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Commercial washing of reusable plastic tableware – facts and trends

The AK GGS provides clarification

As a group of experts, the AK GGS provides support whenever there is news or inquiries about topics related to commercial dishwashing. The documents on the website www.akggs.de, which have been compiled by experts from member companies, serve as guidelines and a source of information.

With the implementation of the Packaging Ordinance in Germany and the associated obligation to provide reusable packaging for the out-of-home market since January 1, 2023, the hygienic reprocessing of reusable plastic tableware such as coffee cups or bowls has also come into sharper focus.

With the help of the following overview, we would like to provide all market participants and interested parties, but especially our customers and their consumers, with an overview of the regulations for commercial dishwashing. In doing so, we also offer the opportunity to better understand any misunderstandings and misinterpretations that may be circulating.

1. Status of current standardization for commercial dishwashing (cleaning and disinfection of consumer goods):

- DIN EN 17735:2023-02 Commercial dishwashers – Hygiene requirements and testing
- DIN 10544:2024-07 Food hygiene – Commercial dishwashers – Supplementary hygiene requirements and testing
- DIN 10522:2006-01 Food hygiene - Commercial machine washing of reusable crates and containers for unpackaged food - Hygiene requirements, testing (only applicable to the commercial sector, e.g., bakery crates or meat crates, integration into existing standards planned)

2. Other standards for hygienic working in the food sector

- DIN 10516:2020-10 Food hygiene - Cleaning and disinfection

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In connection with Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004 on food hygiene, this document serves as a guide and aims to facilitate compliance with hygienic conditions when handling food. A revision is planned.

3. DIN SPEC 91510:2025-04 Requirements for the hygienic reprocessing and reuse of reusable plastic packaging:

This DIN SPEC was developed in accordance with the PAS procedure [\[1\]](#). DIN SPECs are developed in accordance with the PAS procedure in DIN SPEC consortia and do not necessarily involve all interested parties. This document is a collection of recommendations for the hygienic reprocessing and reuse of reusable plastic packaging used in Germany within the scope of the obligation to offer packaging in accordance with § 33 of the Packaging Act (VerpackG). It does not have the character of a standard. This document has not been completely finalized and elaborated. Ideas could be freely contributed, and not all content has been reviewed and confirmed by experts. In particular, about the microbiological specifications, thorough and extensive market research is still required for a valid standard in order to substantiate the values proposed here. Practical experience shows that it is difficult to implement the existing requirements for reusable plastic tableware for the out-of-home market. This is due to the sometimes very long standing/drying times, different handling of this tableware by consumers, and heavy soiling, e.g., with soil or even misuse, e.g., as ashtrays.

Outlook: What can we expect soon?

Innovative solutions have long been available for technical challenges such as adapting the drying process after washing due to the different material properties of plastic items. Commercial transport dishwashers are already capable of delivering hygienic results for plastic items in combination with optimally matched detergents and rinse aids.

The findings gained in connection with the work on DIN SPEC 91510 for items in the out-of-home market show that further research is needed to define the right universally applicable requirements in standard. Requirements must always be reconciled with the technical possibilities. The goal is to develop practical measures that can be easily implemented in the field. Our customers and their consumers should be given the level of safety that is demonstrably necessary and achievable.

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Conclusion

In a professional commercial environment, we clearly and exclusively advocate the use of commercial dishwashers. These allow for standardized cleaning and disinfection processes, are regulated by standards, and are being further developed to meet specific requirements and usage patterns.

It remains to be seen in what form the hygienic handling of reusable plastic tableware for the out-of-home market will be incorporated into the standards. Informative components already exist in the established standards EN 17735 and DIN 10544. Plans to supplement these existing regulations with requirements for reusable plastic tableware for the out-of-home market are obvious. In the future, however, separate guidelines could also be drawn up by experts from the operator circles. It is important to the AK GGS that normative regulations are drawn up and established at European level. With the publication of EN 17735, such a foundation for possible extensions has already been laid.

The findings gained in connection with the work on DIN SPEC 91510 for dishware in the out-of-home market show that further research is needed to define the correct universally applicable requirements in standard. Requirements must always be reconciled with the technical possibilities. The goal is to develop practical measures that can be easily implemented in the field. Our customers and their consumers should be given the level of safety that is demonstrably necessary and achievable.

[\[1\]](#) PAS - Publicly Available Specification

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About the AK GGS

The AK GGS is a German non-association working group in which experts from all industries involved in commercial dishwashing work together to develop valuable practical recommendations for commercial dishwashing. Further information about the AK GGS and its members www.akggs.de.

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