

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF STATE HEALTH SERVICES



DIVISION FOR REGULATORY SERVICES ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSUMER SAFETY SECTION POLICY, STANDARDS, AND QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT PUBLIC SANITATION AND RETAIL FOOD SAFETY GROUP

PUBLIC SANITATION AND RETAIL FOOD SAFETY GROUP REGULATORY CLARIFICATIONS

November 1, 2000 (Revised: July 2, 2015)

PSRFSGRC - No. 4

SUBJECT: STORAGE OF SANITIZING SOLUTION BUCKETS

Applicable Texas Food Establishment Rules (TFER) Sections:

§228.68(d)(2) Wiping Cloths, use limitation
§228.203 Storage, separation
§228.206 Chemicals

Question:

Can the buckets of sanitizing solutions that are used with wiping cloths be located on the food preparation surfaces? This would make it easier for the employees to use the wiping cloths by making the solutions more accessible.

Response:

Even though the sanitizing solutions meet the requirements of an approved indirect food additive, they are still toxic materials. The solutions must be stored in such a manner that they are separated from the food, equipment and utensils.

Support:

The wiping cloths are intended to be utilized following the guidelines that are specified under §228.68(d)(2). If the cloths are to be used wet, then they must be stored in an approved chemical sanitizing solution.

§228.206 states that chemical sanitizers that are applied to food contact surfaces must meet the requirements that are specified in 40 CFR §180.2020. This federal regulation requires that the solutions must be adequately drained from the food-contact equipment before any contact with food. The types of chemicals that are approved as sanitizers and the maximum approved concentration of the chemicals are specified in the regulation. The requirements for draining the solutions and for not exceeding a maximum concentration indicate that these solutions can be hazardous if not properly handled.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration have very strict guidelines that must be followed before a sanitizer is approved as an indirect food additive. The requirements are listed in the document entitled, "Sanitizing Solutions: Chemistry Guidelines for Food Additive Petitions." Sanitizers must be shown to be safe prior to being approved as an indirect food additive. A petition must be submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that not only provides the chemical formulation and characteristics of a compound, but states the intended usage of the chemical compound.

In order for the EPA to estimate probable human exposure to a sanitizer and, thus, evaluate the safety of the sanitizer, an effective concentration and residual analyses must be provided. The approval is based upon the assumption that food will contact a surface that contains a certain concentration of sanitizer residue. "The Agency's calculations are intended to reflect a reasonable, yet conservative, "worst case" situation."

Approval for a sanitizing solution is given with conditional requirements for usage. Deviation for the drainage and residual concentration requirements will void the approval. If a quantity of the sanitizing solution were spilled directly onto the food, the parameters for the approval would clearly be exceeded and the food would be considered to be unsafe for consumption. The solution must be handled as a toxic material.

§228.203 states that "poisonous or toxic materials shall be stored so they cannot contaminate food, equipment, utensils, linens, and single-service and single-use articles...." The section further states that the toxic materials must be separated from the food and equipment and may not be stored above the food or equipment. Careful handling of the solutions must be provided to ensure that none of the solution is spilled directly onto the food. Storing a bucket of sanitizing solution on a food preparation surface poses a potential for contamination.

It would be acceptable to store the sanitizing bucket on a shelf below the food preparation surface or on another nearby surface. The employees would be able to obtain the cloth easily from the solution and return it when the sanitizing step has been completed. Safety practices can never be outweighed by convenience, even if it may ensure that an employee may be more diligent in one of his other duties.

Agree to form and substance:



Christopher Sparks, MPA, R.S.

Manager

Public Sanitation and Retail Food Safety Group

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