GUIDELINES FOR THE SAFE HANDLING OF DRINKING WATER, ICE, AND WATER DISPENSERS

California Conference for Directors of Environmental Health

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I. BACKGROUND

The California Conference for Directors of Environmental Health (CCDEH) is concerned about safe handling and use of water dispensers/water coolers and ice. Recent waterborne illnesses have been associated with dispensing water from these units.

II. SCOPE

This guideline is intended to provide information on safe practices for public use facilities to minimize illnesses that can result from improper storage, use, and refilling of water coolers or portable water dispensers. CCDEH recommends that these guidelines be distributed to public use facilities that provide water coolers or portable dispensers for drinking water. These facilities can include golf courses, sports parks, hiking trails, and day care facilities.

III. OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

A. Water and Ice

- Water and ice must be provided from a public distribution system or an approved water supply that is tested to ensure conformity with applicable regulations.
- Ice machines must be located in an approved area, protected from contamination.
- Ice must be dispensed with a clean ice scoop (without bare-hand contact with the ice).

B. Water Dispensers

- Water dispensers should be constructed of easily cleanable food grade materials.
- The spigot should be of a gravity flow design to prevent contamination during use.
- Water dispensers should be cleaned and sanitized at least once every 24 hours, using a wash-rinse-sanitize method in a three-compartment sink. The compartments of the sink should be of sufficient size to allow immersion of the dispenser and spigot. For dispensers too large to be immersed in the sink, a clean and sanitize in-place procedure can be used. This includes use of a clean bucket and wash cloth for the detergent cleaning step, followed by rinsing the container at least three times with water; and finally, spraying the inside of the dispenser and spigot with a sanitizer solution.
- An area to allow proper air-drying of dispensers should be provided. Dispensers and/or spigots shall not be stored on the floor at any time.

These guidelines were adapted from guidelines distributed from the FDA Division of State and Federal Relations

C. Dispenser Filling

- Dispensers should be filled in an area free of dust, insects or other environmental contaminants. They should not be placed on the floor or ground while filling.
- Dispensers should be filled in a room with smooth, dry, easily cleanable floors, walls, and ceilings. They must also be kept away from chemicals or other contaminants.
- Water hoses used to fill dispensers must be food grade (garden hoses are not approved) and shall not be stored on the ground or capable of being submerged into a drain.
- Hoses should be used exclusively for drinking water dispenser filling and not to fill or clean other equipment or tanks (such as pesticide, herbicide, battery containers).
- All plumbing equipment and connections must be in compliance with applicable plumbing codes to protect the water supply. (Cross connections must not be present and backflow devices are required).
- Wash hands with soap and water prior to handling water dispensers, water or ice.
- Ice must be dispensed with an ice scoop without coming into direct bare hand contact with the ice.
- To prevent direct hand contact with the ice, it is recommended that employees wear clean disposable gloves.