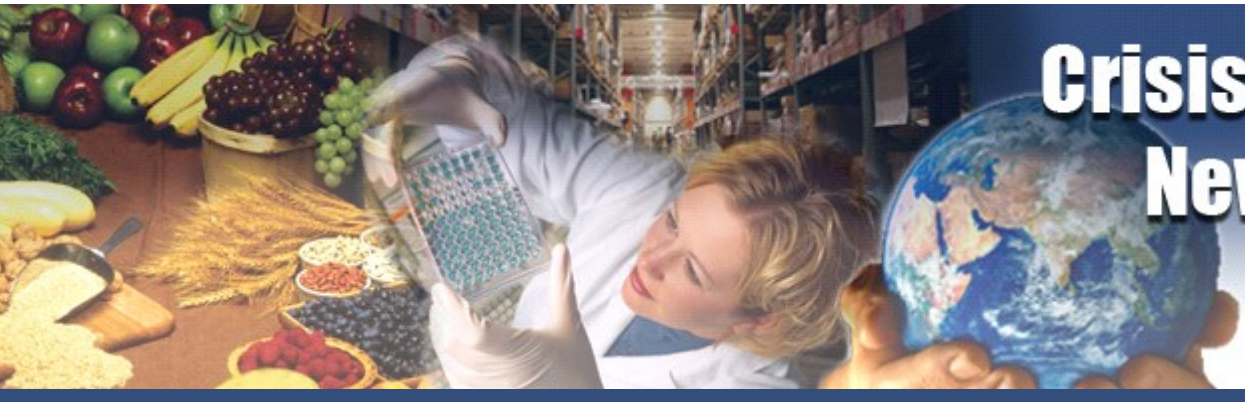


Crisis Control Newsletter

RQA Providing Solutions from Concept to Consumption

Crisis Control Newsletter from RQA, Inc.—A Catlin Preferred Provider to Foodservice, Food Processing and Consumer Products Industries

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Employee Illness in the Food Industry

Fall is in the air and so is cold and flu season. With that in mind, now is a good time to review employee illness policies and how employee illness can be a contributing factor to a foodborne illness outbreak in your facility. Food handlers/workers must be trained upon hiring to report any illnesses they have if the symptoms are sore throat with a fever, vomiting, and diarrhea. When food handlers are experiencing these symptoms they are more likely to contaminate the food and the food contact equipment they are working with.

Once the employee illness has been identified, it is the responsibility of the manager to send the employee home. The employee must not return to work until they are symptom free for at least 24 hours, or they have a note from a medical practitioner. Any food handling employee that has been diagnosed with a foodborne illness caused by Salmonella Typhi, Shigella spp., Shiga toxin-producing E. Coli, Hepatitis A, or Norovirus must be excluded from the facility. The food handling employee may not return to work in the facility until a medical practitioner has determined they can safely return to work.

One of the challenges for the food industry is that those working directly with food do not understand the importance of remaining away from work while ill. Additionally, illnesses among food handlers are not being effectively monitored, and commitment may be lacking to enforce policies regarding ill food handling employees.

One of the pathogens of great concern is Hepatitis A. A food handling employee may become a "carrier" of Hepatitis A. A "carrier" is an individual that has the pathogen in his or her body and they are contagious, but they do not show any signs or symptoms of illness. To complicate matters further, the onset of symptoms for Hepatitis A, are between 15-50 days. That said, if your food handling employee's do not consistently adhere to your companies GMPs on personal hygiene and proper food handling procedures, there is an increased risk of having a recall due to a foodborne pathogen, like Hepatitis A.

Another pathogen of concern is Norovirus. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has indicated that Norovirus is the leading cause of foodborne illness in the United States each year. Norovirus is a very contagious illness that has the ability to infect large numbers of people in a relatively short time. The infective dose to cause illness from Norovirus is between 10-100 particles of one virus. The onset time of illness is generally between 24 and 48 hours, but symptoms have been reported to present in as few as 12 hours after eating/drinking contaminated food. To complicate matters worse, the virus may not be easily destroyed through normal cleaning and sanitizing procedures. Companies need to ensure that the sanitizers they use on food contact equipment are EPA approved and rated for the inactivation of Norovirus. An outbreak of Norovirus in your company has the ability to cripple your work force significantly, which in turn may lead to contamination of product, increased potential for recall events, and reduction of revenue.

Food production and manufacturing companies need to protect their customers, product, and employees from foodborne illness and this can be achieved with a stringent employee illness policy and sound GMPs.

Employee Illness Policy

In order to provide quality food, consumers depend on food manufacturers/distributors to follow safe food handling procedures. It is the responsibility of the business to ensure that food safety procedures are implemented and enforced; this includes an employee illness/sick policy. A few key points for an employee illness policy are outlined below.

Employees should report to their manager or supervisor if they are ill with certain types of symptoms or illnesses. The employee should not work if they have the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Sore Throat
- Jaundice
- Wound or boil that contains pus on exposed skin

Any cuts, burns, boils, sores, skin infections, or iwounds must be covered with a bandage when the employee is working with or around food or food contact surfaces and a glove or finger cot must be worn over the bandage.

If an employee has Jaundice, they should be tested for Hepatitis A. If an employee is diagnosed with Hepatitis A, check with the health department to find out when that employee may return to work. If you notice signs of Jaundice in an employee, make sure you discuss this with them.

