



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY: Prevention of work-related injuries & illnesses through research & investigation

WORK-RELATED AMPUTATIONS IN THE FOOD SERVICE INDUSTRY

Food slicers are commonly used in grocery stores, restaurants, and delicatessens to prepare meats, cheeses and other food items. These machines typically have an electrical-powered rotary blade and can cause severe injury if all safety procedures are not followed. Between 2014 and 2016, food slicers caused 41 work-place amputations in Michigan. Food slicers caused roughly one out of every eight amputations in the restaurant industry. Nearly all (98%) amputations caused by a food slicer involved the end of a finger. Although females experienced only 10% of amputations resulting from other causes, almost half of food slicer-related amputations occurred among females.

EXAMPLES OF WORK-RELATED AMPUTATIONS CAUSED BY FOOD SLICERS

- A 23-year-old male was using a meat slicer at a restaurant when the distal part (3/4 of the nail bed) of his left index finger amputated.
- A 25-year-old male was using a meat slicer at a deli when he had his left middle finger caught in the machine. The end of the finger was amputated, including part of the bone, resulting in exposed bone. The worker needed to have surgical repair of the finger.
- A 45-year-old female was cleaning the meat slicer at a deli when her hand slipped resulting in an amputation of the tip of her right middle finger.

PREVENTING AMPUTATIONS DUE TO FOOD SLICERS

- Always wear cut-resistant gloves when using a food slicer. Stock multiple sizes to ensure appropriate fit.
- Fully retract the food slicer blade and turn off the slicer when not in use or while cleaning.
- Never place food into the slicer by hand-feeding or hand pressure. Use plungers to push food into chute-fed slicers or use the feeding attachment located on the food holder.
- Rotary blade food slicers should always have guards that cover the unused portion of the slicer blade. Unplug the slicer and use a Lockout/Tagout (LO/TO) program when the guards are removed during maintenance or cleaning.
- When cleaning a food slicer, wipe the blade from the center outward to avoid contact with the blade edge. Never wipe toward the blade when cleaning the slicer table.
- Review and follow routine maintenance and disassembly procedures as described in the equipment manual.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The average age of workers who experienced an amputation caused by a food slicer was 32 years.
- The Fair Labor Standards Act prohibits workers under the age of 18 years to work with, repair, adjust, or clean power-driven machinery such as food slicers.
- Many food slicer related amputations happen to experienced workers. Cut-resistant gloves should always be worn, no matter how much practice a worker has.

RESOURCES

OSHA fact sheet on preventing cuts and amputations from food slicers and meat grinders:

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3794.pdf>

U.S. Department of Labor Youth Worker Safety in Restaurants eTool:

https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/youth/restaurant/equipment_foodprep.html