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No Reservations

No Reservations **is a monthly newsletter published by RQA Inc. for the restaurant industry.**

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Food Defense For Restaurants

A good place to start is to ask the question, what is food defense? Food Defense specifically addresses *intentional contamination* of food and food contact surfaces by protecting food from biological, physical, and chemical attacks. Food Safety focuses on preventing *unintentional contamination* of food and food contact surfaces by eliminating or minimizing the growth of bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungi. When you combine both philosophies it equals food protection.

Food defense issues at the retail level is not a new issue. In fact, several incidents have already occurred in the U.S. Here are a few listed below:

- 1984 – A cult headed by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh used cultivated Salmonella bacteria to contaminate restaurant salad bars in Wasco County, Oregon, infecting more than 750 people in the hopes of affecting the outcome of a local election. Thankfully, there were no fatalities.
- 1996 – A former laboratory worker pled guilty to contaminating a tray of doughnuts and muffins with Shigella dysenteriae Type 2. The worker used an unoccupied supervisor's computer to send out an email inviting forty-five other lab workers to enjoy pastries in the employee break room. Twelve of the forty-five workers ate some of the doughnuts and muffins and eventually contracted severe gastrointestinal symptoms. Four employees required hospitalization, but there were no fatalities.
- 2003 – A Michigan supermarket employee was indicted for intentionally contaminating 200 pounds of ground beef with a nicotine-based pesticide. Ninety-two people became ill after eating the ground beef.
- 2005 – A New York McDonald's employee was arrested in a sting operation at the restaurant where a police officer had bitten into a burger filled with shards of glass a few hours earlier. The officer suffered cuts to his mouth and throat.

As you can see from the examples cited above these types of incidents are not specific to international terrorism. In fact there are numerous instances where consumers have intentionally contaminated food looking for a quick settlement from the retail food establishment; finger in chili, condom in French onion soup, razor in burger, hydraulic fluid in orange juice, etc. The vulnerability of retail food service to conscious contamination is well documented. In 2009, for example, G. R. Dalziel, a researcher at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, examined all known incidents of intentional and malicious contamination of foodstuffs along the entire food supply chain in that area. Almost 98 percent of the intentional food contamination incidents he studied, "occur downstream in the food supply chain – at retail outlets, the home, and workplace." In addition, he determined that cases occurring at the food service point of the supply chain led to the greatest number of illnesses and had the largest impact on public health.

Potential attackers must have access to the food for a sufficient time and be able to commit the crime without being discovered. Typical attackers may be disgruntled employees, consumers, criminals, protestors, subversives, and/or terrorists.

Continued:

There are several reasons why people intentionally contaminate food. They may be to spread fear and panic, or to cause financial loss to an employer, or mentally unstable persons operating impulsively. This is why restaurants and food service facilities need to develop their own Food Defense Program.I

To get started each facility must complete a restaurant risk assessment, develop a control plan, develop an incident response plan and perform training for the staff. Creating checklists while you conduct your assessment will aid you in identifying the restaurant's vulnerability. Here are eight different risk factors that may impact your ability to prevent intentional food contamination.

- Access to the kitchen
- Loitering
- Building Security
- Food deliveries
- Self-service
- Manager training
- Employee Training
- Contaminated Food

After you have completed your restaurant risk assessment, you may develop a risk control plan for any risk you identified. Because your restaurant is different from other restaurants and your employees are different from other facilities you will need to design a plan that is specific for your establishment. The risk control plan should list your identified risks and the company policy and procedure required for each risk when it occurs.

Your facility should have procedures in place (incident response plan) to respond to an intentional food contamination incident. Employee training, knowing who to contact in an emergency, and how to protect your customers and staff will help avoid confusion during an intentional food contamination incident. Depending on where the suspect has been and what food may have been affected by tampering, you may need to close portions of the operation or the entire restaurant. Create and hang an "Emergency Response" poster, which has all applicable phone numbers, in a visible location in your kitchen, so that staff can refer to it during an emergency.

To sum up, when you incorporate food defense and food safety into your facility you will provide food protection.

Sources: http://www.domesticpreparedness.com/
http://www.fda.gov/food defense

Pub Style Restaurant, Winona , MN. October 2014

Minnesota health officials said Wednesday that an outbreak of Norovirus in Winona County has sickened approximately 30 people during the past 10 days.

Doug Schultz of the Minnesota Department of Health said that illnesses probably began around Sept. 23, although the department learned about them on Sept. 30.

He said the illness, which causes vomiting and diarrhea, was confirmed in people who ate at the pub-style restaurant. The restaurant owner has voluntarily closed the business to thoroughly clean everything.

"We have been in 100 percent full cooperation with the health department," The owner told the local press.
Schultz advised people to wash their hands frequently, stay at home if they're sick, and wait 24 hours after symptoms subside before returning to work or school.

He noted there are about 40 outbreaks of foodborne illness in Minnesota each year and that approximately 60 percent of them are Norovirus, especially in the fall and winter.

http://www.foodsafetynews.com

Diner, Pittsburgh, PA. October 2014

The facility was ordered to close as part of Nuisance Bar Task force raid. The facility was operating without a health permit. The restaurant lacked water at the three compartment kitchen and basement hand-washing sinks. Several potentially hazardous foods were measured at unsafe temperatures. Several utensils were observed being washed in food preparation sink. The gas hot water tank had no flue, and the bar lacked handwashing sinks. The facility will remain closed until approval to re-open is granted by the health department.

http://www.achd.net

Deli Restaurant, Sharpsburgh, PA. October 2014

The local health department performed a routine health inspection at the deli. The facility was ordered to close today for lack of (any) functioning refrigeration and food found at unsafe temperatures. The routine inspection also uncovered that the dishwasher not sanitizing. Two other moderate risk violations were documented as well. The facility must remain closed until a follow-up inspection is performed, and the health department has given the facility a passing score.

http://www.achd.net

Food Deliveries & Supplies Store, McKees Rocks, PA. October 2014

The subject facility has a significant mouse infestation, birds, and contaminated product. This facility had previously been issued a Consumer Alert in July 2014.

http://www.achd.net

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