

Practical Guide on Take-away Meal and Meal Delivery Services

**Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
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Introduction

1. Ordering take-away meals and meals delivered from food premises have become more popular, particularly for those food orders made through online channels. Apart from those take-away meals and meal delivery services provided by the licensed/permitted food premises which relevant licensing conditions and legislations are in place to make regulatory control over the hygiene and food safety aspects, some food delivery services will also be provided by third-party food delivery agents.
2. This Practical Guide (hereinafter referred to as the “Guide”) lays down conditions for hygienic handling of meals during delivery to all relevant business operators, including food premises and delivery agents, which prepare and deliver meals ready for consumption to customers. The Guide aims to set out the actions that relevant business operators should take so as to reduce the risk of foodborne diseases when providing take-away meals and meal delivery services.

Scope

3. Food premises licensees/permittees have all along been required to adhere the licensing conditions imposed on their licences/permits when providing take-away meals and meal delivery services. Breaching those licensing conditions may result in cancellation of the licences/permits. For completeness, this Guide repeats some of those licensing conditions viz. paragraphs 7.1 and 8.1 of this Guide and contains other general hygiene and food safety guidelines for handling of meals in relation to delivery for voluntary observance by all food premises operators.
4. As for online platform operators, and food delivery agents/deliverers arranged or engaged by the food premises or online platform operators, this Guide contains the minimum general hygiene and food

safety guidelines for handling of meals in relation to delivery for their voluntary observance.

5. In this context, third-party delivery service is generally defined as offering consumers the option to place an order from food premises within a defined geographic radius. This is in contrast to other modes of direct-to-consumer food delivery that are not limited by specific geographic radii, such as grocery delivery and school meal delivery services.

The Practical Guide

6. Food Preparation by Food Premises

- 6.1 Food should be cooked or reheated thoroughly, with a core temperature reaching at least 75°C.
- 6.2 Food should be prepared in time for the delivery and food handlers should avoid cooking too far in advance.
- 6.3 Food should be kept out of the Temperature Danger Zone between 4°C and 60°C as far as practicable before packing it for takeaways or delivery, such as being kept in warmer above 60°C for hot food and in refrigerators at or below 4°C for cold food.

7. Packing of Meals by Food Premises

- 7.1 Suitable containers with fitting coverings or sealed packaging should be used to contain the food according to the imposed licensing condition such as containers be made of material which will not release toxic chemicals into food as a result of changes in temperature or acidity in the food.
- 7.2 Restricted foods set out in Schedule 2 of the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132X) and need to be refrigerated should be packed in containers with cooling gel or likewise materials so as to maintain the optimal storage temperature during delivery (e.g. sushi and sashimi should be kept at or below 4°C). Other hot and cold foods are preferable to be packed in separate

containers and maintained at the optimal storage temperature, that is cold food at or below 4°C and hot food at above 60°C.

- 7.3 It is desirable to set up a designated staging area for picking up take-away meals or to-be delivered meals where the place should be kept clean and dry and no invasion of dust, insect etc.
- 7.4 In case for meal delivery, specific packaging design or tamper-evident devices should be used to prevent food tampering, such as non-resealable packaging (e.g. tear strips) and containers with tamper-evident tapes/stickers or seals to deter tampering activities and maintain food safety and integrity during transportation. The food preparation or packing time should be marked/labelled conspicuously on the containers/tamper-evident devices/packaging etc.

8. Transportation of Meals arranged or engaged by Food Premises

- 8.1 Food premises operators should follow suit the food delivery requirements as imposed in the relevant licensing conditions of the licence/permit, whatsoever the delivery of meal is conducted by staff employed by the food premises operators or third party food delivery agent arranged or engaged by the food premises operators.
- 8.2 Food premises operators should provide adequate training to the food deliverers on basic food safety principles, such as Good Hygiene Practices, contamination prevention, tampering prevention and time-temperature management. All training materials and personnel attendance record should be kept on record for future reference.
- 8.3 Food deliverers should also follow the guidelines as stated in paragraphs 9.10 – 9.22 below.
- 8.4 Food deliverers should be refrained from working if they are known to have an infectious disease with symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting, fever, sore throat, or abdominal pain.
- 8.5 Food premises operators should engage food delivery agent with competency and capability to conduct the food delivery services on required condition.

