Fire is a hazard faced by all commercial kitchens. It only takes a single spark or small gas leak to set a restaurant aflame. Only through properly training employees and following OSHA’s fire safety standards can a restaurant owner protect employees and customers from danger.

**Potential Hazards:**
Electricity and gas are the forms of energy used to power a commercial kitchen. Everywhere that energy is found there is a potential fire hazard. The following list highlights the most common causes of restaurant fires:

- **Open flames** - Loose clothing and hair can easily catch fire if they come into contact with open flames.
- **Full grease traps** - Full grease traps have pieces of food and maybe even stray paper products inside them and can catch fire when more hot grease is added.
- **Poor housekeeping** - Fire can quickly spread in dirty and cluttered walkways and storage areas.
- **Faulty or frayed electrical cords** - Frayed electrical cords or faulty equipment are more likely to spark and cause an electrical fire.
- **Improper storage of flammable materials** - Flammable materials must be stored away from open flames or heat sources so they do not combust.

**What Employers Can Do to Protect Employees:**
Restaurant owners and managers must provide proper training in order to protect their employees and business from fire. Here are some ways employers can minimize the dangers of a fire in the commercial kitchen:

- **Train employees on fire extinguisher use** - Train employees on each shift how to properly use a fire extinguisher and activate the overhead fire suppression system, so in the event of a fire, someone on the cook line will know what to do.
- **Make sure employees do not attempt to fight the fire** - Employees must first sound the alarm, call the fire department and activate the overhead suppression system before attempting to battle the flames themselves.
- **Empty grease traps regularly** — Overfilled grease traps can catch fire.
- **Keep aisles uncluttered** — Cluttered walkways will hamper employees and customers trying to escape from a fire.
- **Provide sufficient lighting** — The emergency exit route needs to be adequately lit so employees and customers can see where they are going in case of an emergency.
- **Make sure exit signs are functioning** — This allows employees and guests to quickly identify the exit in an emergency.