GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR QUALIFYING OVENABLE PACKAGING

Developed by the Foodservice Packaging Institute’s Foodservice Packaging Standards Council

November 10, 2009
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Purpose:
The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to manufacturers seeking to qualify single-use packaging products for ovenable applications.

Scope:
This guidance document is intended to be applicable to all single-use packaging products, for use in consumer, commercial and institutional ovens. These include conventional or range, convection, conveyor and other ovens used in households and the foodservice industry.

Background:
In 1988, the Foodservice & Packaging Institute (FPI) developed, in conjunction with the Cornell University’s Department of Nutrition, “Test Procedure Guidelines to Qualify Dual Ovenable Containers.”

This guideline set forth test criteria for the evaluation of single-use containers intended for use in microwave, conventional, convection and combination ovens, as were found in a normal consumer household, including:

a) oven calibration,
b) guides for evaluating temperature resistance,
c) guides for evaluating dimensional stability,
d) guides for evaluating impact resistance,
e) guides for determining odor limits,
f) microwave oven criteria, and
g) glossary of terms.

In 2009, the Foodservice Packaging Institute’s Foodservice Packaging Standards Council, comprised of industry representatives from both member and non-member companies, considered a revision of these guidelines.

Since the original guidelines were developed over 20 years ago, improvements in cooking technology have produced a wide variety of ovens for cooking, heating and re-heating food. Because of the development of these new cooking technologies, the council determined that it is no longer possible to have a “one size fits all” standard testing protocol to determine the suitability of single-use packaging for ovens. Therefore, the council has developed this guidance document as a replacement.
**General Guidance:**
When seeking to determine the suitability of using a single-use package in an ovenable application, the Foodservice Packaging Institute encourages manufacturers to:

- consider all the variables involved:
  - cooking technology, i.e. conventional; convection; combination; conveyor; pizza; rack ovens; etc.
  - packaging material, i.e. aluminum, paper, coated paper, plastic or other
  - quantity of packages
  - foods contained in the package(s)
  - uses of the package(s), both by household consumers and foodservice operators
- use existing standards developed by organizations such as:
  - American National Standards Institute (ANSI) ([www.ansi.org](http://www.ansi.org))
  - ASTM International ([www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org))
  - International Organization for Standardization (ISO) ([www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org))
  - Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry (TAPPI) ([www.tappi.org](http://www.tappi.org))

[Applicable existing standards from these organizations are listed below.]

- be sure that testing results are reproducible.


**Guidance for Oven Preparation and Calibration:**
When preparing and calibrating ovens, testing should be completed as closely to the geometric center of the oven as possible with temperature monitoring essentially in the same location in an effort to provide the best reproduction for the test conditions. In addition, consider the following standards:

Guidance for Evaluating Temperature Resistance:
Various materials have unique upper temperature limits to which they can safely be subjected without unacceptable distortion or deterioration. Consequently, it is important to establish an upper temperature limit for the container under test.

When evaluating temperature resistance, it is recommended that the test be done under a “no load” condition. In addition, consider the following standards:


Guidance for Evaluating Dimensional Stability:
After the recommended upper temperature limit has been established, test the product for dimensional stability. When evaluating dimensional stability, consider the following standards:

- ASTM F1639 - 05 Standard Test Method for Performance of Combination Ovens (www.astm.org/Standards/F1639.htm)
- ASTM F2239 - 03e1 Standard Test Method for Performance of Conveyor Broilers (www.astm.org/Standards/F2239.htm)
- ASTM F2472 - 05 Standard Test Method for Performance of Staff-Serve Hot Deli Cases (www.astm.org/Standards/F2472.htm)
Guidance for Evaluating Impact Resistance:
After all temperature testing has been completed, those test samples having passed the temperature criteria and an equal number of untested samples should be impact tested under a food load condition. A simulated food load may be used, however it may give erroneous results. Therefore, it is suggested that the intended product for end use be used as the food load material.

When evaluating impact resistance, consider the following standards:


Guidance for Conducting Thermogravimetric Analysis:
When conducting thermogravimetric analysis, consider the following standard:


Guidance for Determining Odor Limits:
When determining odor limits, consider testing according to ASTM Manual 26, “Sensory Testing Methods: 2nd Edition,” published in 1996. For more information, go to:


Another resource is the TAPPI standard, T 483 cm-02 Odor of Packaging Materials (www.tappi.org/s_tappi/doc_bookstore.asp?CID=7371&DID=517411).

Guidance for Evaluating Single-use Containers Intended for Use in Microwave Ovens:
For more information on evaluating single-use containers intended for use in microwave ovens, please refer to FPI’s “Standard Test Method to Qualify Disposables for Use in Microwave Ovens,” which may be found at www.fpi.org.

If you have updates to this guidance document, or would like to include other reference materials and standards, please submit them for consideration to fpi@fpi.org.