



FoodBytes

Indiana State Department of Health

Diagnosed employees can't work

One of the primary focuses of 410 IAC 7-24 is to reduce the likelihood that certain viral and bacterial agents will be transmitted from infected food workers to food. This is the purpose of Sections 120-123. As an inspector, how do you determine that an establishment is complying with these requirements?

If you're accepting an answer of, "we just send them home," that's not sufficient. Statewide regulators need to have a good idea what answers to expect when operators are asked how they handle ill employees.

In general terms, Section 120 requires an establishment to provide a means for employees to report whenever they have any of the listed diseases, symptoms, or health

related conditions. Section 121 states under what conditions the employee will be *excluded* from the establishment or have their work activities *restricted*. Section 122 explains the conditions under which the employee may return from exclusion or restriction. Section 123 explains that the employee has an obligation to report the information to the establishment using the means provided by the establishment under Section 120.



(Continued on page 5)

What are the reportable diseases?

Any food employee who has a doctor's diagnosis of any of these five illnesses must be excluded from the food establishment.

1. Salmonella spp.
2. Shiga toxin-producing E. coli

3. Shigella spp.
4. Hepatitis A virus
5. Norovirus

Clearance from a medical doctor is necessary for a sick employee to return to work.

See Sec. 120 to 127 for more.

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Inside this issue:

IFTAP looks at food transport problems 2

Task Force promotes partnerships 3

ISDH orientation remains popular 3

"High-touch" surfaces need attention 4

E. coli still plagues operators 4

Enhanced training guide on the way 5

Bits, Bytes, and Blurbs 6

Is the transport of unrefrigerated food a problem?

Following the discovery by several local health departments of unrefrigerated trucks hauling potentially hazardous food, several state agencies decided to seek the answer to this question. How widespread is the problem?

From this question, IFTAP, the Interstate Food Transportation Assessment Project, was born. For two days last September, representatives from the Indiana State Department of Health, officers from the Indiana State Police (ISP) Motor Carrier Division, and in-

spectors from the Board of Animal Health, inspected refrigerated trucks at the three weigh stations in Northwest Indiana.

Counterparts in Illinois, Ohio and Michigan also held similar inspection details. Indiana inspectors were stationed at weigh stations on I-65 near



An Indiana State Police Motor Carrier Division Inspector questions a truck driver about the load he is hauling, and explains the law's requirements.

Photos by Ed Norris



For a load to be legally secure, a sturdy "seal" is attached. The cargo can not be accessed without breaking the seal. If the seal is broken, a new seal must be attached and its number documented.

Lowell, and between Chesterton and Michigan City on I-94.

Of the more than one hundred trucks stopped for inspection, only about 3% had any notable violations, mainly foods being transported above 41° F. Drivers of two trucks found to be hauling potentially

hazardous foods without adequate refrigeration were directed to take the loads to a landfill for disposal.

Trucks were randomly selected for inspection based upon whether they had refrigeration units, or the identifying information on the side.

ISP officers would direct selected trucks from the scales to the back parking area for inspection. Drivers were asked about their routes, destinations, and what food safety education they might have received.

IFTAP: what lessons were learned over two days?

Mark Mattox, a project leader along with Travis Goodman and Dan Miller, say interagency cooperation was improved as a result of the inspection exercise.

It was also noted that during the two days of the project, a third of the trucks carrying food products did not have security locks.

But other lessons were unexpected. Many trucks that may have been hauling food products would "blow by" the weigh station, a violation of state law.

It also was noted that trucks known to carry food to particular types of restaurants were nowhere to be seen and may have been

"warned" about the inspections.

A final lesson learned was that such vehicle food safety inspections should be conducted at locations other than weigh stations, perhaps on secondary roads with ISP officers available to pursue drivers who attempt to avoid a weigh station inspection.

Food Safety Task Force promotes partnerships

On November 29, 2006, the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) Food Protection Program sponsored the Indiana Food Safety and Defense Task Force Meeting in Indianapolis. This Task Force was formed to foster partnerships among industry, academia, and governmental agencies. Task Force meetings further develop and strengthen these partnerships.

The November meeting agenda featured numerous speakers from industry and government discuss-

ing various food safety and defense topics. Their presentations demonstrated that industry is successfully responding to food safety and defense threats as one way of keeping the nation's food supply safe.

One objective of the Task Force is to have both a food specialist and a local public health coordinator represented from each public health preparedness district at each meeting. There are still openings for Task Force members

in many of the districts. Please contact one of the ISDH's two Food Defense Program Coordinators for more information about the Task Force meetings. Travis Goodman, 317-233-3081, covers Southern Indiana. For Northern Indiana, George Jones may be reached at 317-234-2982.

