FOOD Review

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A bulletin on Food Safety and Sanitation from Public Health District 4

Ada and Boise County
707 N. Armstrong Pl.
Boise, ID 83704-0825
Tel. (208) 327-7499
Fax (208) 327-8553

Tom Turco - Director
tturco@phd4.state.id.us

Marty Jones - Supervisor
mjones@phd4.state.id.us

Laura Simpson
lsimpson@phd4.state.id.us

Bob Mayer
bmayer@phd4.state.id us

Bud Fulleton
bfulleto@phd4.state.id.us

Carol Johnson
cjohnson@phd4.state.id.us

Deb Carney
dcarney@phd4.state.id.us

Bob Jue
rjue@phd4.state.id.us

Tom Schmalz
Boise County
tschmalz@phd4.state.id.us

Elmore County:
520 E. 8th North
Mtn. Home, ID 83647
Tel. (208) 587-4407
Fax (208) 587-3521

Jerry Davis
jdavis@phd4.state.id.us

Valley County:
703 N. 1st,
McCall, ID 83638
Tel. (208) 634-7194
Fax (208) 634-2174

Jeff Lappin
jlappin@phd4.state.id.us

EQUIPMENT AND UTENSIL SANITIZATION

The most important step after making sure the equipment and utensils are CLEAN is that they are SANITIZED. It seems obvious that working with clean equipment is a necessary part of food safety. Unclean utensils and glassware certainly do not make good impressions on customers. Even though a dish looks clean it may not be a sanitary dish. A plate licked clean by people and pets certainly would not be sanitary and ready for the next user.

Washing dishes and equipment in soapy water and then rinsing off the soap and food particles are important steps. The critical step is then to sanitize in a third sink compartment. Soap and food "neutralize" the sanitizer. An analogy from the swimming pool program is - you are in a pool and wish to get to the other side. Getting there is much easier if the pool is not crowded. Similarly, sanitizer can find germs easier if the food and soap have been removed from the scene.

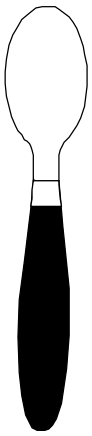
Sanitizing kills the remaining bacteria on dishes and equipment after they have been washed and rinsed. To ensure that sanitization has occurred, proper hot water temperatures or chemical concentrations must be followed. When using chemical sanitizer, more is not necessarily better. The only way to be sure that the correct concentration of sanitizer is being used is with Chlorine, Quaternary ammonium or Iodine test strips. Be sure that the test strips you purchase are suitable for the type of sanitizer you are using.

Sanitizing

Chlorine to a concentration of 100 ppm
(1 1/2 tsp bleach/1gallon water)
Quaternary Ammonium - follow label directions
Iodine - 12.5 to 25 ppm

Wiping Cloths

Chlorine to a concentration of 200 ppm
(1 tbl bleach/1 gallon water)
Quaternary Ammonium to a concentration of 200 ppm
Iodine - 12.5 to 25 ppm



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In This Issue:

Equipment & Utensil Sanitization	1	Managing Your Risk	3
Know The Rules	2	Managing Your Risk cont...	4
Norwalk Virus	3	Class Schedule Reminder	4

continued from page 1...

ULTRA bleach. A recent addition to the chemical marktetplace are "Ultra" bleaches. These are concentrated bleaches which come in smaller containers and may or may not contain perfumes, thickeners, or other additives. ARE THEY OKAY TO USE ?? The label is the law. If the label gives directions for use on dishes and food-contact surfaces in the kitchen, you may use it. If nothing is mentioned about dish sanitizing, then it is not proper to use for dish sanitizing.

Epi. Salmonella Associated with Cantaloupe. The Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control have issued a recommendation that melons be scrubbed with running water prior to slicing. This recommendation resulted from an investigation which revealed Salmonella poona associated with consumption of cantaloupe in the western states. This same scenario has occurred twice before, in 1991 and 2000. As a result of the 1991 outbreak, cut melons were classified as a potentially hazardous food requiring temperature control (refrigeration).

State and local health officials say consumers should wash their hands both before and after preparing foods, and should rinse fruits and vegetables under running water to remove bacteria. Consumers also should promptly refrigerate any unused portions.

People stricken with the bacteria develop symptoms such as fever, abdominal cramps and diarrhea within 3 days of eating contaminated foods. Most people recover within 5 days without medical attention. But for children, the elderly and those with weakened immune systems, the illness can be life-threatening.

KNOW THE RULES.

UNICODE section 400. Employee Responsibility, Knowledge, Health and Hygiene.

