

# GROWLER STATIONS

## Compliance for Refilling Returnable Containers

Issued by the Central District Health Department

**Growler Stations and Kombucha Tea Taps** are examples of products new to our area.

When it comes to self-serve taps for beer, tea, and other beverages, the major food safety factor that needs to be considered is the **potential for cross contamination**.

Cleaning and sanitizing the container and the dispensing apparatus is required to prevent cross contamination of potentially harmful microorganisms.

The Idaho Food Code addresses dispensing equipment, dispensing product, refilling returnable containers, and cleaning containers and equipment.



Photo credit:  
The Growler Station Washington Park, New York

### What you need to know:

- A plan review and approval is required prior to installation for establishments that require a health department food establishment license.
- Refilling returnables shall be a contamination-free process.
- Returnables are to be clean before refilling.
- Thoroughly wash hands before refilling.
- Proper plumbing and waste drainage shall be provided.
- Hot and cold water shall be supplied from an approved source.
- Hand sinks shall be centrally located, visible, and directly accessible. Hand sink is strictly for hand washing.
- Fill lines shall be made of approved food grade materials.
- Have an approved 3 compartment sink for proper cleaning. Sink may be used for rinsing containers with hot water.
- Fill tubes can cross contaminate from one container to the next.
  - A clean fill tube is to be used for each refill. Have spare fill tubes available for the next refill.
  - Fill tubes are food contact surfaces and are required to be washed, rinsed, sanitized and air dried to assure a contamination-free process.
- Be prepared to explain your contamination-free refilling procedure at your next inspection.

## IDAHO FOOD CODE

### 4-204.13 Dispensing Equipment, Protection of Equipment and Food.

In EQUIPMENT that dispenses or vends liquid FOOD or ice in unPACKAGED form:

(A) The delivery tube, chute, orifice, and splash surfaces directly above the container receiving the FOOD shall be designed in a manner, such as with barriers, baffles, or drip aprons, so that drips from condensation and splash are diverted from the opening of the container receiving the FOOD;

(B) The delivery tube, chute, and orifice shall be protected from manual contact such as by being recessed;

**continued** ►

4-204.13 - *continued*

(C) The delivery tube or chute and orifice of EQUIPMENT used to vend liquid FOOD or ice in unPACKAGED form to self-service CONSUMERS shall be designed so that the delivery tube or chute and orifice are protected from dust, insects, rodents, and other contamination by a self-closing door if the EQUIPMENT is:

- (1) Located in an outside area that does not otherwise afford the protection of an enclosure against the rain, windblown debris, insects, rodents, and other contaminants that are present in the environment, or
  - (2) Available for self-service during hours when it is not under the full-time supervision of a FOOD EMPLOYEE; and
- (D) The dispensing EQUIPMENT actuating lever or mechanism and filling device of CONSUMER self-service BEVERAGE dispensing EQUIPMENT shall be designed to prevent contact with the lip-contact surface of glasses or cups that are refilled.

### 3-304.17 Refilling Returnables.

(C) *Personal take-out BEVERAGE containers, such as thermally insulated bottles, nonspill coffee cups, and promotional BEVERAGE glasses, may be refilled by EMPLOYEES or the CONSUMER if refilling is a contamination-free process as specified under 4-204.13(A), (B), and (D).*

### 4-603.17 Returnables, Cleaning for Refilling.\*

- (A) Except as specified in (B) and (C) of this section, returned empty containers intended for cleaning and refilling with FOOD shall be cleaned and refilled in a regulated FOOD PROCESSING PLANT.
- (B) A FOOD-specific container for BEVERAGES may be refilled at a FOOD ESTABLISHMENT if:
- (1) Only a BEVERAGE that is not a POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS FOOD is used as specified under 3-304.17(A);
  - (2) The design of the container and of the rinsing EQUIPMENT and the nature of the BEVERAGE, when considered together, allow effective cleaning at home or in the FOOD ESTABLISHMENT;
  - (3) Facilities for rinsing before refilling returned containers with fresh, hot water that is under pressure and not recirculated are provided as part of the dispensing system;
  - (4) The CONSUMER-owned container returned to the FOOD ESTABLISHMENT for refilling is refilled for sale or service only to the same CONSUMER



**HAVE QUESTIONS?**  
Call CDH's Environmental Health Department at (208) 327-7499  
[cdhd.idaho.gov](http://cdhd.idaho.gov)