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ENFORCEMENT FOR TABLE LITTERING AT HAWKER CENTRES STARTS 1 SEPTEMBER 2021

Enforcement for table littering at coffeeshops and food courts will begin subsequently on 1 January 2022, preceded by a two-month advisory period from November to December 2021.

Singapore, 30 August 2021 – Diners at public dining places are reminded to return their used trays and crockery. Diners should clear their table of litter, such as used tissues and wet wipes, straws, wrappers, drink cans, plastic bottles, and food remnants. Leaving litter behind is an offence under Section 17(1) of the Environmental Public Health Act (EPHA).

2 In May 2021, the National Environment Agency (NEA) announced that it would be mandatory for diners at public dining places to clear their tables of used trays, crockery and litter after their meals. To help diners adjust, NEA officers, hawker centre operators and volunteers were deployed at hawker centres to advise and remind diners. Since the announcement, the response on the ground has been encouraging. From an average Tray and Crockery Return Rate (TCRR) of about 30% in February this year when the Clean Tables Campaign was launched, the average TCRR has improved to about 65%.

3 As previously announced, enforcement against table littering at hawker centres will commence on 1 September 2021. Enforcement officers will continue to remind and advise diners to clear their used tray, crockery and litter. Individuals who have been reminded but refuse to heed the advice will have their particulars taken down and issued a written warning. Those who commit subsequent offences will face enforcement fines. Enforcement will not be taken against those clearly unable to return their trays, such as the frail elderly or young children unable to purchase and carry their own food to the table (see [Annex](#) for Q&As on NEA's enforcement approach).

Tray and Crockery Return Trolleys at Hawker Centres

4 To complement existing tray and crockery return racks at hawker centres and further increase convenience for diners, NEA will progressively introduce trolleys from end-August 2021 where needed. The trolleys could for example be located in areas with tight aisles in between existing tray and crockery return racks to reduce walking distance.

5 In addition, NEA is in the process of installing a further 150 new permanent tray and crockery return racks. NEA will also provide cooked food stallholders with some new trays.

Advisory and Enforcement at Food Courts and Coffeeshops

6 With effect from 1 January 2022, enforcement will commence for table littering at coffeeshops and food courts. The enforcement approach will be similar to hawker centres.

7 To help diners familiarise and adjust, there will be a two-month advisory period from 1 November to 31 December 2021. Agencies will take an advisory approach and no enforcement will be taken during this period at coffeeshops and food courts.

8 During the advisory period, Safe Distancing Ambassadors and officers from the Singapore Food Agency (SFA) deployed at coffeeshops and food courts will continue to remind operators to ensure that their diners clear their dirty trays, crockery and litter. Visual cues such as posters and banners will progressively be installed at these premises to remind diners to clear their tables. While no enforcement will be taken during this period, diners are reminded to comply upon being advised.

9 Coffeeshops and food courts are currently in the midst of installing tray and crockery return infrastructure. SFA will continue to engage operators on their responsibility to implement such infrastructure in their premises, and to tap into NEA's [Clean Tables Support Scheme](#) (CTSS) to defray the costs of putting in place tray return infrastructure and for the purchasing of trays.

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About National Environment Agency

The National Environment Agency (NEA) is the leading public organisation responsible for ensuring a clean and sustainable environment for Singapore. Its key roles are to improve and sustain a clean environment, promote sustainability and resource efficiency, maintain high public health standards, provide timely and reliable meteorological information, and encourage a vibrant hawker culture. NEA works closely with its partners and the community to develop and spearhead environmental and public health initiatives and programmes. It is committed to motivating every individual to care for the environment as a way of life, in order to build a liveable and sustainable Singapore for present and future generations.

For more information, visit www.nea.gov.sg

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About Singapore Food Agency

As the lead agency for food-related matters, the Singapore Food Agency's mission is to ensure and secure a supply of safe food for Singapore. SFA works hand-in-hand with the industry and consumers to grow our three "food baskets" – Diversify import sources, Grow local, and Grow overseas, as well as ensure food safety from farm-to-fork.

SFA also partners food businesses to strengthen capabilities, tap on technologies to raise productivity, undertake research to develop new lines of business, and catalyse industry transformation to ensure food security.

For more information on SFA, visit www.sfa.gov.sg.

Q&As on Table Littering Enforcement

1. **Is it an offence if a diner clears his/her dirty tray and crockery, but leaves behind tissues or empty drink cans, or food remnants such as shells and bones on the dining table?**

Yes, no one should leave behind any litter in any public place, except in a dustbin or other receptacle provided for the deposit of refuse and rubbish. This includes used tissues, wet wipes, drink cans, shells and bones. Diners can return their litter together with the dirty crockery at tray and crockery return stations.

