



British Glass

Statement on the unsuitability of single-use containers for reuse

May 2025

Most glass containers produced by UK manufacturers for the UK market are manufactured to be lightweight and single-use, and the trend is for ever-more lightweight containers. They are specifically designed for the product they will contain and tested to ensure that they can withstand the expected stress encountered during filling, transport, and final use by the consumer. Single-use containers are not designed for the additional impact stresses of a reuse system and should be recycled and not returned for reuse. Misuse of single-use containers carries the risk of glass failure with corresponding loss of product, as well as possible injury to staff and consumers.

Glass containers designed for reuse are available from UK manufacturers. These are designed and tested for their specific product to withstand multiple trips from filler to consumer. **Any glass container destined for use in a reuse system should be specified as 'reusable' by the manufacturer.**

Safety Standards

The General Product Safety Regulations 2005 (GPSR) require all products to be safe in their normal or reasonably foreseeable usage. Glass manufacturers comply with the regulations by designing containers to withstand the stresses that are expected to be encountered and carrying out a range of quality control checks to ensure that each container meets the required standards.

Container specification drawing

The container specification drawing will usually detail the purpose for which the container has been designed, in particular its ability to withstand refilling, vertical load, thermal shock and internal pressure. If the specification states that the container is single-use, then this means that it has not been designed or tested to meet the required performance specification after multiple uses.

The main differences between a reusable and single-use container

- **Strength** – A reusable container is designed and tested to ensure that it maintains its strength requirements after multiple uses. This may be the ability to withstand the internal pressure generated by a carbonated drink or the thermal shock due to the rapid temperature change during pasteurisation, hot filling or sterilisation.
- **Glass thickness** – For reuse the overall glass thickness is increased, especially at the contact points and base, to improve impact resistance.
- **Shape** – Reusable containers are designed to ensure that the container can be emptied and easily washed whilst minimising the potential for damage.

Industry standards

British Glass publishes a range of technical documents, which include guidelines for reusable containers and are free to British Glass members. Non-members can purchase the documents via the British Glass website. British Glass is also working with Cetie to produce a guidance document on design considerations and tests for standard reusable glass containers.