



FoodBytes

Indiana State Department of Health

Updated Food Code now in effect

Although anticipated to be effective at the beginning of 2005, the revised food code became effective last November.

“The process moved much quicker than we expected,” said Scott Gilliam, Food Protection Program Manager. “We weren’t quite ready with the inspection forms that will be used with the revised code.”

In the meantime, inspectors have been given instructions on modifying the current inspection form for in-

terim use.

Since two codes cannot exist at the same time, the old 410 IAC 7-20 “died” the same day as the new code took effect. The new code sections must be cited. Inspectors citing the “wrong” code during inspections will bring into question the legitimacy of the inspection.

The Civil Penalties Rule, 410 IAC 7-23, had to be updated to reflect the new code



410 IAC 7-24 became effective November 13, 2004. It replaced 410 IAC 7-20.

section numbers.

Classes are scheduled to help food inspectors learn the changes.

LMS means training available

A new educational tool, Learning Management System (LMS), has been launched to provide training opportunities for health departments in areas concerning

public health and emergency preparedness. Managed by ISDH and Mid America Public Health Training Center, LMS can evaluate competencies and offer

courses to help the learner improve emergency preparedness skills. More information, including registration information, may be found at www.inlms.com.

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Eating your lunch at your desk? Better sanitize it!

Charles P. Gerba, PhD, likes to study germs. Recently the University of Arizona microbiologist undertook the first-of-its-kind study of bacteria in the workplace. The study took place inside offices in four cities: New York, San Francisco, Tampa, and Tuscon, over the course of a typical workweek.

Dr. Gerba hoped to accomplish three objectives: quantify bacteria levels on workplace surface levels, determine the surfaces with the highest levels of contamination, and measure the effectiveness of wiping those surfaces daily with a sanitizing solution.

The areas of study included a mix of cubicles, open spaces, and private offices. Outside traffic such as deliveries, was limited, and workers' normal routines did not include significant use of disinfectants as part of the cleaning procedures.

Participants were divided into two groups and asked to go about their routines and not to alter their normal routines. One group was

given disinfecting wipes and asked to use them; the other group was not given anything or any instruction.

A total of 7,000 samples from various surfaces were taken nationwide from worksites at three different times over the course of the day. Twelve surfaces at each location were screened for total microbial population, which may include *E. coli*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Streptococcus*, *Salmonella*, and *Staphylococcus aureus* (staph).

The top five most germ-contaminated spots were (in order):

1. phone
2. desktop
3. water fountain handle
4. microwave door handle
5. keyboard

Throughout the day, levels of bacteria among non-wipes users increased by as much as 31 percent. Among wipes users, illness-causing microorganisms were reduced 99 percent or more, even in the most contaminated areas.



There are likely more germs on your desk telephone than any other piece of office equipment.

In offices, common areas that are cleaned and disinfected every day have fewer germs and bacteria than most desks. (On average, the area where you rest your hand on the desk has 10 million bacteria.)

The average desktop has more germs than the typical toilet seat, which was found to be one of the least contaminated surfaces in an office. The study, partly funded by the Chlorox Company, found that using disinfecting wipes can reduce the number of germs and bacteria on office surfaces by up to 99.9 percent.

From University of Arizona News release

Certification Rule, in effect January 1, might change

After three years of anticipation, food handler certification went into effect January 1, requiring most food establishments to have a "certified food handler."

But the rule has not been without controversy. Most of the confusion came with regard to not-for-profit Indiana corporations that are

exempt from compliance with food safety requirements if they provide food to the public not more than 30 days each calendar year.

This meant that many food providers exempt from food safety rules were not exempt from the certification requirement. There was also confusion as to why some

potentially hazardous foods were exempted and others were not.

Now it is anticipated that Sen. Tom Weatherwax, (R Logansport) will introduce legislation to exempt Indiana's non-profit organizations from certification. But until that happens, the law is effective as written.

Training sessions to highlight food code changes

Six training sessions are planned at sites around Indiana to educate local health department inspectors about the revisions in the new food code and changes in the inspection form. The training will highlight the structure of the food code, designed to be easier to use.

Sessions are slated for January 13 at ISDH, January 19 in Lafayette, and January 20 in Chesterton. Other training opportunities will be offered on January 25 in Jasper,

January 26 in Scottsburg, and February 1 in Kendallville. Start time for all classes is 9:00 AM and should conclude by 3:30 PM including a meal break.



