



Standard Interpretations

05/17/2006 - Requirements for covered beverages at nurses' stations.

 [Standard Interpretations - Table of Contents](#)

• **Standard Number:** [1910.1030](#); [1910.1030\(d\)\(2\)\(ix\)](#); [1910.141](#); [1910.141\(g\)\(2\)](#)

May 17, 2006

Ms. Barbara Caporusso, RN
22 El Camino Court
Coram, New York 11727

Dear Ms. Caporusso:

Thank you for your letter to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA's) Directorate of Enforcement Programs (DEP). You had specific concerns regarding OSHA policy on the presence and consumption of beverages in a hospital nursing station. This letter constitutes OSHA's interpretation only of the requirements discussed and may not be applicable to any question not delineated within your original correspondence.

Question: Is it against OSHA regulation to keep a covered beverage at a nurse's station in a hospital?

Reply: OSHA does not have a general prohibition against the consumption of beverages at hospital nursing stations. However, OSHA's bloodborne pathogens standard prohibits the consumption of food and drink in areas in which work involving exposure or potential exposure to blood or other potentially infectious material takes place, or where the potential for contamination of work surfaces exists [29 CFR 1910.1030(d)(2)(ix)]. Also, under 29 CFR 1910.141(g)(2), employees shall not be allowed to consume food or beverages in any area exposed to a toxic material. While you state that beverages at the nursing station might have a lid or cover, the container may also become contaminated, resulting in unsuspected contamination of the hands.

The employer must evaluate the workplace to determine in which locations food or beverages may potentially become contaminated and must prohibit employees from eating or drinking in those areas. An employer may determine that a particular nurse's station or other location is separated from work areas subject to contamination and therefore is so situated that it is not reasonable under the circumstances to anticipate that occupational exposure through the contamination of food and beverages or their containers is likely. The employer may allow employees to consume food and beverages in that area, although no OSHA standard specifically requires that an employer permit this. OSHA standards set minimum safety and health requirements and do not prohibit employers from adopting more stringent requirements.

Thank you for your interest in occupational safety and health. We hope you find this information helpful. OSHA requirements are set by statute, standards, and regulations. Our interpretation letters explain these requirements and how they apply to particular circumstances, but they cannot create additional employer obligations. This letter constitutes OSHA's interpretation of the requirements discussed. Note that our enforcement guidance

may be affected by changes to OSHA rules. Also, from time to time we update our guidance in response to new information. To keep apprised of such developments, you can consult OSHA's website at <http://www.osha.gov>. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact the Office of Health Enforcement at 202-693-2190.

Sincerely,

Richard E. Fairfax, Director
Directorate of Enforcement Programs

**FOOD AND DRINK
PROHIBITED**



IN THIS AREA

