



INFORMATION SHEET

NO. DA-14

DATE : January 29, 2016
CATEGORY : Disabled Access
SUBJECT : **Bar tops and counters**

SECTIONS INVOLVED : **San Francisco Building Code Sections**
- 11B-226.3 Dining surfaces exceeding 34 inches in height
- 11B-902.3 Height

INTENT : To clarify the SFBC requirements for bar tops and counters where food or drink is served for consumption.

DISCUSSION : Section 11B-226.3 applies to both dining surfaces and to bars where food or drink is consumed.

11B-226.3 Dining surfaces exceeding 34 inches in height. Where food or drink is served for consumption at a counter exceeding 34 inches (864 mm) in height, a portion of the main counter 60 inches (1525 mm) minimum in length shall be provided in compliance with Section 11B-902.3.

The language stipulates that "a portion of the main counter" be at a maximum of 34 inches. The question has arisen as to what exactly is "a portion of the main counter." In order to best understand what the code says, it may be helpful to look at what it does not say. The code does not mention the term "shelf," nor does it use the phrase "attached to."

In discussions with both State and Federal agencies, it is generally accepted that this term means a section of the main counter that is identical to the remainder of the counter in all aspects except the height.

Thus, a lower section with a backsplash would not be allowed unless the remainder of the bar top had a backsplash. Nor would a shelf attached to the counter at a lower height be allowed. Equally inappropriate would be a lowered counter that swings up and is used as a gate to enter the workspace, as this is a gate and not a counter. The lowered section must mimic the remainder in all aspects except height.

It should also be clarified that this section applies only to those counters where the food or drink is actually consumed. If the food or drink is merely served and consumed elsewhere, the counter would be considered a sales and service counter and be regulated by Section 11B-227.1.

Tom C. Hui 1/29/16
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