

Master Brewers Safety Toolbox Talk



Safe Environments for Brewery Tours & Guests

Overview

Brewery tours are essential forms of brewery marketing and customer engagement. Managed well, they are very effective at creating a sense of connection with both existing customers and potential future consumers. These tours can be for the public (self-guided or led by a designated guide), personal tours for friends and family, or special access tours for sales account-building programs, community or industry contacts, and various VIP groups.

Each type of group brings its own engagement challenges, but the brewery environment has inherent risks that will be common to all of them. Applying the hazard recognition tools and robust planning we use for employee safety will pay dividends when trying to safeguard these visitors while still offering a satisfying experience.

Brewery Tour Hazards

- Slips and trips
 - Wet, uneven floors
 - Floor grates, trenches
 - Hoses, pumps, and other obstructions
- Forklift traffic
- Hot liquids and surfaces
- Corrosive chemicals
- Moving mechanical equipment
- Carbon dioxide and other gases
- Noise

External Hazards from Groups

- Lack of safety awareness
- Guests who wander off, leave mid-tour, or attempt to touch equipment
- Alcohol / Inebriated guests
- Inappropriate footwear and clothing

Pre-planning: Questions to Ask

- **What are the goals of the tour?**

Understanding the goals will guide decisions about where a tour group will go, the levels of

access/proximity to active areas and processes, etc. Spend time honestly thinking through the objectives so that you understand where to apply controls.

- **What will be the pathway through the brewery?**

Will the tour group remain in a stationary observation point or will they move through the space? If the group is mobile, consideration will need to be given to proximity to active operations and managing the transition from one area to another.

- **How many people can be safely managed in a tour?**

There are two aspects to this: (1) how many people can the space safely accommodate and (2) how many people can a tour guide safely manage? Being able to keep track of everyone in a group is essential when moving through an area.

- **How will tours mesh with operational needs?**

This starts with communication: safety conflicts can often be managed by coordinating production timing with the tour group. Areas that have hazards that can't be managed by typical tour safety precautions should be designated off-limits in advance. It is also best practice to establish conflict management mechanisms to address situations where there are competing priorities between operations and tours.

Communications

- Tour guides or hosts should check in with production staff to determine whether there are any potential conflicts with the planned tour route and/or

timing. Advance warning is important, especially for special access tours that may deviate from a typical pre-planned route.

This communication should also be a two-way street: production staff have a duty to inform tour guides about operational needs and potential hazards.

- Conflict resolution tools are important, and advance planning goes a long way. Working out ways to de-escalate and de-personalize conflicts are essential to long-term stability.
- Tour guides and other staff who may host brewery guests in production spaces qualify as *affected staff* for Right-to-Know training purposes. This training should focus on the brewery hazards a tour could encounter.
- Make time to periodically review the tour program in order to make sure that it is functioning well for all of the stakeholders.

Site Preparation

- **Mapping:** Spend as much time as needed to map out tour routes that minimize impact on operations. Having a few options offers valuable flexibility when navigating potential hazards and conflicts.
- **Inspection:** Tour guides need to walk through the planned route in advance to look for potential issues. Hazards can be addressed directly or be communicating with operators. Adjust the tour routing or timing as needed.
 - Pay attention to hot surfaces and wet floors.
 - Caution tape, ropes, fold-out signs, or other temporary barriers can be used to guide people

away from hazardous areas and restrict access

- Temporary signage can be used to indicate hazards as needed (i.e. dry-erase boards)

- **Forklift traffic:** Cramped areas can lead to conflicts, production delays, and even injuries or fatalities. A well-mapped tour route should avoid this issue, but guides should always be aware of how they are moving a group through an area. Clarity is essential.

Group Management Techniques

- **Limit tour groups to manageable sizes:** Be honest about how many guests a single guide can effectively manage. Inexperienced guides should be assigned smaller groups if possible, to improve the ratio.

Large groups should either be split up between guides or have staff assigned to help manage the crowd, especially when moving between rooms.

- **Alcohol management:** Assess the group in advance for signs of being over-served and be prepared to deal with this upfront.

Have a plan to deal with disruptive people and practice this with new guides. Set clear expectations in advance for pre-planned groups.

- **Keep track of guests:** Tours that move through different areas of the brewery need a method for tracking people during transitions. Watch out for people who wander off or linger behind the main group.

Guests will occasionally want or need to leave the tour group, so plan out how to safely manage these departures while still managing the main group. Don't just let people find their own way out. A best practice is to

count people at the tour beginning and again at the end.

Personal Protective Equipment

- **Recognize the limitations:** Avoiding hazards is always the preferred method for preventing injury. PPE is a last line of defense, not the first or only option.
- **Operational status:** A brewery in active production will have a different set of PPE requirements than one that is powered down for the day. Establish a baseline set of PPE and then add components as required to meet the risks present in the space.
- **Footwear:** Close-toed shoes are a food safety requirement in brewery production areas. This needs to be communicated in advance, especially during warm weather when sandals are common.
- **Eye protection:** Safety glasses are a best practice even when a brewery is inactive, but the controlling factor will be the risk assessment from the pre-planning stage.

[View a video on demand on Tour safety.](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON BREWERY SAFETY, PLEASE VISIT THE MBAA BREWERY SAFETY WEBSITE AT:
<http://www.mbaa.com/brewresources/brewsafety>

If you have any questions regarding this Toolbox Talk, please see your supervisor / manager or a member of the Safety Committee.