Two more sessions are planned specifically for ISDH, and the Marion County Health Department.

Besides discussion of the food code updates, there will be demonstration of the FIRMS program and its use in the field by local health departments.

Specific information about training time and location was sent to each local health department via GroupWise at the end of last November. Questions may be directed to your field representative or to the Retail Foods office at ISDH.

Norovirus now most common illness cause in state

More illnesses are caused by the family of noroviruses than any other single agent.

So says Pam Pontones, Field Epidemiologist Director with the Indiana State Department of Health. She says 75 per cent of the reported enteric outbreaks in Indiana are from Norovirus.

Part of the problem, Pontones says, is that it can take as few as 10 viral particles to cause illness.

“That makes the illness highly contagious,” Pontones says.

The answer, Pontones adds, is using good personal hygiene, following proper time - temperature controls, and avoiding cross contamination. Experts disagree as to the temperature required to control Norovirus. Cooking alone may not be enough.

The illness has been associated with outbreaks on cruise ships, but it may not be the cruise ships them-

selves that are at fault, but rather the fact that passengers are often in close proximity to each other. This allows such a highly contagious disease to be easily spread.

As a result of the increase in Norovirus cases, Norovirus have been added to the list of “excludable” illnesses in the revised food code. A diagnosis will be reason enough to exclude a foodhandler from working in a retail food establishment. Pontones



Proper handwashing is one of the best defenses against Norovirus.

says a person can shed the virus for two weeks after symptoms are gone, or even carry Norovirus without being sick, making containment more difficult.

Norovirus can be a tough pathogen to control. Viral particles can remain viable on an inert surface for 4 or 5 days. It can survive freezing and is not killed by quaternary ammonium compounds (quats), although a bleach solution of 50 to 100 ppm normally used in a retail food establishment will control it.

Following the food safety basics will keep Norovirus in check. Practice proper personal hygiene, eliminate bare hand contact with food, and exclude employees who show symptoms.

People can only get sick with Norovirus from human strains. There is no treatment or vaccine, but the illness will usually run its course in a few days.

Better Process Control School well attended

Purdue University's "Better Process Control School" attracted about two dozen attendees to the two-day class held this past November in Plainfield. About half of those attending were from state and local health departments, the remainder from industry.

The course is required for anyone intending to process and sell any acidified or low-acid canned foods to consumers. The intent is to assure that the processor understands the risks involved and knows how to implement methods to manufacture such foods safely.

The featured instructor was Richard Linton, PhD, a member of the faculty in Purdue's Department of Food Science and nationally recognized expert in this field.

Topics covered included microbiology, identifying acidified foods, proper sanitizing procedures, and types of closures for food containers. Students needed to pass eight short quizzes following each section of the course in order to be certified.

Class members received de-

tailed instruction on risks involved with improper canning.

As Dr. Linton explained, canned products create an "anaerobic" condition, meaning that there is no oxygen inside the container.

"If not processed correctly, any botulism spores that may be present could become vegetative and grow," he said.

Botulism toxin is extremely toxic and small doses can be fatal. *Clostridium botulinum* thrives under conditions that have no oxygen. The organism naturally occurs but is controlled by proper processing.

Dr. Linton added, "The possibility of botulism is the main reason for the law requiring operators who want to process any acidified or low-acid canned foods to take a course like this."



Dr. Richard Linton, Professor at Purdue University, explains the process of commercial sterilization to attendees at the recent Better Process Control School. Two dozen people attended, representing industry and regulators.

Also helping with the instruction were Neal Singletary, PhD, Consumer Safety Officer with FDA, who discussed the federal regulations involving acidified and low acid canned food products, and Shirley Vargas, Supervisor of the Wholesale Foods Program at ISDH, who talked about the role ISDH plays in regulating industry.

Thanks in part to Neal Singletary, PhD, FDA

So where are the printed copies of the new code?

In the past, local health department inspectors have come to expect all the printed materials they need to be supplied free of charge. But state budget restraints have forced cutbacks.

"A single printing of the food code might cost \$30,000," said Scott Gilliam, Food Protection Program Manager. "With Indiana's

current budget situation, getting approval for such an expenditure is highly unlikely."

Local health departments will be provided with limited printed copies that can be reproduced, if desired. Gilliam said it would be reasonable to charge a printing fee to operators wanting a copy.

