



FoodBytes

Indiana State Department of Health

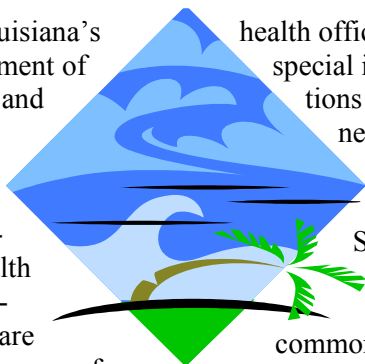
Hurricanes' catastrophic concerns

First Katrina, then Rita. People recognize the wind and flood damage caused by major hurricanes, but unseen problems are literally just below the surface and they're not what many people fear.

There may be no power, no refrigeration, no potable water, and no proper sewage disposal. Flooding problems have been especially acute in New Orleans, leaving flood waters teeming with microbes from waste.

Louisiana's Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Public Health says illnesses are going to come from the pathogens already present.

Typically, hurricanes do not cause diseases like Cholera and Typhoid as they're not common in the gulf states area, so these diseases are not expected. Therefore,



health officials say, special immunizations are not needed.

The American Society for Microbiology says common infectious disease problems in New Orleans in the coming weeks are likely to be skin and soft-tissue infections, most likely from cuts, abrasions and wounds.

They say the primary culprits will be *Staphylococcus* and

(Continued on page 2)

Proper hygiene most important

The American Society for Microbiology (ASM) says to prevent risk of infection, people should practice basic hygiene, frequently washing their hands with soap and clean

water or disinfecting hands with an alcohol-based hand cleaner. Individuals should not eat food that has been exposed to flood waters or that has not been kept cold.

ASM also says persons affected by flooding should drink only bottled water until health authorities have declared municipal water to be safe.

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Inside this issue:

Allergen labeling changes	2
Food symposium planned	3
Cider guidance offered	3
Food security improving at state fair	4
When is chili too chilly?	5
Franchise using time as a control	5
Bits, Bytes, and Blurbs	6

Allergen labeling changes should help consumers

It is estimated that 8% of children and up to 2% of adults have allergies or sensitivities to foods. The FDA identifies eight allergens that are responsible for 90% of food allergies. The 'Big Eight' includes: wheat, milk, eggs, soy, peanuts, tree nuts, fish and shellfish.

FALCPA will require the use of an allergen's common or plain name either in or near the ingredient listing.

In 2004, Congress passed the Food Allergen Labeling & Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA) designed to inform consumers about allergens.

For consumers who buy foods for allergic persons, understanding all of the ingredients and their source may be daunting. This Act will require the use of the allergen's common or plain name either as part of the ingredient listing (usually in parentheses after the ingredient) or in the immediate vicinity of the listing. For ingredients

listed as spices or flavorings, any allergenic components must still be listed. The allergen may be listed in bold, qualified by such words as 'Contains' or listed under a heading titled "Allergenic Ingredients" to draw the consumer's attention. This goes into effect for all products manufactured after January 1, 2006 requiring an ingredient statement.

An example would be ingredients like casein, sodium caseinate, lactose, and whey. These are all milk derivatives, so the ingredient list must include the word "milk." Each allergenic component need only be listed once, even if it is found in more than one ingredient. Fish, shellfish and nuts must list the species; like flounder, seabass, shrimp, walnuts or almonds.

For additional information about food allergies visit these websites: "www.cfsan.fda.gov/list.html" (without the quotes) and select 'Food Allergens.' Or go to www.foodallergy.org.

Simply put, the plain word (milk, egg, soy, etc) has to be listed

somewhere in or near the ingredient list. Consumers who are purchasing foods and need to avoid allergens will now know exactly what allergens are in the product because of the labeling.

Teens are most likely to suffer a fatal allergic reaction. They're more independent from their caretakers and less likely to draw attention to themselves over an allergy. For prepared foods, this labeling in theory could help because they can read an ingredient list and easily see if they shouldn't eat it.

Julie Puterbaugh, Wholesale Food Specialist

The way inspectors look at labeling during a retail inspection hasn't changed. Until the food code labeling requirements are amended, Section 146 remains in effect as stated.

Remember, too, that the labeling requirements apply to food packaged on site. Foods improperly labeled from a commercial manufacturer would probably be a wholesale issue.

Hurricanes' concerns (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

Streptococcus bacteria, both of which can generally be treated with available antibiotics. Diseases caused by consumption of contaminated food or water as well as diseases caused by mosquitoes or other insect bites are also a threat.

