



January 2019

**QUESTION:**

My food processing plant is seeking certification against the British Retail Consortium (BRC) Global Standard for Food Safety (issue 8). During the certification audit, the BRC auditor asked for proof that the hoses used to dispense cleaning and sanitizing chemicals, and those wash-down hoses used to dispense water during the sanitation process, were certified as "food grade." I have never heard of this requirement nor did I find it specified in the BRC standard. Was the auditor correct in asking for this?

**ANSWER:**

No, the auditor was not correct in asking for evidence these types of hoses be certified food grade. The BRC standard states that cleaning equipment (e.g., chemical dispensing hoses and other cleaning and sanitation equipment, ref. BRC Food i8, 4.11.6) be "fit for purpose." Chemical dispensing hoses would not be expected to be food grade as long as there is no evidence that they are contaminating the product. The industry norm for dispensing equipment is acceptable. As for the wash-down hoses, this is indirectly addressed in 4.5.1 of the standard as "All water...used for equipment or plant cleaning shall be supplied in sufficient quantity, be potable at point of use or pose no risk of contamination according to applicable legislation." Wash-down hoses are rated for use with potable water rather than rated as food grade. As in the case with the chemical dispensing hoses, the potable water rating is acceptable as long as there is no evidence the material is a contaminant. This issue is addressed by the most commonly used GFSI-recognized food safety certification programs in North America (e.g., SQF, BRC and FSSC22000) in a similar manner with no requirement for specific certification, but rather with language addressing suitability of use and overall prevention of contamination.

The typical concern with these types of hoses in a food processing plant is their condition and their sanitary maintenance. Chemical dispensing hoses can wear over time and should be kept in a good state to minimize leaks, which could lead to personnel safety among other issues. Wash-down hoses should be kept in good repair and properly stowed on racks when not in use to reduce the potential development of a microbial harborage

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### ABOUT THE EXPERT



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