

Retail Sales and Service – General Fact Sheet



WHAT ARE THE GENERAL DUTIES OF SOMEONE WHO WORKS IN RETAIL SALES AND SERVICE, OR IN A SIMILAR JOB THAT INVOLVES WORKING WITH THE PUBLIC?

Some of the main duties of sales and service personnel in stores, hotels and other locations are to:

- Greet customers and discuss details of the transaction.
- Provide information to customers about products and services.
- Determine method of payment, and prepare bills, invoices and other documents.
- Assemble displays of merchandise.
- Maintain inventory of merchandise.
- Maintain internal record-keeping systems.
- Working with computers, bar readers and other electronic devices.
- Be aware of customer actions while on the premises (e.g., be alert to potential issues or acts of theft).

What are some health and safety issues for retail sales and service personnel?

- Standing for long hours.
- Exposure to various chemicals and materials, which may include paints, solvents, pesticides, fertilizers, perfumes, or cleaning products.
- Indoor air quality.
- Repetitive manual tasks or working in awkward positions.
- Risk of back injury from pushing, pulling or lifting objects.
- Injuries from sharp objects, knives, scissors, box cutters, etc.
- Exposure to extreme temperatures.
- Slips, trips and falls.
- Risk of overhead materials falling.
- Working on ladders or other potentially unstable structures.
- Risk of violent attack.
- Working alone.
- Handling money.
- Bullying.
- Stress.
- Fire.
- Fatigue or other health effects of shift work or extended work days.
- Exposure to common viruses such as colds and seasonal influenza.

What are some preventive measures for retail sales and service personnel?

- Learn safe lifting procedures.
- Learn fire safety and emergency evacuation procedures, including how to assist customers when evacuating.
- Learn how to use equipment and tools safely.
- Avoid or take frequent breaks from awkward body positions.
- Wear appropriate footwear and other personal protective equipment when needed, such as eye and face protectors, gloves, respirator, or high visibility safety apparel.
- Keep all work areas clear of clutter and equipment.
- Establish good housekeeping practices.
- Learn safe handling and storage procedures before working with hazardous products.
- Know how to react in a negative or violent situation.
- Know how to stay safe if working alone. For example, have a mobile phone or other alternative means to contact a designated person when working alone.
- Do not exceed the capacity of the shelves when storing merchandise.
- Do not block fire-exits and fire-extinguishers.
- Keep a first-aid kit within easy access.

What are some good general safe work practices?

- Practice safe lifting.
- Find ways to minimize musculoskeletal disorders on the job.
- Take all safety precautions when working on ladders.
- Follow or establish safety procedures for working alone, or for avoiding working alone wherever possible.
- Follow company safety rules.
- Learn about chemical safety, WHMIS and SDSs.
- Know how to report a hazard and near miss.
- Follow good housekeeping procedures.
- Use hand washing to reduce the risk of common infections.

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