Approved by the Interagency Committee May 4, 2010

Single Use Food Service Utensil

Overview

Where appropriate and practicable, re-usable food service ware such as metal utensils is always preferable. When washing food service ware is not possible and use of disposable food service ware is unavoidable, compostable food service utensils should be used. Where compostable service utensils are selected, a mechanism for composting should be in use. As established in the specification for Solid Waste Recycling and Management Services, affected entities are encouraged to seek out and contract with waste management vendors who offer composting services.

In recent years, biobased products have re-emerged as an alternative to conventional fossil-fuel-based products, particularly in the food service ware sector. Biobased products are made, in whole or in part, from renewable materials, such as corn, potatoes, sugar cane waste, and perennial grasses. Though not new to the market, paper and other products made from renewable forestry materials are also biobased. The renewability of agricultural and forestry resources is a significant environmental attribute. However, biobased content alone is not an adequate measure of sustainability. Like any other products, biobased products can have environmental and health impacts throughout their life cycle, from production and use to discarding after use. The environmental footprint of biobased products depends on the methods used to produce and harvest the renewable materials, the toxicity and persistence of the chemical additives used the recovery systems available for discarded products, and many other factors. For these reasons, it is important to choose biobased products carefully.

Due to the tremendous amount of waste being generated from disposable food ware and the costs for its disposal, cafeterias and food service operations are beginning to convert to more environmentally friendly food service ware. This transition has become more complicated and complex than expected due to various forms of food service ware options that are available. Manufacturers of newer food service ware and its packaging are focused on recycling and source reduction. Unfortunately, most of these items are still disposed of in landfills. In order to significantly reduce the amount of waste generated from these materials, food service operations need to determine what food service ware and its associated packaging best suits the needs of their customers while creating the least environmental impact.

Covered Products:

Light to heavy weight duty, single use utensils (spoons, forks, knives, soup spoons)

Definitions:

Bio-based Materials
Included (but not limited to):
• cellulose,
• fiber crops such as hemp and flax,
• bamboo and other grasses,
• agricultural waste such as sugarcane (bagasse) and rice straw
• materials derived from agricultural products such as starch and lactic acid (PLA).

Biodegradable
Degradable in which the degradation results from the action of naturally occurring microorganisms such as bacteria, fungi, and algae (no set time scale).

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Bioplastic
Plastics derived from renewable bio-based sources, such as vegetable oil, corn starch, potato starch, or pea starch rather than traditional plastics derived from petroleum.

Compostable
Capable of undergoing biological decomposition in a compost facility as part of an available program, such that the material is not visually distinguishable and breaks down into carbon dioxide, water, inorganic compounds, and biomass suitable for use as a soil amendment, leaving no toxic residue (within a period of 180 days).

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Standard Setting:

ASTM International (American Society for Testing Materials) is one of the largest voluntary standards development organizations in the world-a trusted source for technical standards for materials, products, systems, and services. Known for their high technical quality and market relevancy, ASTM International standards have an important role in the information infrastructure that guides design, manufacturing and trade in the global economy.

ASTM D6400-04 - Standard Specification for Compostable Plastics.

> This specification is intended to establish the requirements for labeling of materials and products, including packaging made from plastics, as "compostable in municipal and industrial composting facilities."
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> The properties in this specification are those required to determine if plastics and products made from plastics will compost satisfactorily, including biodegrading at a rate comparable to known compostable materials.
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> Further, the properties in the specification are required to assure that the degradation of these materials will not diminish the value or utility of the compost resulting from the composting process.
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> The following safety hazards caveat pertains to the test methods portion of this standard:
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> *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate health and safety practices and to determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) is a professional membership association of key individuals and groups from government, industry and academia, which promotes the use, and recycling of biodegradable polymeric materials (via composting). The BPI is open to any materials and products that demonstrate (via scientifically proven techniques) that their products are completely biodegradable in approved composting facilities.

Specifications:

Where such products are cost competitive; meet form, function and utility requirements; and will be managed in a municipal or commercial composting program; all single-use utensils shall, to the maximum extent practicable, be compostable as defined under the ASTM Standard Specification for Compostable Plastics (D6400-04); or, if such standard is not applicable, be biodegradable.

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Affected entities are encouraged to purchase compostable single use utensils that are certified by the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI).

The utensils (spoons, forks, knives) sizes shall be commensurate with commercially available sizes specific to the designated duty type, normally 7 inches. The utensils' durability and sturdiness shall be commensurate with the specific designated duty type. The utensils duty types are minimum requirements and utensils designated at higher duty are acceptable for lower duty types (i.e. a utensil designated "medium duty" is acceptable for "light duty" type).

The utensils shall be heat resistant (190ºF min), impermeable, shatterproof (not splinter), and have a 1-year shelf life (minimum) dry storage.

Packaging:

All packaging materials shall be made from reusable or recyclable materials. All paper based packaging shall contain a minimum of 30 percent by fiber weight postconsumer fiber. No foil or Mylar packaging shall be used. Excessive inner packing is not acceptable.

In accordance with Environmental Conservation Law section 37-0205, packaging shall not contain inks, dyes, pigments, adhesives, stabilizers, or any other additives to which any lead, cadmium, mercury or hexavalent chromium has been included as an element during manufacture or distribution in such a way that the sum of the concentrations levels of such lead, cadmium, mercury or hexavalent chromium exceed the following concentration level: 100 parts per million by weight (0.01%).

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