

# FoodBytes

Food Protection Program

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Indiana State Department of Health

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## Illness reporting - no time to relax

**N**ow is not the time to let up on seeking compliance in foodborne illness control.

How operators handle illness reporting by employees must be discussed during the interview phase of retail food establishment inspections.

A recent informal survey revealed operators typically could not name any of the five reportable illnesses, or name the reportable symptoms. Only a few could name any symptoms and perhaps name one reportable illness.

Part of this may stem from not being comfortable discussing "private" matters like diarrhea or vomiting in public. But for the spread of disease to be prevented, illness symptoms must be discussed.

As part of any routine inspection, inspectors must ask questions about the

illness reporting policy of the establishment. This policy should describe the reportable symptoms and illnesses.

How extensive the plan is will be determined by how many employees there are. If there are only two employees, for example, a simple plan might be sufficient. But a work staff of a dozen or more would necessitate a more comprehensive plan.



The food code does not require this plan be in writing, but writing it down is an excellent idea so that all employees and managers have access to the same accurate information.

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## FoodBytes moves online with new look

This issue is the first electronic edition of FoodBytes, offered exclusively via the internet.

When each issue is ready, those on the ISDH Food Protection email list will receive an email with a link to the current issue.

Readers may also go directly to the ISDH Food Protection Web site at any time to view current and past issues.

Find the FoodBytes online at the web address presented on the last page, follow the links.

## Meat recall forces processing plant to close its doors

Because of the economic impact caused by the recall of 21.7 million pounds of ground meat products - the second largest in U.S. history - Topps Meat Company has closed its doors.

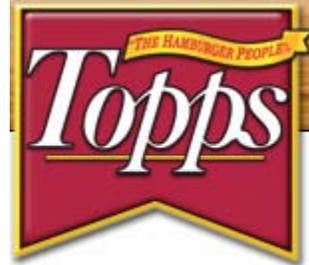
"In one week we have gone from the largest U.S. manufacturer of frozen hamburgers to a company that cannot overcome the economic reality of a recall this large," said Anthony D'Urso, Chief Operating Officer.

"Most of all, we regret that our products have been linked by public health agencies to recently reported illnesses," D'Urso added.

The company employed 87 in its Elizabeth, N. J., facility.

Topps Meat Company was founded in 1940 and was a leading manufacturer and supplier of premium branded frozen hamburgers and other portion controlled meat for supermarkets and mass merchandisers, like Wal-Mart.

A few employees remained at the plant to assist the USDA in its investigation and to assess the effectiveness of the recall.



*E. coli* was discovered during routine sampling by the New York State Department of Health.

Meat affected by the recall, all with an establishment number "9748," was distributed to retail grocery stores and institutions. A company spokesman believes most of the meat had been consumed.

According to Topps, this was the only recall in the company's history.

## Castleberry's Georgia plant reopens with new labeling

Castleberry's Foods plant in Augusta, G.A., has reopened with new labels to identify its products.

"American Originals" will appear in larger letters on product labels so, as the company says, will allow consumers to distinguish new products from those recalled in 2007.

In addition, the company announced label design enhancements and new UPC codes for other company owned brands to be reintroduced to the marketplace. Cattle Drive Gold™, Bunker Hill®, Triple Bar Ranch® and Black Rock Cattle Company® will feature newly designed labels and new UPC codes. Some of the recalled

products will not be reintroduced.

Castleberry's Foods recalled all products manufactured in its Georgia plant last July after

botulism was discovered in several cans. Consumers in several states became ill from consuming a

Castleberry's product, which eventually led to the plant closing.

Several cases of botulism were reported in Indiana and believed to be caused by consumption of the recalled products.

The USDA and FDA have approved the plant to resume operation.

"American Originals" will appear in larger letters on the product labels.

No recalled products should be on store shelves. If inspectors find any Castleberry's Foods items with original labels, they should contact Dan Gala, ISDH Food Protection, at 317-233-7360. Such canned foods must be immediately removed from sale.

For more information, call the company's consumer hotline at 800-203-4412, or visit the company's web site: [www.castleberry.com](http://www.castleberry.com)



## Orientation draws 3 dozen

The annual Orientation for new local health department employees was held this past fall. It is intended to showcase the services provided by ISDH. The following attended and their health departments follow each name.

Richard Thompson, Adams; Robert McLaughlin, Cass; Jessica L. Mallory, Clark; Alan Crosby, Decatur; Jama Cox, Decatur; Emily Grantz, Floyd; Alice Quinn, Grant; Richard Rider, Grant; Andrea Alltop, Greene; Jennifer Hill, Hendricks; Sharon Mayer, Hendricks; Nate Minyard, Henry; Sharon Farrell, ISDH; Mike Beaman, Knox; Mindy S. Wessel, Knox; William A. Bish, Lake.