There is the increased threat of

Vibrio vulnificus from tainted gulf waters where shellfish are harvested. *Vibrio* naturally occurs in gulf waters.

Another concern is gastrointestinal illnesses from the contaminated flood waters. *E. Coli* will be common in flood waters contaminated with sewage.



Food symposium agenda planned, slated for March

One of the most popular training sessions offered by the Food Protection Program at the Indiana State Department of Health in the past has been the Food Symposium. The last event was truly “standing room only.”

The planned agenda for the next conference, completed with input from local health department inspectors, will focus on a variety of topics including the latest retail food establishment

inspection techniques.

The new Certification requirements will also be discussed.

The symposium is scheduled for March 7, 8, and 9, and will be held in a new location - the Wayne Township Fire Department Training Facility on Indianapolis' west side.

More information, including how to register, plus the complete agenda, will be mailed to local health depart-

ments around the start of next year.

This training will help meet the continuing education requirements for Standardization or professional examinations like the Certified Food Safety Professional (CFSP).



ISDH offers guide to safe apple cider production

Apple cider is popular especially during the fall when apples are ripe and available for cider processing. Apple cider processors are considered Retail Food Establishments by definition of the Food Code, and therefore those requirements apply to assure a safe and quality beverage.



“It is important to remember that apple cider is a high risk food and should be a high priority within your inspection program,” said Scott Gilliam, Food Program Manager. “It should not be considered low risk, such as honey or maple syrup processing.”

Because of the food safety risks associated with cider, the Food Protection Program has pre-

“Remember that apple cider is a high risk food and should be a high priority with your inspection program.”

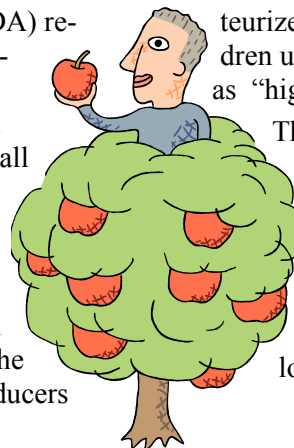
pared a guide for small apple processors. This guide spells out the risks connected with apple cider and also shows ways it can be produced safely.

To reduce the potential for serious illnesses, the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) requires apple cider processors to provide a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan for all wholesale juice and apple cider as of January 20, 2004. The HACCP plan must demonstrate a 5-log pathogen reduction (99.999%) treatment of the juice or cider. Retail producers

of juice or cider are exempt from the HACCP regulation but are required to have a warning statement as part of the labeling. This means extra care must be taken if the cider is not correctly pasteurized. If these requirements are not clear to a cider producer, this is probably an indication that more operator training is needed.

Orchards that provide tours to elementary school children should be cautioned not to serve unpasteurized juice to them as children under age 9 are defined as “highly susceptible.”

The guide is based upon FDA's Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) and Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and has been made available to all local health departments.



State fair food security, safety awareness, improving

Security at the Indiana State Fair has improved. Food Defense Specialists Mark Mattox and Travis Goodman both say that some of the food security problems observed last year have been corrected.

Mattox adds, "One of the greatest concerns noted at the 2004 State Fair was the delivery of foodstuffs to unmanned booths and stands. At times, morning food deliveries were left at food stands unattended until an owner or employee arrived to put it away." In some cases, this was hours later.

This practice carried potential food security and food safety risks. Not only was the food vulnerable to sabotage, but also possibly to spoilage.

For the second year, ISDH food security coordinators worked along with food safety inspectors at the Indiana State Fair. "The food



Keeping food products under lock precludes the possibility of tampering. A security guard monitors the storage area.

security mission this year was to conduct a follow-up to last year's assessment," said Scott Gilliam, Food Protection Program Manager.

Gilliam added, "The assessments are followed by recommendations that, if implemented, may eliminate or reduce opportunities for deliberate food contamination."

Another area of concern revealed last year, according to Mattox, was unsecured food storage at food stands during non-business hours. Freezers and coolers containing food items were left unlocked at night after closing and were easily accessible. Freezers containing bagged ice were also left unsecured overnight.

To increase awareness, food security was incorporated into the pre-fair food vendor training required by the State Fair. The training focused on observations made during the 2004 State Fair and included recommendations for improvement.

Food inspectors from the Food Protection Program of the Indiana State Department of Health inspected nearly 200 food vendors, including those providing "samples" to consumers.

Increased food security should be a consideration at all of Indiana's local fairs and festivals.

Mark Mattox contributed to this story

Plan now for 2006 events

Questions still come from local health department inspectors about how to handle temporary events. One answer is planning.

