



Guidance Document

Protective Devices and Display Requirements for Unpackaged Foods Subject to Droplet Contamination and Unnecessary Handling by Customers

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Guidance Document is to establish the minimum requirements for the protection of food subject to possible droplet contamination and unnecessary handling by customers. Furthermore, this document establishes minimum criteria for protecting food displayed at buffets, salad bars, sushi bars, and similar food service operations. This document is not intended to address bulk food sales operations in retail markets.

II. LEGAL AUTHORITY

California Health & Safety Code Sections 114010 and 114080(b).

III. EXEMPTIONS

Although the use of food protective devices is always encouraged, the following food service activities are not required to provide food protective devices to prevent droplet contamination of foods:

- Food displayed at a private party or gathering (e.g., wedding reception, etc.)
- Food preparation activities at a buffet (e.g., fajitas, omelets, etc.) and tableside preparation in which the food item is being specifically prepared for that customer
- Food displays or food preparation surfaces located more than 30 inches away from the customer

IV. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- A. Unless specifically exempted, all unpackaged foods subject to customer contamination must be protected using properly designed and installed shields, approved containers with tight fitting lids, or approved mechanical dispensers.
- B. All potentially hazardous foods must be maintained at or above 135°F or at or below 41°F at all times. These foods must be rapidly heated or cooled to the required temperatures prior to being placed for display. An accurate probe thermometer must be readily available to check product temperatures. Potentially hazardous foods left over at the end of each serving period shall be discarded, or rapidly cooled to 41°F or below.

- C. Food service personnel shall be available at all times when food is displayed for the customer to ensure that the facilities are maintained and operated in a sanitary manner.
- D. Each installation must be approved by the Environmental Health Division. All construction work must conform to local building codes and have the necessary approvals from the local building and fire authorities.
- E. Containers, and other utensils designed to be single-service, shall be used once only, and then discarded.
- F. All equipment, utensils and related facilities shall meet or be certified or classified for sanitation by an American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accredited certification program, and be kept clean and in good repair. In the absence of an applicable ANSI sanitation certification, the Environmental Health Division will evaluate the proposed equipment to determine its acceptability.
- G. Eating utensils located at the service line must be displayed in a sanitary manner. The utensil's food contact surface area must be protected from contamination and unnecessary handling (e.g., silverware displayed with the handles up, cups stacked face down).
- H. All protective equipment/utensil designs not specifically addressed in this SOP must be submitted to the Environmental Health Division for review and acceptance prior to use.

V. FOOD PROTECTIVE DEVICES AND DISPLAY CRITERIA

A. Food Protection Shields

1. Food protection shields shall be of a design approved by the Environmental Health Division, and installed and maintained in a manner so as to adequately protect the displayed food from customer contamination. Devices shall be mounted so as to intercept a direct line between the customer's mouth and the food display area, at the customer's "use" position. The vertical distance from the average customer's mouth to the floor shall be considered to be from 54 to 60 inches. Some acceptable designs are shown in the attachment. The size of the openings shown provide minimum protection. The openings may not be greater than the vertical dimensions illustrated. If the device is at an angle of 45° to 90° with no horizontal protection, the top of the device must be at least 60 inches from the floor. The vertical openings may be decreased for any acceptable designs if more protection is desired. Alternate designs from those illustrated may be approved only if scale drawings are submitted to the Environmental Health Division for evaluation. Food protection devices must be rigidly mounted.
2. End panels are required when it can be reasonably assumed that, through normal use, the foods may be subjected to contamination from the customer's mouth, through access at the ends of the display unit. End panels, when required, must adequately protect the food and must be installed with a minimum one (1) inch clearance between the panel and counter top of the display unit to facilitate cleaning.

3. Unusual food service operations may necessitate the use of alternative devices or designs, which adequately protect the food. Examples of such operations include school cafeterias (where the customers are children) and food service operations in which the customer is seated directly in front of the displayed food. In such cases, plans and specifications must be submitted to the Environmental Health Division detailing the food display, protective device design, and all other information necessary to evaluate and ensure that the food will be properly protected.

B. Food Displayed in Lidded Bulk Containers

Foods may be displayed and dispensed from lidded containers, in lieu of food protection shields, under the following conditions:

1. Foods displayed for customer self-service shall be obtained from containers which have tight fitting, securely attached lids (e.g., soup kettles, roll top chafing dishes, flip top lidded condiment containers, etc.).
2. Where an employee dishes up the food, chafing dishes and other such containers in which the lids lift off may also be used. The covers of these containers must be replaced after each serving.

C. Other Protective Containers and Devices

Other containers and devices, which have been accepted for the display/dispensing of unpackaged foods, include:

1. Pour-type containers for coffee, sugar, salt, etc.
2. Squeeze-type containers for syrup, mustard, catsup
3. Pump-type devices for hot cheeses, and other toppings
4. Mechanical dispensing devices such as onion/relish dispensers, soft serve machines, etc.
5. Lidded containers in which the serving utensils are an integral part of the lid

Attachment



