FDA 21 CFR 177.1520 Compliance Guide for Plastic Food Containers

A buyer checklist from LT Plastics, authorized Bonar Plastics distributor (USA). Updated November 2026. This guide is general information, not legal advice.

1. What 21 CFR 177.1520 covers

Title 21 of the US Code of Federal Regulations, section 177.1520, lists the olefin polymers (including polyethylene such as HDPE) that may be used in articles intended to contact food, with identity, density and extractable limits. It applies to the resin. A container is "FDA compliant" when it is made from a resin that meets this section for the intended food type and use conditions.

2. FDA compliant vs "food grade" vs "FDA approved"

Term	What it means	What to ask for
FDA compliant	Resin meets the applicable 21 CFR food-contact section	Resin supplier compliance letter citing 21 CFR 177.1520
Food grade	Marketing term with no single legal definition	The compliance letter, and the food types it covers
FDA approved	FDA does not pre-approve finished containers	Treat as a red flag; ask what regulation is meant

3. Buyer checklist before you order

1) Compliance letter for the resin, naming 21 CFR 177.1520. 2) Food types and temperature range the letter covers (hot fill, fatty foods, freezing). 3) Colorants and additives: are they also cleared for food contact? 4) Cleaning: which sanitizers and temperatures the container tolerates. 5) Traceability: lot or date code on the container for your FSMA records. 6) Whether the container is used only for food after purchase (no prior chemical use).

4. Where to read the regulation

eCFR, Title 21, Part 177, Section 177.1520:
https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-21/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-177/subpart-B/section-177.1520

FDA, Food Contact Substances overview:
https://www.fda.gov/food/packaging-food-contact-substances-fcs

5. Get the paperwork with your quote

Request food grade totes, bulk bins or hoppers at https://ltplastics.us/products/food-grade-totes. Tell us the food, temperature and cleaning method and we include the compliance documentation with the quote. Phone +1 (602) 921-6133 · bob@logistictrade.com

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