

## Office Kitchen Guidelines

### **Purpose**

Washington County is committed to minimizing negative environmental impacts, reducing waste in our operations, and promoting healthy communal work areas. By incorporating sustainability and safety considerations in our office kitchens and break rooms, we are able to promote practices that improve health, conserve natural resources, and encourage environmentally responsible behaviors.

The objective of the Office Kitchen Guidelines is to identify and implement “best practices” that support the sustainable kitchens and appropriate health and safety standards. Many County break rooms utilize donated durable dishware and kitchen goods to reduce the amount of waste generated from disposable paper and plastic products. These guidelines will serve as a tool for appropriate use and care of the durable items. Considerations for responsible energy and water use are also included in order to promote sustainable resource use.

### **Scope**

These guidelines apply to County office break rooms and kitchens.

### **Guidelines**

The Sustainability Program, in conjunction with the Health and Human Services Department, has developed the following best practices. Departments and Divisions shall follow these criteria to the best of their abilities. If any Department has more stringent guidelines, they will supersede this list.

#### **Care:**

*Reduce waste.* One way to reduce waste in the break room is to use reusable dishes, drinkware and flatware, instead of disposables. However, the dishware will need to be properly washed and stored in order to keep a clean supply on hand.

*Clean up after yourself.* As a courtesy to others, employees should wash their own dishes as soon as possible after they're done using them. Employees should not pile dishes in the sink and leave them behind. Employees should set a good example and everyone will benefit from a tidy, appetizing space to relax, cook, and eat.

*Offer a hand.* Employees may occasionally need to clean up after others, empty the dish draining rack when it's full, or pitch in for a complete kitchen cleaning.

*Scrape your plate.* Most break room sinks do not have a garbage disposal, so employees should scrape any crumbs into the garbage before washing dishes.

#### **Cleaning:**

*Clean hands.* Always wash hands in warm, soapy water before and after preparing food.

*Dish washing.* If dishwashers are not available, dishware should be washed in hot, soapy water and air-dried. Along with dishcloths and dish soap, consider stocking reusable rubber gloves, scrubbing brushes, and scrapers in the kitchen.

*Sponges.* Dishcloths and scrubbing brushes are recommended for washing dishware instead of sponges. Dishcloths should be laundered frequently using the warm or hot wash cycle. Sponges are not recommended since they can harbor bacteria.

*Cutting boards.* Cutting boards should be thoroughly washed with hot, soapy water, then rinsed and allowed to air-dry. Knives and cutting boards should be cleaned after each use.

*Linens.* If dish towels are used, they need to be laundered often using the warm or hot cycle. Do not use dish towels to dry hands—use disposable paper towels. Personal towels may be used to dry hands as long as they are properly laundered and not shared among employees. Reusable napkins should be laundered after each use. Paper towels should be used to clean up any potentially unsafe spills, such as juices from raw meat, poultry, fish, and shellfish. These areas should also be washed and disinfected with dilute bleach.

*Water.* Avoid running the hot water for long periods of time while washing dishes if a tub or dish basin is not available. Dishware should be soaped up, scrubbed, and then rinsed all at once for efficient use of resources.

**Storage:**

*Refrigerator/Freezer.* Maintain optimal settings for your refrigerator (37-41°F) and freezer (0-5°F) for energy efficiency and food safety. Remove and discard food that has expired or has gone bad.

*Safe food storage.* Do not store raw meat, poultry, fish or shellfish over other foods.

*Durables storage.* Clean dishes should be stored in a clean cabinet away from dirty items. Dirty linens should be stored separately from clean linens in clearly marked containers.

*Chemicals.* Cleaning products should be stored separately from food items.

**Responsibilities**

All employees are responsible for applying this guideline to the best of their abilities. The guidelines should be provided in electronic form to employees and posted in each work unit break room or kitchen. The Attachment A following this document is suitable for printing and posting.

General kitchen cleaning duties may be assigned to employees in order to maintain a proper level of sanitation and an inviting atmosphere. Cleaning products (e.g. dish soap) for durable dishware washed in office kitchens and break rooms may be purchased using County funds. Unscented, non-toxic dish soap is recommended since fragrances and chemical dyes may trigger allergic reactions or asthma.

Kitchen linens will be voluntarily laundered by employees on an as needed basis. Clean towels will be kept separate from dirty towels and evaluated at least weekly to determine if they should be laundered. Employees who volunteer to launder the linens at home are not eligible for reimbursement for their time, resources, mileage, or materials for the process. If there are not enough volunteers to maintain a kitchen linen program, it may be discontinued.

**Exemptions**

County work units with access to a cafeteria, dishwashing facilities, and laundry facilities may set their own guidelines for operation. They should, however, strive to reduce their waste where possible and maintain a healthy, sustainable kitchen environment.



Approved:



Signature

5/30/12  
Date

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