

# MEDIA ADVISORY

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JOINTLY ISSUED BY NEA AND SFA**

## **STEPPED-UP ENFORCEMENT AGAINST TABLE LITTERING FROM 1 JUNE 2023**

**Singapore, 31 May 2023** – From 1 June 2023, enforcement officers will ask for the particulars of diners who do not return their used trays and crockery at hawker centres, coffeeshops and food courts. First-time offenders will be issued a written warning, while repeat offenders will be issued fines or charged in Court. Prior to 1 June 2023, enforcement officers will advise diners who do not clear their used trays and crockery to do so, and only those who refuse to heed officers' advice will be issued written warnings.

2 To promote good hygiene and encourage social responsibility, the National Environment Agency (NEA) and Singapore Food Agency (SFA) started enforcing against table littering at hawker centres from 1 September 2021, and at coffeeshops and food courts from 1 January 2022. The average Tray and Crockery Return Rate (TCRR) at hawker centres has since increased to 91 per cent currently, from 65 percent in August 2021. Coffeeshops and food courts have also maintained their TCRR at 90 per cent in Dec 2022. We thank everyone who has contributed to this movement and displayed social graciousness.

4 The stepped-up enforcement on table littering from 1 June onwards aims to ensure that the good efforts of the majority who return their used trays and crockery, are not marred by the inconsiderate behaviour of the minority. Please refer to the Annex on some common Q&As on enforcement for table littering.

5 NEA and SFA will continue to reach out to members of the public to remind everyone to keep Singapore clean. We urge the public to cooperate with the enforcement officers if approached by them.

- End -

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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](http://www.nea.gov.sg)

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**About the Singapore Food Agency (SFA)**

As the lead agency for food-related matters, the Singapore Food Agency's mission is to ensure and secure a safe food supply 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 with food businesses to strengthen capabilities, tap into technologies to raise productivity, undertake research to develop new lines of business, and catalyze industry transformation to ensure food security.

For more information on SFA, visit [www.sfa.gov.sg](http://www.sfa.gov.sg)

### Q&As on Enforcement for Table Littering

1. **Is it an offence if a diner clears his/her tray and used 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 used crockery at tray and crockery return stations.

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

Cleaners will assist to remove trays, used crockery and litter left behind by the previous diner. We urge all diners to return their used 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 trays and used crockery. Those able to bring the trays and food to the table on their own should likewise be able to return their trays and used crockery.

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

Cleaners are still required to maintain and upkeep the general cleanliness of dining places, including regularly wiping the tables, as well as clearing and sorting used crockery at the designated tray and crockery return points.

Returning one's tray and used crockery will reduce the cleaners' need to make frequent rounds to clear tables. They can instead focus on cleaning the tables, enabling faster turnover of tables during peak meal times. 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 trays and used crockery.

6. **Will the cost of cleaning services be reduced since we now have to clear our tables?**

While diners are being required to clear up after dining, cleaners still need to maintain and upkeep the general cleanliness of dining places, including wiping tables, and clearing and sorting used crockery at designated tray and crockery return points. Hence, we do not anticipate any reduction in cleaning costs in the immediate term.

7. **Are cleaning contractors hiring fewer cleaners than before?**

The resident cleaning workforce has not changed significantly over the past years. 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 the trays and crockery are sorted and cleared from the tray and crockery return points in a timely manner.

**8. What has been done to improve the cleanliness of hawker centres, coffeeshops and food courts?**

SFA and NEA conducts checks at hawker centres, coffeeshops and food courts to ensure the establishments are kept clean at all times and are compliant with our regulations. SFA engages coffeeshop and food court operators to remind them of the requirements and ensure they provide sufficient tray return racks and maintain the facilities properly.

NEA also continues to work closely with the Hawkers' Associations, operators and cleaning contractors to improve the cleanliness of hawker centres, through infrastructural adjustments (e.g. centralising some of the existing tray and crockery return racks by shifting lesser utilised racks to more popular return points to facilitate more efficient clearing of trays and used crockery) as well as refinements to the workflow and manpower deployment (e.g. deploying more cleaners to focus on clearing of racks during peak meal periods).

For cleaning lapses observed, service buyers can exercise contractual levers against the errant cleaning contractors, where necessary. During peak dining periods, there will be higher cleaning loads. Hence, cleaners may need a little more time to come around to wipe the tables after use, or to clear the tray and crockery return points. We continue to seek patrons' understanding, support, and patience with our cleaners.

**9. 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.

**10. Will enforcement action be taken against diners at zi char/ steamboat stalls 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. Bulky specialised crockery such as steamboat pots, mookata hotpots and grilled fish metal trays will be cleared by the dedicated service staff or cleaners. Diners are still required to return their trays and other used crockery, and clear litter such as used tissues, wet wipes and food remnants after their meals.

**11. What if the enforcement officer requests for a diner's particulars but he/she does not have them on hand?**

Various types of photo IDs are accepted for verification by the officer, including digital NRIC through the Singpass app. In the event that the offender does not possess any valid particulars on hand, the officer will seek the assistance of police officers to verify the identity of the offender.

**12. What if a diner steps away from the table to get a drink with the intention of coming back to return his/her tray, but enforcement officers accuse him/her of littering?**

If we assessed that the diner had indeed stepped away from the table to get a drink with the intention of coming back to return his/her tray, the officer will request that the diner clear the used tray/crockery before proceeding to buy the drink. No enforcement action will be taken against the diner.

**13. What if diners are unable to return their tray as the tray return rack is full? Will enforcement be taken against them?**

No enforcement will be taken against diners leaving the trays and crockery near the tray return station in such situations.

**14. Will authorities take any action against operators who fail to ensure the maintenance of the Tray Return Racks?**

Under the Environmental Sanitation Regime, Premises Managers need to coordinate housekeeping and cleanliness issues with stakeholders, including Hawkers' Associations to ensure cleanliness outcomes for the entire centre are met. This includes daily cleaning and disinfection of countertops/shelves of the tray return stations/racks, on top of prompt clearing of used trays/crockery and litter such as used tissues, wet wipes and food remnants by cleaners during the centres' operations.