff Safety During Extreme Heat

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS

Managers and supervisors should monitor employees for symptoms of heat-related illness, including:

- + Heavy sweating
- + Dizziness
- + Headache
- + Nausea
- + Muscle cramps
- + Confusion or unusual behavior

IF AN EMPLOYEE SHOWS SYMPTOMS

Take immediate action:

- + Move the employee to a cooler location.
- + Provide cool drinking water if they are alert and able to drink safely.
- + Apply cool towels or ice packs to the neck, armpits, and wrists.

Call for medical assistance immediately if symptoms are severe or the employee becomes confused, loses consciousness, or stops sweating.



Operational Adjustments

Simple scheduling changes can reduce employee exposure to extreme heat.

- + Schedule food preparation and deliveries during early morning hours whenever possible.
- + Rotate employees through cooler workstations.
- + Increase the frequency of rest breaks during the hottest part of the day.
- + If operationally appropriate, allow employees to cool down briefly in walk-in coolers. Avoid prolonged occupancy and always follow safety procedures.



Long-Term Facility Improvements

If excessive kitchen temperatures are a recurring issue each summer, consider investing in permanent solutions such as:

- + Additional makeup air units with cooling capability
- + Air curtains at receiving and loading doors
- + Reflective roof coatings
- + Improved insulation above kitchen areas
- + High-efficiency or demand-controlled ventilation systems
- + Relocating refrigeration condensers away from occupied workspaces

These improvements can improve employee comfort, reduce HVAC strain, and increase energy efficiency over time.

RISK CONTROL TIP

If the dining room feels comfortable but the kitchen is excessively hot, the most common causes are:

1. Insufficient kitchen hood exhaust performance
2. Inadequate makeup air
3. Too many heat-producing appliances operating simultaneously

In most cases, improving exhaust airflow and makeup air provides the greatest reduction in kitchen temperatures without requiring major renovations.

Key Takeaway

Extreme heat creates real safety risks for restaurant employees, but many of those risks can be reduced through proactive planning, proper ventilation, hydration, and smart operational adjustments. A few simple changes today can help protect your team, improve comfort, and keep your kitchen operating safely throughout the hottest days of the year.



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