



Six steps to ensure foodgrade lubrication compliance with BRC Issue 9

Ensure compliance with BRC Issue 9 and safeguard your business with our FREE White Paper: 6 Steps to Ensure Foodgrade Lubrication Compliance with BRC Issue 9.

Is your food production site a well-oiled machine?

Ensure compliance, maximise reliability and minimise stress with a systemised, efficient lubrication culture.

The BRC's Global Standard for Food Safety (Issue 9) replaced BRC Issue 8 on 1 August 2022 (with certification against Issue 9 commencing in audits from 1 February 2023). As part of the standard's ongoing development, BRC continues to enhance the requirements placed upon food manufacturers by introducing proper structure and control of lubricants and lubrication processes.

All of the requirements are ultimately designed to assure the quality, safety and authenticity of the food we consume whilst at the same time protecting and enhancing our health.

Activate Lubricants are privileged to work with many skilled and experienced engineers who understand the risks and challenges associated with the use of machine lubricants in the food production environment.

While we do see 'best practice', 98% of the time we are able to improve current processes through rationalisation, systemisation, application training and the use of our fully synthetic, foodgrade products.

The Activate system has been specifically designed to guarantee audit compliance to BRC Global Standards and practically eliminate the risk of misapplication. Our overriding goal is to help you avoid costly product recall and resulting brand damage.

Our customers often describe Activate as being "ahead of the game" – that's because it is our chosen game. We are 100% focussed on the food industry and have a unique understanding of the challenges faced by food manufacturing and packaging.

Our system enables you to bring order to your oil store and streamline your inventory and processes for complete peace of mind, particularly at audit time!

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This document outlines the six steps to ensuring Issue 9 compliance with Activate:

1. Where are you now?
2. Rationalise & simplify
3. Synthetic versus mineral
4. Systemise
5. Get the paperwork right
6. Keep up to date

Step 1 - Where are you now?

The first step is always forming an initial understanding of your requirements based on an analysis of current practices. Unfortunately, due to other pressures resulting in a general lack of time, many managers and operatives simply lose sight of their lubrication landscape. This can often mean that out-dated or mis-matched products and processes continue 'under the radar', threatening the compliance level.

Activate's technical team will visit your site to assess your current lubrication practices and provide a clear picture of your current situation and any potential pitfalls it may present. We will then perform a GAP analysis in order to create a solution for moving forward, exactly tailored to your needs.

Step 2 - Rationalise and simplify

When visiting customer sites for the first time, we typically see oil stores comprising a high number of different products, often from multiple manufacturers, with no methodical storage system. We also come across products that are not foodgrade (NSF registered). If this sounds like your oil store, then you need to take action!

Simplification also goes beyond the lubricants themselves. By using effective visual management and undertaking application training, you can ensure that your operatives are as streamlined as your inventory: always using the correct product, for the correct application, at the correct time.

Following the site visit and GAP analysis, we will install an appropriate Activate System in your oil store for an agreed trial period. You will receive full training and support during this time, along with a review and debrief at the end.

Step 3 - Synthetic versus mineral

A huge variety of base oils used in the manufacture of foodgrade lubricants, ranging from Group 2 Base Oils (basic medicinal white oils) to Group 4 synthetic PAO's and Group 5 specialist base oils. Not only do the higher-grade synthetic oils enable a significant uplift to lubricant and equipment performance but, based on our experience and industry-accepted tests, they also last 10 times longer.

Reliability is the key factor - over the years, we have witnessed first-hand many catastrophic failures as a direct result of 'cheap' lubricants that do not have the capability to effectively lubricate components.

Activate's fully synthetic foodgrade lubricants are of the highest quality and consistency and feature wide operating bands to enable significant rationalisation. Our experienced team works with you to ensure correct application knowledge and our products help reduce breakdowns, extend the life of machines and are all 100% foodsafe - if it says Activate on the label, it IS foodgrade!



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Step 4 - Systemise

Disorder is the enemy of a compliant foodgrade lubrication culture and if your production site isn't a well-oiled machine, it could be putting you at risk! Implementing a coherent system that carries through from delivery to application ensures that consistent 'best practices' are carried out, maximising lubrication performance and cost-effectiveness while reducing stress and risk. Making things simple for your engineers also enables them to maximise their time and productivity.

Activate produce a range of systems to suit diverse food industry environments and all our lubricant containers are colour-coded to ensure correct application every time. When allied to our fully synthetic oils, greases and aerosols, our world-class, systemised, visual management approach guarantees audit compliance to BRC Global Standards and greatly enhances reliability.

Following the site visit and GAP analysis, we will install an appropriate Activate System in your oil store for an agreed trial period. You will receive full training and support during this time, along with a review and debrief at the end.



Typical oil store



Activate System8®
Unique visual management storage system.

