

AGRICULTURE AND PORTABLE SANITATION (GAP)

Food safety has become an area of great importance due to the rise in food-borne illnesses. In the world's food supply, the most commonly known of these are salmonella and E. coli, but there are many others. Everyone has a shared interest in making sure these bacteria are not spread, and that's where Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) come in.

GAP are specific methods that, when applied to agriculture, create food for consumers or further processing that is safe and wholesome. There are numerous competing definitions of what methods constitute good agricultural practice. Among the most common are those promoted by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and those published by the United States Department of Agriculture—Agricultural Marketing Service.

Good agricultural practices vary from county to county and from crop to crop, but the goal is the same everywhere: keeping the food supply safe.

The United States Food and Drug Administration publication, "Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables" (download it at <https://www.fda.gov/media/117408/download>), contains a small section regarding the toilets in fields where food is produced. The publication provides the following guidelines for toilet facilities and hand wash stations:

- **Toilet facilities should be accessible.** The more accessible the facilities, the greater the likelihood that they will be used. Workers should always have the opportunity to use the facilities when they need to, not only when they are on break. This helps reduce the incidence of workers in the field or outside packing areas relieving themselves elsewhere (such as in fields).
- **Toilet facilities should be properly located.** Toilet facilities in the field should not be located near a water source used in irrigation or in a location that would subject such facilities to potential runoff in the event of heavy rains. Runoff from improperly constructed and located toilet facilities has the potential to contaminate soil, water sources, produce, animals, and workers.
- **Toilet facilities and hand wash stations should be well supplied.** Provide an adequate supply of toilet paper. Hand wash stations should be equipped with a basin, water, liquid soap, sanitary hand drying devices (such as disposable paper towels), and a waste container.
- **All facilities should be kept clean.** Toilets and hand wash stations, whether attached to the toilet facility or located near it, should be cleaned on a regular basis. Containers used to transport or store water for hand washing should, on a routine basis, be emptied and thoroughly cleaned, sanitized, and refilled with potable water.

In addition to this, the Guide specifies the following regarding service of portable toilets:

- **Use caution when servicing portable toilets.** Wastewater from portable toilet facilities that may drain into a field can contaminate fresh produce. Sewage transport trucks need direct access to toilet facilities to ensure proper collection and disposal of waste through a municipal sewage system or a sub-surface septic tank system.

- **Have a plan for containment and treatment of any effluent in the event of leakage or a spill.** Operators should be made aware and be prepared in the event of any incidence of leakage or spillage of effluent in a field. Refer to 40 CFR Part 503 for additional guidance.

The PSAI supports the GAP initiative through its industry-specific procedures. Since regulations vary greatly across the United States and internationally, the PSAI's intent has been to provide guidance on best practices for all operators to adopt, regardless of where they are located. The precautions we recommend will assist in the prevention of contamination of food crops by field workers due to unsanitary field restrooms. They will also help keep workers healthy by making sure they have adequate hand wash facilities. These Best Practices criteria meet or exceed what the GAP initiative requires.

1. Compliance with the most current version of ANSI/PSAI Z4.1, Z4.3, and Z4.4 standards must be maintained at all times.
2. Portable restrooms must be rigidly constructed and their inside surfaces must be made of nonabsorbent material that is smooth and easily cleanable.
3. The wastewater tank must be constructed of durable, easily cleanable material and have an adequate tank capacity.
4. Construction of units must prevent splashing on the occupant, field, or road.
5. Portable restrooms must be ventilated and have self-closing doors, lockable from the inside, and must be constructed to ensure privacy.
6. Portable restrooms must be screened to keep flies and other vermin away from the excreta.
7. Effective odor control deodorizer must be used in waste holding tanks.
8. Toilet paper must be provided at all times in a suitable holder inside each portable restroom.
9. Portable restrooms used for agricultural purposes must be maintained in good repair at all times.
10. Contents of portable restrooms must be disposed of by pumping into a sanitary sewer or by a liquid waste hauler transporting the liquid waste for proper disposal. The disposal of waste from the restrooms and/or hand wash facilities must not cause unsanitary conditions, nuisance, or contamination.
11. Any spillage or leakage must be cleaned up immediately, complying with the owner's spill containment and clean-up procedures.
12. A hand wash facility must be adjacent to every (group of) portable restroom(s).
13. Hand wash facilities are self-contained or drain into a waste tank, confirming that there is no risk of cross contamination.
14. Hand wash facilities must be maintained in a clean, sanitary condition and kept in good repair at all times. They must also be properly stocked with soap and single-use paper towels.
15. A trash receptacle must be available for disposing of used paper towels (provided by renter).
16. The portable restroom operator shall have and supply each customer with a spill containment and cleanup plan.
17. Bilingual signs will be posted in or near the unit(s) stating, "Workers must wash hands before returning to work."
18. All portable restroom services shall comply with PSAI Portable Sanitation Professional Certification Standards for health and safety.
19. All services need to be recorded on service sticker inside each portable restroom.
20. Portable restrooms generally should be pumped before they are moved. When this is not possible, the units should be moved with extreme caution, and any splashing or runoff should be cleaned immediately.

The PSAI is dedicated to providing programs that promote high standards of sanitation worldwide. Through our educational conferences, annual trade shows, and committee work, we provide opportunities for Members to share information affecting their areas of the world. We invite all portable restroom operators and industry suppliers to join us in raising standards and keeping our food supply safe.