

Subject: VENDOR VISIT POLICY
Importance: Low

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1. Recently ACES has been contacted by several product vendors who have attended numerous food management boards and come away with a sense that there had been no desire on the part of the installation to actually seek new products. Products are added or deleted from catalogs with no explanation or notification to the losing vendor. NAPA holders are disregarded in the decision process and potential savings are not evaluated and thus are passed up. DA Pam 30-22 provides Army guidance on cuttings and product demonstrations. This policy was developed to assist in management of installation food programs and to improve our business acumen when dealing with vendors.

2. Travel and product costs to attend these boards quickly mount into the thousands of dollars for these firms. While they must be willing to expend the required effort and funds to gain sales they should not be exposed to these costs unnecessarily. Product vendors should be invited to food management boards under only three circumstances.

a. Product complaint: There is an expressed dissatisfaction with a current product. This can be in quality, price, handling requirements, diner acceptability. A product may not perform as promised in the "sales pitch" or may not meet stated Army standards. In this case one or more competing firms should be invited to a competitive cutting. A demonstration may also be used if a cutting is not deemed necessary.

b. New Product: Food program managers desire a new product for which a like item is not currently on the catalog. This may be a new item in the market place desired to improve variety in our food program.

c. Training on existing Products: Product vendors who have items on the current catalog should be invited to provide information and training on THOSE products. The hundreds of products currently cataloged provide a very wide variety of options to request training, recipe guidance, cost effective use guidance and marketing advice. Those firms currently supplying our installations will be very cooperative in these requests as they represent opportunities to increase sales.

3. Vendors should not be asked to expend the time, energy, and money to attend these meetings unless there is an expressed intent to change products or add new items not currently used. Also when contacted by a vendor that wants to attend your menu board to demonstrate a product that currently is on the catalog as another choice, the FPM must make a decision. If there is no problem with current product, there is no need to see the proposed product (See para 2 above). Food Program managers must determine a need for a product before inviting firms to their

installation. Food management boards should have minimal vendor attendance with the emphasis being placed on introducing newly cataloged products and training in the preparation of those or other cataloged items.

4. All prime vendors hold periodic food shows which are well suited for browsing and trying new items. Some vendors will also offer "Mini Food Shows" on the installation with a product mix aimed directly at our feeding program. These also should include primarily items for which we desire to investigate and items for which we feel a change is required. Installation Food Management Boards should not be used as mini food shows.

5. Food program managers must also recognize the problems inherent with constant change in product mix. Constant in and out of like product causes chaos in the installation food program.

a. AFMIS master item and recipe files must constantly be updated to enable the dining facility manager to order and use these items. This has long been a very weak point in our continuing program. Most installation food program managers do not have up to date automated files. When these files are not accurate dining facility managers encounter difficulty in ordering products or maintaining accurate inventories.

b. There are reports of items being added at one meeting and deleted at the next without even a trial of the product. Also reported has been the adding of like products at consecutive meetings. Recipes do not hold multiple stock numbers for the same ingredient thereby relegating duplicate products to nonuse and aging inventory.

c. Inventory listings continue to grow as long as there is any remaining balance of a discontinued item within any dining facility. This hinders the efficient and accurate conduct of required inventories which in-turn impacts on the accuracy of the dining facility account status.

d. Food service personnel are subjected to the constant change in preparation techniques for the changing products without proper training causing poorly prepared items being presented to the diner. This ultimately impacts our entire program and results in even more changes to products in the effort to improve.

e. Prime vendors are put to unneeded expense to constantly bring in and then purge items that were never given a fair use or chance of use. Additionally, vendors are invited to return multiple times to demonstrate products with no decision forthcoming. This ultimately results in higher fees to the military customer which negatively impacts the soldier diner. The Army has received claims submitted by prime vendors for their investment to stock products that we requested but did not follow through with purchase. These have amounted to hundreds of thousands of dollars. This is a direct waste of the dollar resources provided for the management of our program and the feeding of soldiers.

6. The Army policy on cuttings and demonstrations is established in DA Pam 30-22. Additional guidance has been provided in the recently approved Procedures for the Selection, Cataloging, and Retention of Subsistence Items. These are available on the ACES web site and will be included in a change to DA Pam 30-22. Product evaluation and new item request forms are also provided in DA Pam 30-22. Food program managers should review this guidance when preparing for Food Management Boards or when desiring to investigate new products.

7. Request that all food program managers and IMA- Region food program directors review and discuss this message and develop local guidance on the invitation of vendors and the establishment of manageable thresholds for the addition and deletion of products.

8. Point of Contacts for this message is Mr. David Staples (phone: 804-734-4862) (email: david.p.staples@lee.army.mil) or Mr. Richard A. Harsh (phone: 804-734-4832) (email: harshr@lee.army.mil)