This section of the rules requires an employee to notify the employer or person in charge of a food establishment when the employee has reason to suspect that he or she has a disease listed in Section 400.03. That employer or person in charge is then required to immediately notify the health department and obtain guidance on proper actions needed to protect the public health. In the past most of the calls we received were about Hepatitis. However, the rules also cover undiagnosed illnesses when with symptoms of diarrhea and/or vomiting.

If an employee should call in sick, the person in charge should determine what symptoms the employee is having. Many times an employee is contagious and may contaminate food before they have symptoms.

Having a strict handwashing policy and following the no bare hands rules can prevent contamination of food by a contagious, but healthy appearing, employee.

Food Review is sent quarterly, free of charge to all licensed food establishments in our health district. We hope to include news of interest and importance. Topic ideas or articles written by the readers are welcome to be sent to: Editor, Food Review, CDHD, 707 N. Armstrong Pl., Boise, ID 83704. Extra copies of the newsletter are available at your local Health Department office.

Norwalk Virus : #1 Cause of Foodborne Illness.

Foods at risk of being contaminated with Norwalk Virus are fresh products, including frozen raw products and ready-to-eat foods (salads, sandwiches). Very low virus doses can infect someone. They may be spread via the air. Viruses are shed in stools before symtoms begin. Humans were thought to be the only reservoir but related viruses in pigs and cattle indicate the possibility for interspecies transmission. **Facts:** Norwalk and Norwalk-like viruses are resistant to acids in the stomach and a chlorine solution up to 10 ppm. They survive well on surfaces.

MANAGING YOUR RISK

Jeff Lappin, EHS

As food establishment operators, you are well aware of the changes in the food industry over the last few years. The *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreaks that made national news in the 1990's are just one example of the change and the growing risk that food establishments face in their everyday operation. This "emerging pathogen" causes severe illness and death for the "at risk" population. In this case the "at risk" population is young children, the elderly, and people whose immune systems are not as strong as in a normal healthy adult. There is a growing population of such people in the community who you will be serving in your establishment. To ignore the risk of causing food poisoning is inviting disaster for you and your customers. The question then is how can you manage your operation to protect your customers and minimize your risk.

First, it is important to understand what are high-risk activities. According to The Idaho Food Safety and Sanitation Manual, the main causes of food poisoning are improper holding time/temperature, poor personal hygiene, improper cooking, contaminated equipment, and food from unsafe sources. Together these account for 90% of all food-borne illnesses. If you can assure that steps in food preparation are being done in a safe manner then you have significantly lowered your risk. A recent FDA study, however, found very poor compliance in food establishments in these areas. They concluded that a different approach to food safety is needed.

To help meet that goal, this health district among other things has condensed a two day FDA class down to a three to four hour class to help operators develop a risk control plan that is customized for their establishment. During the class we examined the flow of food through the establishment and explored the risk at each step and discussed measures to control that risk. For instance, cooling a large batch of soup is a high-risk activity. When it is cooled from 140 to 70 degrees in 2 hours and then from 70 to 45 degrees in four hours or less, the risk is minimized. The question is, "Are you attaining that cooling rate every time the soup is cooled down?" To assure that every batch of soup is safe, the management should implement a cooling rate procedure.

Operating procedures need to contain some key elements to be effective. After examining the food flow, the high-risk step(s) needs to be identified along with the proper actions to control the risk. In our previous example the risk was soup cooling and the action was cooling as per the food regulations. Can this action be monitored or observed? In our example, we can monitor the temperature with a thermometer. It is critical to include in the procedure what will be monitored, how will it be done, who will do it, and when or how often will it be done. After verifying that the procedure works, staff need to be trained and provided with any necessary equipment such as an accurate thermometer as in our example. We recommend that any measurements be recorded to assure you that the proper steps are being followed

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Central District Health Department
Environmental Health
707 N. Armstrong Pl.
Boise, ID 83704-0825

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continued from page 3...

even when management is not there to supervise the operation. If problems occur, such as improper cooling, it is important to know what action is needed to correct the immediate problem and to keep the problem from occurring in the future. Such corrective actions can be written into the plan.

These standard operating plans are already in use in many franchise type food establishments. They have resources to construct such plans that smaller operations may lack. It is our goal to provide assistance through inspection reviews, training and classroom instruction. We hope all operators will develop procedures and plans that will work for their establishments. Plan development takes time and a commitment on your part and our part to succeed. We hope you will embark on this proven method to reduce the risk of food poisoning in your establishment.

REMINDER:

Training Class Schedules are on the CDHD website: www.cdhd.org., then in the left margin click on classes@cdhd. We can also provide training at your facility, but do charge $60/hour.

check out our website:

www.cdhd.org

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