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Food Defense Fact Sheet for Regulators

What is Food Defense?

Food defense, formerly known as food security, is the means of preventing or eliminating the deliberate contamination of food by biological agents, toxins, chemicals, radiation, or a physical object. Awareness and prevention are the most important aspects of food defense.

Threats to the food supply could occur at any level in the food-supply chain. These attacks are focused on a specific food item, process, company, or business. Attacks may be done by a variety of individuals such as, individuals posing as customers, employees/former employees, vendors, competitors, political ideologists, organized terrorist or activist groups, lone “copycat” individuals, criminals, or anyone with an agenda. The motivations for such attacks vary greatly and include, but are not limited to, financial gain, thrill/challenge, prestige, revenge, publicity, chaos, competitive advantage, or political reasons.

A lack in food defense may have devastating repercussions for a company. Food contamination can result in widespread illnesses or even death of the consumer(s), law proceedings, distrust in the product, company, regulators, and even the industry.

What does the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) do related to Food Defense?

In 2002, ISDH entered into a Public Health Preparedness and Response to Bioterrorism Cooperative Agreement and received bioterrorism funding from the Federal Centers for Disease Control. ISDH conducts food defense vulnerability assessments for Indiana food manufacturers, processors, and distributors. The ISDH Food Protection Program has a Food Defense Program responsible for developing and implementing these assessments to prevent deliberate contamination in the food supply.

The Food Defense Program manages the Indiana Food Safety and Defense Task Force and is constantly working to raise awareness of food defense related issues. The Program will address any questions or concerns and is available to discuss food defense. The Food Defense Program has extensive contacts with Indiana and the United States Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and other local partners who are aware and vigilant of food defense issues and concerns. If you have any questions, contact the ISDH Food Defense Program.

ISDH Food Protection Program website: www.foods.isdh.in.gov.

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