

Food Premises Serving Low Risk and Pre-packaged Ready-to-eat Food

Amendments to the Food Premises Regulation (Ontario Regulation 493/17) made under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* relating to this matter came into effect January 1, 2020. This document has been prepared for public health units, food premises operators and food industry stakeholders to raise awareness of the amendments and assist with consistent implementation.

Background

These recent amendments respond to the needs of community meal programs and certain other food premises serving lower risk food, while balancing public health and safety. The amendments align with the government's commitment to reduce burden and increase flexibility for small businesses.

Regulatory exception

The regulatory exception applies to food premises that:

1. do not prepare food and that distribute only low-risk food items, pre-packaged food items, or a combination of low-risk food items and pre-packaged food items;
2. prepare only low-risk food items and serve only,
 - low-risk food items,
 - pre-packaged, ready-to-eat food items, or
 - a combination of low-risk food items and pre-packaged, ready-to-eat food items.

Applicable regulatory requirements under the Food Premises Regulation

Clause 7 (3) (c) Handwashing stations

Applicable food premises are no longer required to have the specified handwashing stations in a food premises. However, there is still a regulatory requirement for food premises operators to ensure that food handlers wash their hands as often as necessary to prevent the contamination of food or food areas.

S. 18 Dishwashing equipment

Applicable premises are no longer required to provide the structural number of a two- or three-compartment sink and/or a commercial mechanical dishwasher. However, any utensils used to prepare food must be cleaned and sanitized in accordance with current regulatory requirements (e.g., sections 19 – 23).

S. 32 Food handler training

Applicable premises are no longer required to ensure there is at least one food handler or supervisor on the premises who has completed food handler training.

Low-risk food means food that is not potentially hazardous (i.e., does not require time and temperature control). Examples include whole fruits and vegetables, bread and most baked goods (with no custard).

Ready-to-eat food is food with no additional processing steps prior to consumption.

Pre-packaged food is food that is packaged at a premise other than the premises at which it is offered for sale.

Best Practices

While some structural requirements may not be required under the Food Premises regulation, there are best practices to ensure food continues to be prepared safely.

Hand washing

Handwashing is required prior to handling any food item. Hand washing may be conducted by using a handwash sink that is available to the food handler such as a washroom or other available sink that is supplied with liquid soap and paper towel or an air dryer.

Dishwashing equipment

Clean and sanitize utensils after use. This may be conducted using a domestic dishwasher or by using a two-sink or three-sink method. If an adequate number of sinks are not available, it is recommended to wash and rinse utensils in a separate sink from handwashing or ensure the sink is thoroughly cleaned and sanitized prior to dishwashing. The sanitizing step should be conducted in a second or third sink. However, if not readily available, substituting the second or third sink with a dishwash container or bin may be used to complete the sanitizing step.

Food handler training

The food handler training required by the Food Premises regulation may not be required however, it is important to understand safe food handling practices while handling food. The food premises operator may consider implementing internal food safety training or the development of procedures to ensure staff and volunteers are provided with food safety knowledge.

Additional Information

For more information on compliance with the Food Premises regulation please refer to the following ministry resources: [Food Premises Reference Document](#)