

# Restaurant Electrical Fires

Electrical fires are the second leading cause of fires in the restaurant industry. They are a serious concern and a threat to our jobs. Most electrical problems can be identified before a fire occurs. By knowing the leading causes of fires and what can be done to prevent them, we can reduce the chances of one occurring in the workplace.

Here are some of the common causes of electrical fires.

## Overloading of electrical system with too much equipment

When restaurants add new equipment, their electrical system can become overtaxed, leading to overloaded circuits. A clear signal that this may be occurring is when equipment shuts down prematurely or when several appliances are operating and electrical power dims. Don't assume that an appliance may be broken if it keeps shutting down, this may be a sign of an electrical problem.

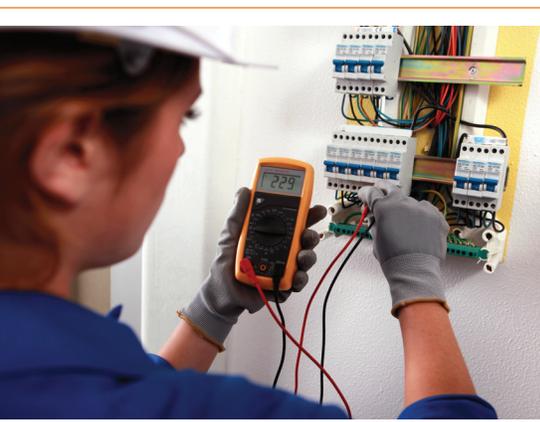
## Extension Cord Use

Extension cords should be used for temporary electrical supply only. They should not be used more than 1-2 days. Each extension cord has a wattage rating on its label; if the appliance wattage is greater than the cord's wattage, it should not be used to power the appliance. Some appliances may not indicate wattage but rather indicate the number of amps and volts. To determine the wattage, multiply the amps by the volts. For example, an appliance is listed as 10 amps at 125 volts. The wattage rating is 1250W (10x125).

Extension cords should not be tacked to a wall, placed underneath doors or within doorframes. Also placing them underneath mats is not recommended. They should not be used if any wiring is exposed. If you see exposed wiring, remove the cord from service and tag it. If you notice a warm extension cord, unplug it from the wall and notify your manager.

## Electrical Panel Problems

Panel problems are usually easy to identify. Electrical panels should have a cover and the cover needs to be closed to prevent electrical sparks from escaping the panel. Since panels may spark, it is important to keep combustible storage at least three feet from a panel. This will reduce the potential of igniting nearby materials. Open circuit breakers should be supplied with dummy breakers so the panel has no openings.



# Restaurant Electrical Fires (continued)

Taping off circuit breakers is a common but unsafe practice in the restaurant industry. Taping the circuit breaker can prevent it from closing during an electrical surge and can harm employees as well as start a fire.

If you see taped circuits, notify your manager. If an electrical panel feels warm to the touch, that is an indicator of a potentially severe electrical problem. Notify your manager right away.

## Lighting

Lighting is the third major cause of restaurant fires. Many of the fires started in lighting units are due to foreign materials near the light, such as bird nests. When you see any nesting activity in a light fixture, notify your manager so it can be removed.

The second leading cause of fires caused by lighting is improper wiring or too high wattage being used in the fixture. All fixtures have wattage requirements and before you change a light bulb, make sure the wattage meets or is less than the fixture requirements.

If you see a light fixture that is going on/off or dimming, this may be an indication that the fixture is not working properly and should be checked.

Should you have any questions or need further assistance, please visit our website, send an email or call us.



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