



Mine site reusable crib kits

Hygiene

Waste avoidance:

Reducing single-use plastics on mine sites

Reusable food containers and crib kits are effectively used on mine sites and in accommodation villages in Western Australia (WA). On some sites, crib kits and bring-your-own food containers have been standard for decades. Crib kits can be easily implemented in these closed loop environments.

Reusable containers reduce reliance on single-use packaging, whether plastic or paper based. They also avoid large volumes of disposable containers being sent to landfill. This is a positive outcome for the environment, sustainability goals and ESG targets.



Courtesy of BCI Minerals

Reusable crib kits not only reduce waste and environmental impacts but can also cut costs for mining and catering companies by eliminating recurring expenditure on disposable items. The costs of disposable food containers and cups add up across the three meals a day. This cost is passed on by caterers to mining companies or contractors, built into quotes and invoices.

A basic but functional single order crib kit with an insulated crib bag, three containers and cutlery set can be purchased for less than \$50. Costs can reduce by about 20 percent when the kits are purchased in greater quantities.

Examples from WA mine sites show the cost of reusable crib kits can be recovered in three to eight months due to the savings on no-longer-needed disposable containers. Savings of tens of thousands of dollars per month can be made. Over time, this is a significant business cost saving, an environmental win and a move towards a circular economy.

Washing containers

Site cleaners do **not** wash reusable crib kit containers. It is not in their contracted tasks and it is probable that people would take less care with dirty containers if cleaners were expected to wash them. A general expectation is that people rinse their own containers after eating lunch and wash them thoroughly with soap and hot water before filling. Rules at some sites state that containers be washed on the way into the dining hall or dry mess crib room – or washed in their own crib room.

Containers are dried with paper towels or shaken and air dried. Managing a supply of cotton tea towels would be onerous and a potential health and safety risk.

Hand washing

On many sites, there is a behavioural and hygiene expectation for people to wash their hands with soap and water before entering the dining hall or dry mess. This is sometimes policed via CCTV and it is reportedly common for staff to 'pull others up' if they don't wash their hands.

“ By providing accessible self-service wash stations with clear instructions and offering incentives or recognition to encourage participation and compliance, mining companies can balance hygiene, convenience and sustainability goals and a successful reusable system. ”

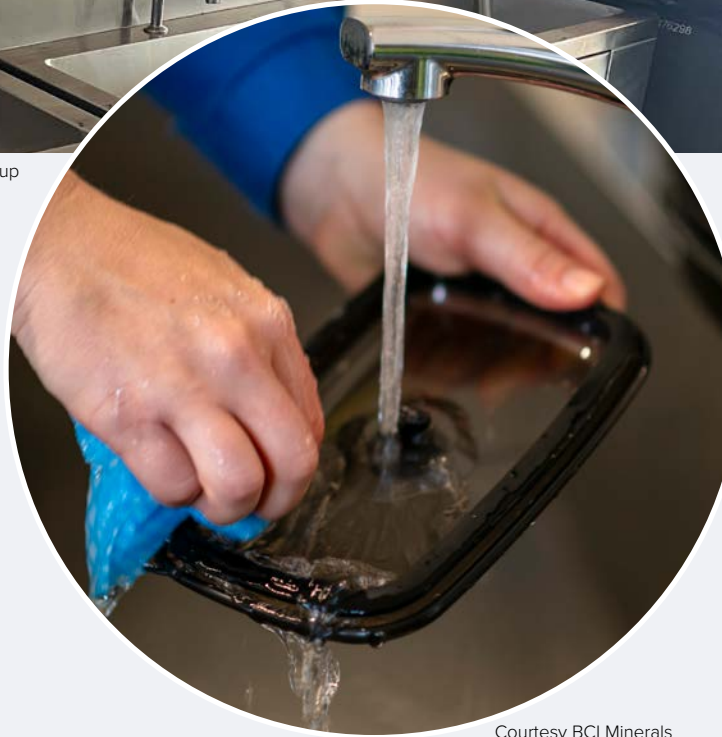


Courtesy Compass Group

Food safety

Crib bags can carry bacteria and toxins. They should not be permitted in fridges for hygiene reasons and because cool air is unable to penetrate the bag, presenting another food temperature and safety concern.

Hot take-away food, or 'hot cribbing', was offered on some mine sites in the past and was extremely popular. The practice is now rare and limited in its application on mine sites due to food safety regulations. Instead, cold leftovers are placed in cold wells in bain maries and people serve themselves into their reusable containers before shifts start. The food is later heated in crib room microwaves. The number of bays for the cold wells depends on the workforce size. There is potential for bain maries to replace storage spaces used for single-use plastic containers in dining hall and dry mess areas. On some sites up to eight bays are used.



Courtesy BCI Minerals

Storage

Racks or hooks outside the dining hall or dry mess are recommended to provide a hanging spot or shelf to leave crib bags. It is an accepted industry standard that dirty uniforms, PPE and crib bags are not permitted in dining halls and dry mess buildings for health and safety reasons.

Crib bags are considered a trip and hygiene hazard. They are often not permitted near food preparation areas. Due to their transportable nature, crib bags could be placed on mine site floors, where toxins can be present, on seats and floors in buses, in dongas, crib rooms and sometimes on toilet floors.

It is best practice for people to eat breakfast before their shift starts, while wearing clean gear, then fetch their containers from crib bags and return to the food area to pack their lunch. Crib bags should stay outside.



Courtesy Greatland

For more information on rolling out reusables in mining villages, visit the WA Government's Plan for Plastics webpage on the project [Reusable solutions for mine site catering](#) | Western Australian Government.