The next Task Force meeting will be held March 21, 2007, in Indianapolis.

*Kris Thomas, Retail Food Specialist
Travis Goodman, Food Defense Program
Coordinator*

ISDH Orientation remains popular with locals

Employees of local health departments who are new to the field had an opportunity recently to find out what services are offered by the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) and other agencies to help them do their jobs as well as whom to contact for help.

The orientation, held November 28 through 30, focused on topics ranging from food protection to waste water. Speakers, mostly from ISDH, spoke about the following program areas: Food Protection, Sanitary Engineering, Acute Care, Lead, Board of Animal Health, Indoor Air and Radiological Health, Communicable Disease, Vector Control and Food Defense. There was also a speaker from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

Natalie Stoops served as moderator.



First Row: Shelley Dodd, Elkhart Co.; Jennifer Asbury, Montgomery Co.; Natalie Stoops, ISDH; April Reeves, Brown Co.

Second Row: Michelle Couture, Elkhart Co.; Cathy Manuel, DeKalb Co.; Deb Gardner, Fulton Co.; Karen McGlynn, Monroe Co.

Third Row: Morgan Johnson, Hamilton Co.; Traci Hoover, Huntington Co.; Holly Wood, Putnam Co.; L. Geoffrey Stoner, Knox Co.

Fourth Row: Lynette Corp, Montgomery Co.; Shannon Shepherd, Fulton Co.

Fifth Row: W. Bruce Hammer, Kosciusko Co.; Tim Brunner, Scott Co.; Jack Travillian, Floyd Co.; Jason Howard, Wayne Co.; Tony Lavish White Co.

“High-Touch” surfaces deserve special attention

With the recent outbreaks of Norovirus and other highly contagious diseases, it is becoming more important for inspectors to get food establishment operators to focus more attention on effective cleaning practices.

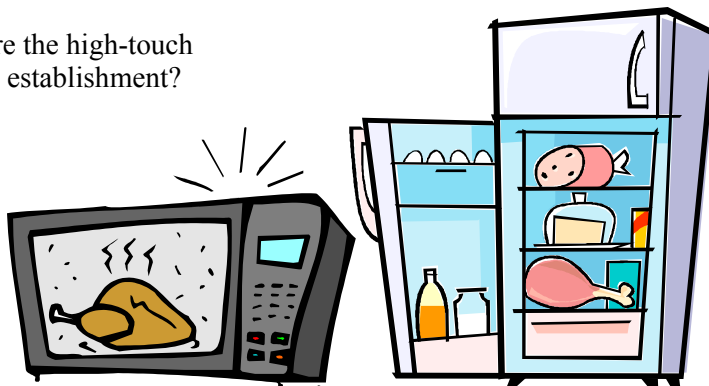
Operators often will focus on cleaning schedules that take care of floors, and make sure employees are wiping down food contact surfaces, like prep tables, but they will overlook many of the “high-touch” areas such as door handles, knobs, and buttons on equipment.

Viruses can remain viable on solid surfaces for days and sometimes weeks. Even surfaces that look clean can be contaminated.

High-touch surfaces may be defined as those areas that are frequently touched by many food employees. Such surfaces should get special attention from managers when establishing cleaning schedules, but often are overlooked altogether. Yet these high-touch spots can allow pathogens to be spread even though the food handler might be wearing gloves.

So, what are the high-touch areas within an establishment?

This is best answered by observing employees in action. What areas do they touch over and over? What do they touch after contacting the high-touch spots?



Handles and buttons on equipment like reach-in coolers and microwaves must be cleaned on a regular schedule to stop the spread of viruses among food employees.

Chances are, an alert inspector will observe these areas to be concerned about: handles on walk-in and reach-in units, buttons on microwaves, handles and knobs on foodservice equipment. One of the most likely contaminated pieces of “equipment” in the establishment, and the most overlooked, is the telephone. Chances are telephones are never included on the cleaning schedule, but they should be.

Cleaning these areas once a day is probably not enough. They

should be wiped down with sanitizing solution at four-hour intervals, or less. Operators should follow the same cleaning and sanitizing guidelines as for any other equipment.