Also attending were Kenneth T. Johnston, Laporte; Benjamin Hood, Marion; Tamika Rhodes, Marion; Fikru Hailu, Marion; Al Foust, Pike; Julia Martin, Porter; Darrell Brackney, Putnam; Douglas Ehmen, Putnam; Sherri Schmidt, Ripley; Eugene Hopkins,



Shelby; William Pursley, Shelby; Stephan Sever, Shelby; Walter Buchs, Stueben; John Greenamy, Stueben; Nick Stevens, Stueben; Dan Gala, ISDH. David Ortel, ISDH, was facilitator.

## Goal of pilot project: assess training forms, methods

A national workgroup under The Conference for Food Protection (CFP) has just completed a “pilot project” to test forms developed to assess training new food inspectors, and one Indiana health department took part.

The Howard Co. Health Dept. was among 27

state and local health departments from around the nation that completed the project co-chaired by Dr. David McSwane, professor in Indiana University’s School of Public and Environmental Affairs, and John Marcello, FDA Retail Food Specialist, Pacific Region, from the Phoenix Resident Post.

The project goal was to develop a nationally-recognized training and

standardization process for food inspectors.

The project evaluated the Assessment of Training Needs (ATN) worksheets that may be used

to assess performance elements of the trainee. The project members then recommended changes to the forms developed by the workgroup.

The recommended training process includes 25 joint inspections with a trained inspector, completing a series of online food safety courses from the FDA, plus training in many other areas.

“I wanted to be involved to see firsthand whether a small health department could do this with staffing and time constraints,” said Sue Norris, Environmental Coordi-

nator at Howard Co. “Yes, they can - absolutely.”

Other health departments in the project ranged from Maricopa Co. in Arizona to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. “We had to be the smallest,” said Norris.

The recommendations of the group will be presented to the CFP this April.

The improved training process is intended to augment “Standard Two” of FDA’s nine *Voluntary Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards* for local health departments. Dearborn, Howard and LaPorte County Health Departments are currently participating in the Standards program. More information on the Standards program may be found at [www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/ret3toc.html](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/ret3toc.html)

## FDA introduces new Food Protection Plan

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has just introduced a Food Protection Plan addressing both food safety and food defense for domestic and imported products.



The plan is integrated with the Administration's Import Safety Action Plan.

"This Food Protection Plan will implement a strategy of prevention, intervention and response to build safety into every step of the food supply chain," said Michael O. Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services, in a recent press release.

FDA was prompted to increase food safety efforts following several significant food product recalls during the past year. *Clostridium Botulinum* was identified in several of the recalled food products.

The core elements of the plan include "prevention" designed to build in safety from the start, "intervention" with a focus on intervention when risks are identified, and "response," meant to assure a rapid and appropriate response, if warranted.

Recent incidents of contaminated food and animal feed have

highlighted the importance of a strong food protection system, according to FDA. Rising food imports, increasing consumption of convenience foods, and new foodborne pathogens, are among the challenges Americans face.

FDA says it wants to move toward a food safety and defense system that is more proactive and strategic, with a greater emphasis on prevention.

For this plan to be fully effective, FDA believes it will need the help of Congress in order to protect citizens from foodborne illness.

## Regular cleaning will help keep cockroaches out

Cockroaches could be anywhere they find food, water, and dark places to hide.

The German cockroach, the most common species found in food prep kitchens in the U.S. has a life span of just under five months, and one female can produce up to 35,000 offspring.

Their ability to reproduce so rapidly, plus the fact that they can transmit disease, are main reasons they need to be controlled when first spotted, according to Lee Green, Entomologist for the Indiana State Department of Health.

Green says take away what the pests are looking for and you will keep them at bay.

In a life span of under five months, a female can produce up to 35,000 offspring.

Since roaches don't like light, food establishment operators don't always realize there is a problem until it is too late. When roaches are seen in daylight, it can mean hiding places are full.

The presence of roaches can be easily determined by placing glue boards along baseboards and behind equipment.

Inspect the boards in the morning. The presence of one or two bugs is probably not a serious threat, but five to 20, or more, indicates a serious problem.

Using a professional exterminator is the best way to eliminate roaches. A pest control operator

will target the problem with the right chemicals that are approved for food establishment use.

