

Reusable Packaging System Design Standard



Part 7:

Third-party washing, sanitization & handling of foodware

Summary of Requirements

The [Reusable Packaging System Design Standard](#) provides a foundation to align reuse systems globally so they can share infrastructure and become interoperable. This systemic approach is necessary for reuse to become affordable, efficient, and convenient, and scale across sectors and global regions in a way that provides a solution to both the climate and plastic crises.

This document is a summary of the main requirements for washing, sanitization, drying and handling of foodware. It is applicable to reusable food and beverage packaging that is filled at point-of-sale, such as coffee cups in a cafe or clamshell food containers in a restaurant.

For details related to these requirements, see the document: [Part 7: Third-party washing](#).

Requirements for employee health and personal hygiene

- Employees collecting, handling, washing or distributing foodware containers must report any illness to the manager on duty in a manner that allows the manager to reduce the risk of foodborne disease transmission.
- Facilities must designate hand washing sinks in certain locations and with certain equipment and must post hand washing instructions near them.
- Employees that handle and/or fill clean foodware must wash hands at the specified times, including, for example, before starting work, when moving from one food preparation area to another, after using the restroom, after touching dirty dishes, equipment, or utensils, etc.
- The prescribed method of handwashing must be followed, which includes cleaning hands and exposed portions of arms with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds.
- When wearing gloves is required, employees must follow the prescribed donning and removal methods, must change or replace gloves when they become damaged or soiled, or after coughing, sneezing, or touching the hair or face, and must wash hands between glove changes.

Requirements for machine warewashing

Warewashing machines must have an affixed data plate that provides detailed instructions about the proper operation of the machine and must be operated in accordance with the data plate and other manufacturer instructions. The data plate and/or facility SOPs must include information on the type of containers and materials that can be washed in the machine.

- **Precleaning:** Nylon pads and brushes must be used for removing food debris instead of metal scouring pads. Foodware may need to be pre-flushed or soaked for effective cleaning.
- **Loading:** Foodware must be loaded into the machine on racks, trays, or baskets or onto conveyors in a position that exposes it to an unobstructed spray and allows it to drain.

- **Washing:** Machine manufacturer instructions for wash temperature, detergent and cleaning chemicals must be followed to avoid risk of chemical burns or chemical residues.
- **Sanitization:** A chemical sanitizing solution or heat must be used to sanitize foodware after it completes the wash cycle. The concentration of the sanitizing solution and contact time must follow U.S. EPA guidelines and must be determined/verified using test kits. Hot water can be used for sanitizing instead of a chemical sanitizing solution and the temperature of the water and contact time must follow U.S. EPA guidelines.
- **Rinsing:** A rinse additive is required for some warewashing machines.
- **Drying:** After cleaning and sanitizing, foodware must be air-dried or properly drained before contact with food and before being stacked or stored. Containers must not be cloth dried.

Requirements for hand warewashing

A three-compartment handwashing process can be used instead of a machine. In this case, the three-compartment sink may also be used to wash wiping cloths, clean produce, and thaw food, but must not be used for hand washing or for washing mops or maintenance tools. Each section of the sink should be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized before each dishwashing session.

- **Precleaning:** Excess food must be scraped off into a trash can or food waste disposal. If using a four-compartment sink, the first section may be used during this prep period, either to house the food waste disposal or as an area to soak dishes to make removing food easier. Nylon pads and brushes must be used instead of metal scouring pads.
- **Washing:** Foodware must be washed in the first sink compartment using warm, soapy water. The compartment should be filled with a solution of water and soap, detergent, cleaner, or degreaser. The minimum water temperature should be between 95°F and 120°F (35°C and 49°C), depending on local codes. A combination of glass brushes, sponges and scrubbers, dish cloths, and scrub brushes may be necessary, depending on container types.
- **Rinsing:** Soap must be removed from foodware by immersing in or spraying with clean, hot water in the second sink compartment. The required temperature is generally a minimum of 110°F (43°C), but may depend on local codes.
- **Sanitizing:** Foodware must be soaked in the third sink compartment for sanitization. The compartment must contain a chemical sanitizing solution or hot water. Foodware must be fully immersed in the chemical sanitizing solution or hot water for a required period of time. Concentrations, temperatures and times should follow U.S. EPA guidelines.
- **Drying:** After washing and sanitizing, containers must be air-dried or adequately drained before contact with food or before being stacked or stored. Foodware must not be cloth dried.

Foodware storage requirements

- Each foodware container must be inspected before it is placed in storage or packed for redistribution to ensure foodware does not have dents, cracks, or other damage that would render it unsafe for additional use.
- Foodware must not be stacked or stored until completely dry.
- Foodware must be stored, transported and distributed in approved containers with lids to protect from dirt, dust and other contaminants.
- In the case that storage/distribution containers are also used as collections bins for dirty containers, they must be washed and sanitized between each use and be clearly labeled as “clean” or “dirty.”

Foodware handling requirements

- Clean foodware must be stored and transported in approved containers with lids. In the case storage/distribution bins and collection bins are interchangeable, they must be washed and sanitized between each use and clearly labeled as “clean” or “dirty.”
- Handling procedures must be printed and kept in all vehicles, sorting, storage and washing facilities for reference.
- Distribution vehicles (trucks, vans, bikes, etc.) must have separated and designated “clean” and “dirty” areas.
- Vehicle operators that switch between distributing clean foodware and collecting used foodware must wash and sanitize vehicle storage areas between uses.
- Clean gloves must be available in vehicles, at or near each collection point, and at the sorting, washing and storage facilities where employees drop off used foodware or pick up clean foodware. Employees must use gloves to handle any foodware or bins. Employees must wash hands and replace gloves if switching between collection and distribution roles.
- If a glove rips while handling dirty foodware, the employee must immediately wash hands and clean and sanitize any surfaces touched on the way to washing hands.
- If any clean foodware comes in contact with a dirty glove, ripped glove, or is dropped, or placed on an unsanitary surface, it must be returned to a washing facility to be rewashed.
- **When picking up clean foodware for distribution, employees must:** collect cleaned, sanitized foodware that is packed and sealed in a distribution/storage container(s) from the warewashing provider; place distribution/storage container(s) into the designated clean section of the distribution vehicle.
- **When distributing clean foodware, employees must:** distribute clean containers in sealed distribution/storage containers to vendors back of house, give storage/distribution container(s) directly to vendor employees or place it in designated areas in the back of house or behind the counter, away from customers and potential contamination until used.
- **When collecting dirty bins from collection points, employees must:** don gloves, open the collection point housing unit and remove collection bin (if applicable), seal bin with lid, place sealed bin into the designated dirty section of the collection vehicle.
- **When inserting clean collection bins into collection points, employees must:** place sanitized collection bin from the vehicle into the collection point housing unit.
- **When returning dirty foodware to a sorting or washing facility, employees must:** don gloves and unload collection bins at sorting or washing facility according to the facility’s SOPs.

Record keeping requirements

Operators must keep and retain records relating to any measure put in place to control hazards in an appropriate manner and for an appropriate period, commensurate with the nature and size of operations. Record-keeping protocols must be included at each appropriate stage and included in SOP’s. Operators must make information contained in these records available to the competent authority and vendors on request.

Additional details related to these requirements are provided in the full [Part 7: Third-party washing](#).