There is a possibility that code

copies may be supplied on a CD in the future for distribution, but that has yet to be approved. Electronic copies can be reproduced more cheaply than printed copies.

The code can also be accessed via the ISDH Food Protection web site found on the back page. This access meets the requirement for operators to have a copy on site.

What would you like on your pizza?

The answer to the question, “What do you want on your pizza?” depends upon where you are in the world.

After choosing cheese, Americans mostly ask for pepperoni (about 252 million pounds’ worth each year), followed by sausage, green peppers, mushrooms, and onions.

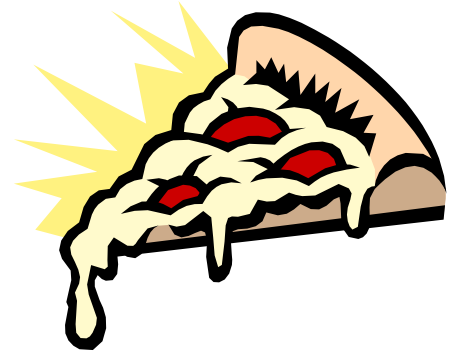
But if you order pizza, say, in Sweden, your toppings might include bananas and curry, artichoke hearts, roast beef, or tuna. Tuna is

said to be very popular.

Should you find yourself ordering a pizza in Russia, expect toppings to include red herring, or mockba (combination of sardines, tuna, mackerel, salmon and onions).

In Japan, you can order Squid and Mayo, Jaga (a mix of mayonnaise, potato, and bacon), or eel on top of your pizza.

Pizza in India? Try topping it with pickled ginger, minced mutton and “paneer” (a form of cottage



cheese), or tandoori chicken.

In England, turkey and cranberry pizzas have been observed at Christmas time.

About anything goes when it comes to pizza toppings, but apparently no one has yet thought to put corn on a pizza.

Via the Internet

EHS Orientation draws attendees from state, locals

The Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) orientation, sponsored by the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) provided new employees of local health departments and health-related agencies of state government an overview of the services ISDH provides.

The orientation, held November 30 and December 1, covered the scope of public health and expectations of environmental health specialists in Indiana’s local health departments.

Topics covered included on-site sewage disposal systems, vector control, communicable diseases, food safety and security, collecting samples, and more.

Those attending were Alicia Brown, Herbert Newman, Amy Pettijohn, Jeff Tempel, Board of Animal Health; Sharon Modglin,



Brown Co.; Milton Rotman, Green Co.; Jeanette Gartner, Hamilton Co.; Devin Brennan, Hendricks Co.; and Andrew Miller, Huntington Co.

Also attending were Linda McClure, Julie Puterbaugh, ISDH; Dian Tollinger, IU; Mindy Wessel, Knox Co.; Elizabeth Yound, Morgan Co.; Steve Walters, Jessie Patrick, Putnam Co.; Wayne

Peace, Ripley Co.; and Irene McCafferty, Switzerland Co.

Rounding out the list were Susan Jones, Theresa Jackson, Sarah Reed, Vigo Co.; Carol Coudret, Vanderburgh Co.; and Sharon Pattee and Lynn Dannacher, Wabash Co.

Natalie Stoops, Retail Food Training Specialist, was the moderator.



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Bits, Bytes, and Blurbs

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

- ◆ **Food Protection Manager**
Scott Gilliam has been honored by the Indiana Environmental Health Association. During the organization's recent educational conference, Gilliam received the "Tim Sullivan Memorial Award" in recognition of his outstanding work in food protection.
- ◆ **People who use antacids or acid-reducing prescription drugs** might be more susceptible to foodborne illnesses. Researchers at a Baltimore hospital have found that when stomach acids that help keep pathogenic bacterial in check are reduced by prescription drugs known as "proton pump

inhibitors, the body's ability to fight off gastrointestinal illnesses is also reduced.

- ◆ **Twelve new definitions** have been added to the new food code along with ten new sections. The rest of the code is either unchanged, or has minor changes. The biggest difference is in the location of the sections. The organization was changed to improve usefulness.

- ◆ **FIRMS is closer than ever** to its roll-out to local health departments, so watch for announcements!

Calendar

Several regional trainings around the state in January covering the food code changes. (See the article elsewhere in this issue.)

IEHA Spring Conference
April 14, 2005 in Greenwood