Most major events have an organizer or "event coordinator." Contact that person to let them know what the health department's requirements are for selling food in

a given jurisdiction.

Set a deadline for applications and stick to it. Let the coordinators know the deadline, and ask that they provide a list of vendors they expect to come. Inspectors should *never* be in the position of having to handle paperwork or collect fees in the field during any event.

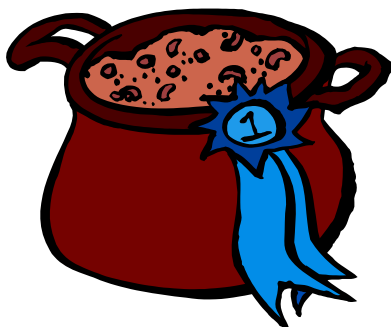
Not sure what events are coming? Check with your Chamber of Commerce, or scan the local media for events where food vendors will be present.

Take the first steps; don't wait for them to come to you.



When is chili too chilly? Putting the heat in reheat

A major fast food restaurant chain offers chili as part of its menu. The product uses cooked burger meat not previously sold as a main ingredient.



But as trained inspectors know, this type of “complex” food process offers opportunities for food safety problems unless proper controls are in place.

In the case of one particular restaurant, a local health department inspector found that the left-over hamburger meat from one day was being stored in the walk-in cooler until needed for the chili.

The inspector observed that the temperature of the chili was averaging only around 140° F. following a re-heating process that took

more than two hours.

Part of the problem, the inspector found, was that the restaurant was calling this a “new” food product rather than a reheated food as per Sec. 188 of the food code.

The right interpretation of this section is that if an ingredient of the “new” food product has been cooked and cooled on site, the food must be reheated to 165° F. before being hot held for service.

Cooling the cooked hamburger would also need to be monitored.

Franchise using time as a control for new offering

What can an operator do when your potentially hazardous chicken pieces are too small to be held hot enough without affecting quality? Use “time” as a control.

When a leading fast food restaurant introduced its new slender chicken strips several months ago, the company developed a HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) plan to assure the product was safe.

But several sharp-eyed local food inspectors questioned the fact that the product was held for a period of time at room temperature and wanted to cite this as a temperature violation. And without proof to the contrary, they were right to cite this violation.

So representatives from the restaurant chain approached Scott Gilliam, Food Protection Program Manager, and requested an interpretation. The company supplied

Sec. 193 does allow time as a control, an alternative when controlling temperature is not practical or desirable.

its HACCP plan and procedures for handling the product safely. The plan outlined a two minute cook step in a deep fryer, draining, then called for the chicken to be held at room temperature up to one hour. It would then be discarded if not served. The chicken strips would be re-heated for 25 seconds prior to serving.

Sec. 193 of 410 IAC 7-24 does allow time as a control, when controlling temperature is not practical or desirable (i.e. for quality reasons). This section also calls for the food to be clearly marked to indicate a time for discarding not to exceed four hours, and that food be thrown out if not served within that time. The procedure exceeded



this requirement by discarding within one hour.

However, Sec. 193 also says the written procedure “shall be approved by the regulatory authority prior to use,” and maintained in the local establishment.

The company wants approval of its plan from ISDH so as not to have to seek approval in Indiana’s 94 local health jurisdictions. If, or when, such approval is granted, local inspectors will be sent a copy of this approval.



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We're on the web!

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Bits, Bytes, and Blurbs

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

- ◆ **The Pulaski Co. Health Dept. has reason to be proud. Bailey Hoover, daughter of Food Environmental Health Specialist, Holly Hoover, was chosen Queen at this year's Indiana State Fair. Bailey is beginning her first year at St. Joseph's College in Rensselaer.**
- ◆ **The state of Maryland is the only state that has no state parks.**
- ◆ **Having the right testing equipment is essential to performing a proper inspection. An inspector's tool box should include at least a thermocouple thermometer, a maximum registering thermometer (or heat sensitive tapes) and a**

test kit for testing sanitizing solutions.

- ◆ **Thermometers should be checked regularly for accuracy. Temperature violations should not be cited if they're taken with an inaccurate instrument.**
- ◆ **Did you know? The labeling requirement spelled out in Sec. 146 of the food code applies only to foods packaged in the retail food es-**

tablissement. Food that comes into the establishment without proper labeling is a violation, but the violation has likely occurred at the processor level.

Calendar

Environmental Health Specialist Orientation

November 29, 30, December 1, 2005

ISDH

ISDH Food Symposium

March 7, 8, 9, 2006

Wayne Township Fire Dept. Training Center