9. Transportation of Meals arranged or engaged by Online Food Platform or Delivery Agents

A. For Food Premises

- 9.1 Clear delineation of responsibilities between the food premises and the online food platform or delivery agent on all customer complaints in respect of the quality of the ordered meals and any consequential effects thereof, including any food incidence such as food poisoning case, food hygiene and/or related issues should be set out in the relevant contractual agreements.

B. For Online Food Platform and Food Delivery Agent

- 9.2 Clear delineation of responsibilities between the food premises and the online food platform or delivery agent on all customer complaints in respect of the quality of the ordered meals and any consequential effects thereof, including any food incidence such as food poisoning case, food hygiene and/or related issues should be set out in the relevant contractual agreements.
- 9.3 The licensing status of relevant food business licence or restricted food permit of the concerned food premises providing the meals should be verified before entering the contract with the food premises and performed regular counter check from time to time.
- 9.4 The delivery capacity should be controlled strictly by checking the time record against any delayed deliveries.
- 9.5 All delivery records, including date and time of the order received from whom, the date and time from where the food/meal is picked up, and the date and time at where the food/meal is delivered by which delivery personnel should be kept for 60 days for tracking and tracing by the authorities in case of a foodborne outbreak or recall. It is desirable to incorporate and leverage technology for securing food safety, such as :

- (i) providing optimal/most efficient delivery route and sequence for the food deliveries to shorten the delivery time ;
- (ii) restricting food orders that take a long time to arrive, particularly high-risk meals with inadequate temperature control ;
- (iii) sending notifications to customers upon any delivery delay.

9.6 A mechanism to handle non-compliance and customer complaints should be set up.

9.7 Online food platform and/or food delivery agent should provide adequate training to the food deliverers on basic food safety principles, such as Good Hygiene Practices, contamination prevention, tampering prevention and time-temperature management. All training materials and personnel attendance record should be kept on record for future references.

9.8 Food deliverers should be refrained from working if they are known to have an infectious disease with symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting, fever, sore throat, or abdominal pain.

9.9 Regular review should be made with the food premises so as to facilitate the arrangement of delivery of meals right after the food preparation.

C. For Food Deliverers

9.10 All food must be untampered and delivered to customers in a manner that maintains it from becoming unsafe or unfit to eat. The food and its packaging must not be opened, altered, tampered with or changed.

9.11 The food should be stored in covered delivery containers so as to protect it from harmful microorganisms, foreign objects, and cross-contamination with other ingredients.

9.12 Restricted foods that need to be refrigerated (e.g. sushi and sashimi) should be kept cool at or below 4°C as far as

- practicable while in transit. They should be packed in an insulated box or bag solely for transportation of cold food.
- 9.13 Hot and cold foods are preferable to be maintained at the optimal storage temperature during delivery, that is cold foods at or below 4°C and hot foods at above 60°C.
- 9.14 The food should be properly packed and positioned (e.g. upright) to avoid crushing of food or damage to food containers.
- 9.15 Ready-to-eat food must be separated from raw food as well as all food from non-food items during transportation.
- 9.16 Any unnecessary ransacking and the length of time that delivery items are kept out of temperature control should be minimized.
- 9.17 In the course of transportation, in case food warming device and food refrigerating device is not available for hot food and cold food respectively, all food should be delivered to the customers within one hour after preparation.
- 9.18 The storage compartments (such as trunks or tail boxes) of the vehicles for transportation food and delivery containers should be :
- (i) cleaned by sanitisers, disinfectants or liquid soap thoroughly before and after each delivery ;
 - (ii) maintained in good conditions.
- 9.19 The storage compartments or delivery containers used to carry anything other than food should have adequate cleaning between loads to avoid contamination.
- 9.20 Food deliverers should follow good personal hygiene practices, including proper handwashing and keeping as clean as reasonably practicable the clothing. Food deliverers can use alcohol-based hand sanitisers instead if no washing facilities are available and their hands are not visibly dirty, open cut or abrasion on any exposed part of body be covered with suitable waterproof dressing.

- 9.21 Food deliverers should stop working if they have or suspect they have an infectious disease with symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting, fever, sore throat, or abdominal pain.
- 9.22 Food deliverers should attend relevant training on basic food safety principles, such as Good Hygiene Practices, contamination prevention, tampering prevention and time-temperature management.