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Step 5 - Get the paperwork right

There is a range of essential paperwork that is required to be available to guarantee compliance to BRC global standards. This should not only be on-hand for the auditors when they visit, but also feature as a permanently available resource for engineers and other relevant operators. Correct paperwork is an integral part of any 'right first time' approach, enabling a full understanding of the parameters of both product and process from the very top of the lubrication culture.

Integral to (and stored on) all Activate systems, the Compliance Manual contains all essential paperwork to ensure compliance. This includes all current colour-coded Safety Data Sheets for all products supplied to site, a colour-coded application guide detailing all products used on site, their suited application, temperature range and NSF foodgrade certification, and our latest Allergen Statement covering all Activate foodgrade products.

Step 6 - Keep up to date

Keeping up to date with (and promptly reacting to) changes to lubrication compliance requirements, and any new rules and regulations that cover foodgrade lubricant products, is essential to avoid potentially costly pitfalls. Compliance managers need to ensure that any changes are swiftly implemented at 'ground level', which can be tricky if there is no coherent lubrication culture in place.

The Activate team is always on hand to answer questions or offer advice. We offer an e-training option that gives 24/7 access to 'best practice' videos covering our systems, products and processes. These are automatically updated when new products and legislation comes out. We also keep our customers up to date through our regular email newsletters and social media posts.

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Cross-referencing different foodgrade lubricants

We are increasingly seeing buyers who have no tribological background, or even a basic understanding of lubrication, being given the unenviable task of having to attempt to rationalise and simplify products to save costs.

It's essential that you avoid inadvertently stripping value out of lubrication and focus on securing a compliant, optimised and cost-effective foodgrade solution.

Compare apples to apples

The first challenge is due to the variety of base oils used in the manufacture of foodgrade lubricants. These split into a number of categories and range from Group 2 Base Oils which are a basic foodgrade medicinal white oil and cost around £600 per tonne, right up to Group 4 synthetic PAO's at £4000 per tonne and then specialist group 5 base oils, including silicones, synthetic esters and glycols that can cost up to £7000 per tonne.

Not only do the higher grades perform better than the more basic but, based on our experience and industry-accepted tests, they also last 10 times longer.

Look at 'value', not 'cost'

Over the years, we have witnessed first-hand many catastrophic failures as a direct result of products being swapped out for 'cheaper' alternatives that do not have the capability to effectively lubricate components.

When you consider that the lubrication cost within an engineering budget is typically well below 1%, it is foolhardy to take these risks. Most food manufacturers push their equipment at least to the OEM's limit and often well beyond. It therefore makes sound commercial and engineering sense to provide the equipment with best possible lubrication protection in this situation.

Many food manufacturers list failures to rotating equipment in their top 5 breakdowns. Motors, bearings, gearboxes, pumps and fans.

Don't forget greases and aerosols

Rationalising and cross-referencing greases is even more complex than fluids. The base oil makes up typically 80-90% of a grease, the rest is made up of grease soaps. Some grease soaps are not compatible with other soaps and some base oils are not compatible with each other; some base oils might cost £600 per tonne and some might cost £4000 per tonne. It is very easy to focus on price without understanding the total cost of ownership and potential commercial harm caused by the use of an inferior or incompatible product.

Aerosols are also a challenge because, once again, the base oil could be a basic white oil at £600 per tonne or a fully synthetic Group 4 at £3000 per tonne. In addition to this, whilst the aerosol may state it contains 400ml, this includes a mixture of base oil, solvent, and propellant. Without knowing the composition of these actual ingredients, it is impossible to cross-reference different brands.

The true value and total cost of ownership is often lost in an attempt to 'save money'.



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Know your limits when cross-referencing

We are often asked to produce Cross Reference Guides to assist companies when changing over from one brand to another. To do this effectively without introducing any risks in the process, buyers need a deep understanding of tribology, best practise lubrication techniques and compliance, legal and audit requirements, along with many years' experience in the practical field.

Points that have to be given due consideration include speed, load, temperature range, historic challenges, performance issues, methods of application, washdown procedure, resistance to chemicals, polymer types, oil types, and compatibility.

It's all about identifying best performance and value to ensure maximum efficiency and protect against downtime.

Choose your lubrication partner wisely

It is absolutely critical that your lubrication partner can demonstrate a thorough understanding and expertise in all areas in order to safely transition your site to a single source and guarantee audit compliance.

Activate is the only company in the UK to focus solely on foodgrade lubricants. Our team has unrivalled expertise and practical experience in this field and is able to assist with any rationalisation and compliance questions.



The UK food industry is a very dynamic environment and we know how pressured it can be! Activate promise compliance, reliability, service and performance and our overall aim is to offer our customers 100% peace of mind with the minimum of hassle. We are always at the end of the phone to answer any queries and provide comprehensive support.

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