2. **Are diners expected to remove trays, dirty crockery and litter left behind by the previous diner?**

Cleaners will assist to remove trays, dirty crockery and litter left behind by the previous diner. We urge all diners to return their dirty trays and crockery, remove litter and keep the tables clean for the next diner.

3. **Will NEA enforce against the elderly, the less-abled, or children under 12 years old for table littering?**

Enforcement will not be taken against the frail elderly or less-abled, or children who are clearly unable to clear their tables. These groups would typically be those who are unable to order and bring the food ordered to the tables on their own to begin with. Family members or dining companions of these groups should help to dispose of the litter and return the dirty trays and crockery. Those able to bring the trays and food to the table on their own should likewise be able to return their dirty trays and crockery.

4. **Will cleaners lose their jobs if I clear the trays for them?**

Cleaners will not lose their jobs just because diners clear their trays. The demands on cleaners have increased amidst the COVID19 pandemic. They are required to maintain and upkeep the general cleanliness of dining places, including regularly wiping and sanitising the tables, as well as clearing and sorting dirty crockery at the designated tray and crockery return points.

Returning one's dirty tray and crockery will reduce the cleaners' need to make frequent rounds to clear tables. They can instead focus on cleaning and sanitising the tables instead, enabling faster turnover of tables during peak mealtimes. This benefits hawkers, diners and cleaners.

5. **What if the cleaner insists on clearing the table for diners?**

In such situations, diners are welcome to let the cleaners clear the table. Cleaning contractors and cleaners have been briefed on the 'self-service concept' and table-cleaning workflow. Hence, we urge diners to take the initiative in keeping their tables clean and returning dirty trays and crockery.

6. **Will there be sufficient trays and tray return stations for diners?**

NEA and Hawkers' Associations/Operators have ensured that there are sufficient tray and crockery return facilities at hawker centres. Currently, there are around 900 existing racks placed at our hawker centres, where diners can return their dirty trays and crockery. On top of this, 150 additional racks are being added progressively. NEA is also providing cooked food stallholders with new trays.

7. **Will NEA improve the cleanliness of trays and tray return stations?**

Stallholders have the responsibility to provide clean crockery and trays for diners, including washing and sanitising trays to ensure that the trays are clean.

NEA, in consultation with stakeholders such as the Environmental Management Association of Singapore (EMAS), cleaning companies and cleaners, is working on a revised table-cleaning

workflow that focuses on getting tables cleaned and sanitised in an efficient manner, as well as tray and crockery return point management. Cleaning contractors can use this revised table-cleaning workflow to redesign their process to clear tray and crockery return stations in a timely manner.

8. Will there be more waste bins and wash basins installed at public dining places?

Currently, litter bins and wash basins are located at convenient locations within the hawker centres. Where necessary, NEA will work with the relevant stakeholders to install more litter bins and wash basins.

9. Why is the government focusing on table littering at this time?

The COVID-19 pandemic underscores the need for us to maintain high public hygiene and cleanliness standards. Enforcement against table littering will complement educational efforts to maintain high standards of public health, which are even more critical during the pandemic. NEA will take an advisory approach until the end of August 2021, during which no enforcement action will be taken. Enforcement action against diners who refuse to heed our officers' advice will commence from 1 September 2021.

10. Will the cost of cleaning services be reduced or will NEA pay less for cleaning services since we now have to clear our tables?

NEA does not get paid for cleaning services. Table-cleaning services are contracted at competitive market prices by either NEA, as part of an integrated cleaning contract, or contracted by the stallholders through their Hawkers' Association or Managing Agent. Even with diners being required to clear up after dining, cleaners are still required to maintain and upkeep the general cleanliness of dining places, including wiping and sanitising tables, and clearing and sorting dirty crockery at designated tray and crockery return points. Hence, we do not anticipate any reduction in cleaning costs to be paid by NEA or the stallholders in the immediate term.

By adopting a 'self-service concept' to clear up tables after meals, diners can contribute towards alleviating the shortage of cleaners in the cleaning workforce and mitigate the upward pressure on cleaning cost over time.

11. Are cleaning contractors reaping extra profits as cleaners will do less than before?

No. With public hygiene being an important first line of defence against diseases such as COVID-19, the workload of the table cleaning service providers has increased as they step up on the cleaning and disinfection work at dining places. Even with diners clearing their tables after meals, cleaners would still need to make sure that the tables are well cleaned and sanitised, and the trays and crockery are sorted and cleared from the tray and crockery return points in a timely manner.

12. Will NEA take enforcement action against diners at Zi Char/ Steamboat eating places within hawker centres/ coffeeshops?

The littering law applies to all diners in public dining places. NEA will take a pragmatic approach in situations where the stall has dedicated service staff to serve food to the table and to clear the crockery and utensils during and after the meal. Where it is unclear if the tables are served by dedicated staff, diners will be reminded to clear their dirty crockery and litter after their meals.