Instructions for cleaning water canisters and containers in food establishments

These instructions are intended for mobile food establishments or summer kiosks that use canister or tank water. Domestic water that complies with the legal requirements must be used for the preparation of food, hand washing and cleaning of equipment and food.

The microbiological quality of domestic water is influenced by:
- quality of the water source
- regular cleaning and maintenance of canisters, containers, hoses, etc.
- temperature of the water
- frequent replacement of the water.

In a mobile food establishment or summer kiosk, you need clean warm water to wash your hands when handling easily perishable unpacked foods. For example, a hot water heater or a thermal canister with a tap is suitable for heating water. Clean water is also required for washing and cleaning of tools and equipment during work.

1. Water inlet

The food business operator is responsible for ensuring that the quality of the water used meets the legal requirements and that the quality of the water is not a food safety hazard.

Domestic water can be drawn from the municipal water supply network (e.g. a food establishment or a hydrant) or from a personal well. Domestic water should not be drawn from a toilet or other unsanitary facility (e.g. a cleaning closet).

If well water is used, its quality must be inspected regularly. Tap water should be allowed to run until the water is cold and clear. Ensure that you have a sufficient supply of domestic water for your operation; you must know where you can get more water during the operation. As a rule of thumb, at least 15 litres of water is required for a sales event.

2. Water equipment and the maintenance and service thereof

All water transport and storage containers must be suitable for food use. Check the condition of canisters, water tanks and water point taps, seals, nozzles, hoses and other parts of the water point at the beginning of each operating period and regularly during the operating period. Monitor them for wear, service or replace if necessary.

A separate container is required to collect wastewater. If a similar canisters is used to collect wastewater as clean water, the canisters must be marked. Wastewater should be disposed of appropriately.

3. Use and storage of canned water

The water canister must be filled with as cold water as possible from a clean tap at the beginning of the working day before the start of operations. Water should be stored in the coolest possible location. It is not recommended to store multiple days of water in a mobile food establishment or kiosk; the canisters should be filled at the beginning of the working day according to the need. If the canister is replenished during the workday, it is recommended to rinse it with (hot) water in between.

4. Washing and storing of canisters

At the end of the working day, the canisters should be completely drained and thoroughly cleaned with detergent and a brush. Particular attention should be paid to the faucet, seals and possible corners. It may be easier to clean deep canisters with a bottle brush than with a regular dish brush. After cleaning, the canister should be left to dry. There must be enough canisters to allow a canister to dry between uses. A clean place should be reserved for drying and storing the canisters.

In addition to detergent, it is good to clean the canisters regularly with a disinfectant in accordance with the product's usage instructions, 1–2 times per year. After disinfection, the canister should be thoroughly rinsed with plenty of water. Suitable agents for cleaning and disinfection include vinegar, chlorite, baking soda, and citric acid. Disinfectants or disinfecting cleaning agents suitable for food surfaces are, for example, Diversey Suma Bac, Berner HETI Desipesu, Kiilto Erikois-Iduna and PURA TANK.

5. Fixed water tanks

Fixed water tanks, such as hot water tanks, should be disassembled, washed, disinfected and dried regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions, at least once before the start of the season for summer operations. The condition of the system components (especially seals, nozzles, hoses, etc.) must be monitored regularly and serviced or replaced if necessary.

6. Water self-supervision studies

Monitoring of water quality should always be sensory. Operators that handle perishable foods (e.g. cooking raw meat, chopping vegetables) must examine the microbiological quality of the tank water they use annually, at least at the beginning of the operating period. The operator may have this examination be carried out by a laboratory. The Finnish Food Authority maintains a list of approved laboratories.

7. Microbiological quality requirements and quality objectives for domestic water

Quality requirements: Escherichia coli 0 cfu/100 ml, Enterococci 0 cfu/100 ml

Quality objectives: coliform bacteria 0 cfu/100 ml, number of heterotrophic colonies (22°C) below 100 cfu/ml.

Additional information

Decree of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health on Quality Requirements and Monitoring Studies for Domestic Water in Small Units (401/2001)

Decree of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health on the Quality and Control of Domestic Water and on Risk Management of Water Equipment in Buildings (1352/2015)

Food Authority instructions: Water and ice monitoring in food establishments

City of Helsinki
Environmental Services
Food Safety Unit
P.O. BOX 58235, 00099 CITY OF HELSINKI
Työpajankatu 8, 00580 Helsinki
Tel. +358 9 310 1635 (switchboard)
kymp.ulkomyynti@hel.fi
kymp.talousvesivalvonta@hel.fi