But the establishment must be cleaned on a regular schedule. Take trash and garbage out. Remove greasy residue from around fryers. Remove empty boxes to eliminate hiding places and inspect incoming deliveries.



The German cockroach is commonly found in food establishments. Proper cleaning helps keep them out.

## Illness reporting - no time to relax (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

Inspectors need to ask questions like these examples:

*Does this facility have an illness reporting policy? Is it in writing? May I review it?*

*What are the reportable symptoms that require that a food employee must not work with food?*

*What are the five reportable illnesses that require a food employee be excluded?*

If the person in charge is unable to answer satisfactorily, look upon this as an opportunity for education, not just to cite violations. (Although

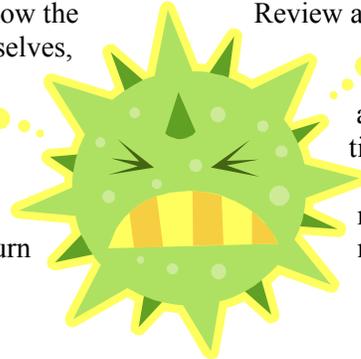
not giving the correct responses would be critical violations.) Don't accept the answer that many managers give that "if they're sick, we send them home." That's not enough to satisfy code compliance.

Inspectors must know the proper responses themselves, including when a food employee must be "excluded" from the establishment, and under what conditions that employee may return to work.

Ask the questions

during each inspection until managers can give the correct responses. Stress to managers that communication with employees must happen daily, not just during an occasional staff meeting.

Review and become familiar with Sections 120 to 127. Asking about illness prevention must be a natural part of all regular retail food establishment inspections.



## Hammond Health Department forced to close

After 118 years, the Hammond Health Department in Hammond ceased providing services to Hammond city residents, as of January 7th, eliminating 16 employees.

At the urging of Hammond Mayor, Thomas McDermott, Jr., the Hammond City Council voted in September to cut the health department budget to zero and to dissolve the health department, despite strong objections by Dr. Rodrigo R. Paneres, Health Officer, as well as many citizens.

This was the third time in as many years that the Mayor had requested the council cut the department's funding, but the first time he got a majority vote from the

city council.

The Lake County Health Department in Crown Point will take over providing services to Hammond. It is anticipated that

Lake County will have to hire additional employees to handle the increased work load. It is unclear how the

Hammond Health Department records will be handled.

The Hammond Board of Health was created by Ordinance on June 10, 1889 to "prevent the introduction and spread of contagious, malignant,

dangerous or infectious disease." Smallpox was a concern and persons were required to be vaccinated. Violations could result in a fine of up to \$10 if convicted.

Other early city ordinances passed prior to 1900 included these examples:

It was unlawful to sell food after exposed to dust or unsanitary conditions that might render food unwholesome or dangerous.

It was unlawful for persons afflicted with a contagious disease to work in or about a grocery store, ice cream parlor, hotel restaurant, eating house, or peddler wagon.

Peddlers had to keep food properly covered.

The penalty was no less than \$5.00 for a conviction.

Field Epidemiologist Donna Allen contributed to this article.

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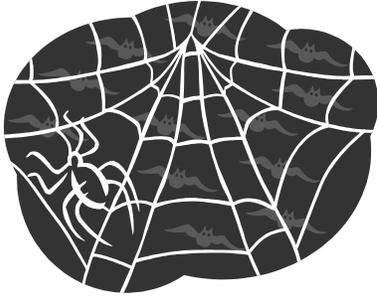


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## Indiana State Department of Health

### FoodBytes

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## Tidbits, Crumbs, and Leftovers

- ◆ Sharon Farrell has joined the Retail Food Program staff at ISDH in the Central Office.
- ◆ Another recall, this time involving canned vegetables, was issued just as this issue of FoodBytes was being produced. Products from New Era Canning Co. with a plant code of 00249 are being recalled and should not be sold or served. Some of the products may not have been adequately cooked. Separate information was provided to local health depts.
- ◆ Mushroom season will soon be here prompting this reminder that wild mushrooms cannot be sold at retail without proof of inspection by a recognized

authority. There are reports each year about mushrooms being sold to stores by customers who then resell them.

This is a critical violation under Sec. 164 of the food code. The retail store needs to show written proof of the source of the wild mushrooms.

- ◆ Don't calibrate a food employees' probe thermometer for them. Have the employee do it with your guid-

ance. This will demonstrate they know how to calibrate it correctly.

Send your questions and comments to the e-mail or postal address on this page.

## Calendar

ISDH Food Safety and Defense Symposium

Fishers, March 11, 12, 13

IEHA Spring Conference

Indianapolis, April, 10