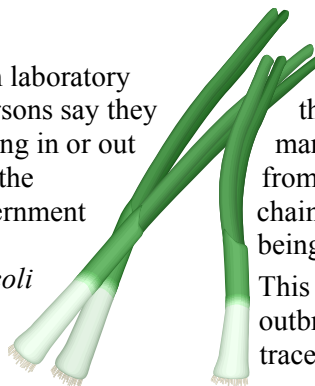
Pathogens, like Norovirus, are spread by people who transmit the virus to food and to other persons. It is also spread by an employee contacting surfaces that have been touched by an infected food handler. Cleaning and sanitizing all high-touch surfaces can help assure that an outbreak does not occur.

E. coli a problem for food operators and inspectors

First it was spinach. Now it may be green onions or lettuce that is the vehicle causing *E. coli* outbreaks in several states.

At least two Mexican food chains have dealt with illness outbreaks blamed on *E. coli*. Some restaurants decided to temporarily suspend the use of green onions

based upon their own laboratory tests. FDA spokespersons say they have not ruled anything in or out and are testing all of the chains’ foods in government labs. Lettuce is now thought to be the *E. coli* carrier, and not the onions.



Because of the nature of the outbreaks covering many stores in several states from more than one restaurant chain, the source of supply is being closely investigated. This comes on the heels of an outbreak of *E. coli* that was traced to raw spinach.

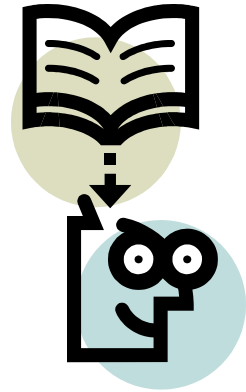
Enhanced training guidance for field staffed readied

Two Retail Food Protection Program field staffers saw a need and have found a way to fill it.

Retail Food Specialists Lisa Harrison and Kris Thomas knew that there was no organized program for providing training to new health department inspectors. The two noted that there was no one source that had all the basic information that an inspector should know to do the job effectively. Last year, they set out to change that, little realizing what a huge task it

would turn out to be.

Once completed, information ranging from all the applicable laws, to food establishment inspection techniques, will be arranged into one or two large reference binders. As ISDH Retail Food field staff train new inspectors, they will be able to notate the trainee's progress and be sure that all important information is covered.



The training guidance can be used at any pace for which both trainer and trainee are comfortable.

With nearly all the needed information in one place, it is much more likely that new inspector training will be complete.

Your retail food specialist has more information on the new training program.

Diagnosed employees must be excluded

(Continued from page 1)

Although the food rule does not require a written policy, it is highly recommended that establishments with more than one or two employees have an illness policy in writing. An establishment with just one or a couple of employees can meet the requirement with what might be called a "word-of-mouth" policy, but each person must know all of the five reportable diseases, their symptoms and conditions, plus what to do about them.



A written policy should explain who to contact if employees have any of the diseases, symptoms, or listed conditions. Ideally, it should explain what will happen to the ill employee and what must happen

It is highly recommended that establishments with more than one or two employees have an illness policy in writing.

before they return to work. There should be some common repetition of the policy, not just brief one-time training when employees are hired. A regular annual or biannual in-service type training stressing the policy, or a posting of the policy, in general terms, on a wall or announcement board will assure that all employees know what to do in the event illness occurs, so the public is protected.

Dan Miller, Retail Food Specialist

Ask the right questions

Below are some of the questions to ask the "person in charge" (PIC) that must be part of an inspector's routine. They can be asked at any time during the inspection.

1. "Do you have an illness-reporting policy?"
2. "Is this policy in writing?"
3. "What are some of the symptoms to look for that might indicate an employee is ill?"
4. "Do you know the five reportable diseases that require an employee be excluded?"

If the PIC cannot name all five, then this becomes an opportunity for education.



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[www.in.gov/isdh/
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Bits, Bytes, and Blurbs

Send your questions to the e-mail or postal address above.

- ◆ **Indiana law requires that milk sold to the public be pasteurized but the label doesn't have to state "pasteurized." The plant number and "Grade A" do have to be on the label. If it's not milk from cows then the mammal that produced it must be named.**
- ◆ **Retail food establishments that get their potable water from a private source (a well) must have the water tested quarterly to assure the water is safe. Inspectors should ask to see the water lab reports. Don't assume that an establishment is served by a public utility. It is not uncommon to find a business with a private**

well but have public sewage disposal, especially in small towns.

- ◆ **A retail food establishment that has a certified person on staff may have only completed part of the requirement. That person must also have the authority to oversee food safety and to correct problems. This is one reason that it makes sense for at least one manager to be certified. A certified employee may not be comfortable placed in this**

position, or be allowed by management to perform an oversight function.

Calendar

Food Safety & Defense Task Force
March 21 in Indianapolis

IEHA Spring Conference
April 12 in Indianapolis