INGESTION OF BRISTLES FROM GRILL BRUSHES

1 Problem

Step 1. Outline the Problem

What

Problem(s)

People injured from inadvertently ingesting wire bristles from grill brushes

Where

Physical Location

Rhode Island Hospital

Impacted

Risk of serious health issues

Frequency

Six at one hospital, likely many more cases worldwide

Step 2. Analysis

Basic Level Cause Map - Start with simple Why questions.

- Safety Goal
- Risk of serious health issues
- Potential to ingest a wire bristle from brush

More Detailed Cause-and-Effect

This issue can be analyzed by building a Cause Map or visual root cause analysis. The first step in creating a Cause Map is to determine how the issue impacts the overall goals of an organization. In this example, we’ll consider the organization the general public and the main impacted goal is the safety goal since there is a risk of serious health issues. Causes are now added to the Cause Map by asking “why” questions. Why is there a risk of serious health issues? Because there is the potential to swallow a wire bristle and the wire bristle can do a lot of damage within the body. (To view a high level Cause Map of this issue, click “Download PDF” above.)

Continuing the “why” questions, we would now ask “why” is there a potential to swallow a wire bristle? This possibilities exists because people may inadvertently swallow the bristles without realizing it, the bristles come from wire brushes that are often used to clean residential grills and the bristles sometimes fall out of the brushes and stick to the grill. People may inadvertently ingest the bristles because the bristles can stick to meat and the texture can hide the presence of the bristle. Many people are also unaware of the potential danger of eating a wire bristle so they aren’t looking to find bristles. Investigation into this issue has not found any defects that are causing bristles to fall out. No one brand or type of grill brushes has been singled out as the culprit in these causes, but a worn grill brush is more likely to shed bristles than a new brush.

3 Solutions

The final step of the Cause Mapping process is to come up with potential solutions that could be used to prevent the problem from reoccurring. The best way to protect yourself from the possibility of this occurring is to inspect the grill after using a wire grill brush or to find another method to clean your grill.

A new report documented 6 patients who were treated for accidentally ingesting wire bristles from brushes used to clean grills. The 6 cases were all seen at the same hospital within a one year period.

“We’ve identified 12 at one hospital in just the past couple of years, so we know that it’s much more common than anyone suspects.”

- said Dr. David Grand, the author of the new report and a radiologist at Rhode Island Hospital.

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