Likewise, if diagnosed with a foodborne illness or the following, an employee should not work around food or food equipment:

- All Salmonella species
- All Shigella species
- E.coli 0157:H7
- Hepatitis A
- Entamoeba histolytica
- All Campylobacter species
- Norovirus
- Cryptosporidium
- Giardia
- Yersinia enterocolitica
- Staphylococcus aureus
- Listeria monocytogenes (aka Listeriosis)



An employee illness log should be kept for at 12 months. The information recorded on the Employee Illness Log is confidential and must be kept in a secured area. Only managers should have access to these records.

It is good practice for any food producing/manufacturing company to encourage their staff to adhere to a personal hygiene program and train food handling employees to properly handle food & food contact equipment. Educating the staff on the importance of good health and working without illness will reduce the potential for recall situations and employee absenteeism.

Recall Re-Caps—August 2014

Food and Drug Administration Recalls (www.fda.gov)

Product: Ground Oregano
Incident: Possible Health Risk–*Salmonella*

A Sparks, MD firm is voluntarily recalling .75 oz bottles of ground oregano due to possible contamination with *Salmonella*. The recalled product was shipped from April 4, 2014 to August 5, 2014 nationwide and internationally to Aruba, Bahamas, Bermuda, Indonesia, Jamaica, Netherlands, Puerto Rico, Singapore, Thailand and Virgin Islands. The potential for risk was brought to the firm's attention by FDA during routine testing. The recall affected 1,032 cases that were shipped of the affected date codes. So far, no illnesses have been reported to date in connection with this problem. The firm has alerted customers and grocery outlets not to consume this product. The firm is advising consumers and retailers to remove the product with the affected dated codes and dispose of the recalled product and its container. Consumers with questions should contact the company directly for instruction on how to receive a replacement or full refund.

Product: Organic Carob Powder
Incident: Possible Health Risk– *Salmonella*

A El Cajon, CA firm is recalling organic carob powder because it has the potential to be contaminated with *Salmonella*. The organic carob powder was distributed nationwide in retail stores and through mail orders. The product comes in 1 lb, 20 lb and 55 lb white poly bags. So far, no illnesses have been reported to date associated with consumption of this product. The potential for contamination was noted after routine testing by the firm's supplier revealed the possibility of *Salmonella*. Production of the recalled product has been suspended while the FDA and the company continue to investigate the source of the problem. Consumers should return the carob powder products to the place of purchase for a refund and contact the company with any questions.

United States Department of Agriculture Recalls (www.usda.gov)

Product: Sausage Product
Incident: Possible Health Risk–*Undeclared Allergen*

A Buffalo, NY establishment is recalling approximately 106,800 pounds of smoked sausage due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen. The product contains soy, a known allergen that is not declared on the label of the product. The 2.5 lb packages of smoked sausage were produced on June 11, June 13, June 19, July 10, July 19 and Aug. 1, 2014. The product was sent to distribution centers for resale as well as retail establishments nationwide. The problem was discovered by the company when they reformulated the product and updated packaging and labeling. The employees at the firm utilized the old formulation containing soy that was not declared on the updated packaging and labels. FSIS has not received any reports of illness or adverse reactions due to consumption of these products. Consumers and media with questions should directly contact the company for more details.

Product: Ground Beef Products
Incident: Possible Health Risk–*E. Coli O157:H7*

A South Weymouth, MA and Newton, MA retailer is recalling approximately 368 pounds of ground beef products produced at both locations because they may be contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7. 125 lbs of ground beef products were produced on June 8, 2014 at the Newton, MA location and 170 lbs of the ground beef products were produced on June 10, 2014. 73 lbs of the ground beef products were produce on June 21, 2014 at the South Weymouth, MA location. FSIS was notified of an investigation of *E. coli* O157:H7 illnesses on June 25, 2014. Working with the MA Dept. of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control, FSIS determined that there is a link between the ground beef purchased and this illness cluster. FSIS is continuing to work with public health partners to determine the source of this outbreak. Media and consumers with questions in regard to the recall should directly contact the company.

Consumer Product Safety Commission Recalls (www.cpsc.gov)

Product: Lighted Night Stands
Incident: Possible Risk-*Burn Hazard*

A High Point, NC importer is recalling approximately 500 lighted night stands manufactured in Vietnam (20 units in Canada). The lighted night stands were sold in three different styles and finishes. They are made of wood, have two drawers, a power strip on the back panel and a 20 watt halogen bulb on the underside of the bottom panel. There are two touch buttons on either side of the side panels which operate the night stand's lamp. The light fixture under the night stand can overheat and scorch carpet, posing a burn hazard. The firm has received three reports of the lighting fixtures overheating and scorching carpets. No injuries have been reported. The night stand's were sold at major furniture stores nationwide and online from March 2013 through April 2014. Consumers should unplug the night stand light from the outlet and contact the company to receive a free repair kit. Consumers should contact the firm for more information.

Product: Smoke Alarms
Incident: Possible Risk-*Failure to Alert Consumers*

An Arden Hills, MN importer and a Mebane, NC importer are recalling approximately 141,000 units of smoke detectors (13,000 units in Canada). The recall involves 33 models of smoke detectors that are hard wired into a security system. The smoker detectors were made for professional installation and used primarily in commercial buildings, schools, hotels, apartments, dormitories and homes as part of the fire alarm system. The radio frequency interference can cause the smoke detectors to fail to alert consumers of a fire. The smoke alarms were manufactured in China and sold at contractors, dealers and installers for use in fire alarm systems from March 2013 to February 2014. Consumers should immediately contact their security or fire system provider to receive free replacement and free installation of new smoke detectors. Consumers should contact the company directly for additional information.

Crisis Control is a newsletter jointly published by RQA, Inc. & Catlin Group.

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