Globalization

What does globalization mean in the food safety context? Consider the connections between feed and food; the positive impact of safe drinking water; the sharing of data and information across the world.

In this issue, we think you’ll find valuable data, websites and insights that you can use as you practice food safety in your home, business and community. We’ve included norovirus outbreak data, an update on Minnesota’s cooperative process of rule revision, a video celebrating the Clean Water Act, training resources, and more.

Sarah and the PWDU team
**Training Events**

**FD215 Managing Retail Food Safety**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) course FD215 Managing Retail Food Safety will be held in St. Paul at the Freeman Building on February 3 through 5, 2015.

This course is designed to allow participants from regulatory agencies an opportunity to explore the various ways that risk-based inspections can be applied in retail and food service establishments. Topics will include the "process approach" to HACCP, applications of HACCP principles in routine inspection work, and assessing active managerial control of risk factors by operators through a HACCP system or other established food safety systems.

While the process approach is new to many regulators, it is better designed for use in retail and food service settings than traditional HACCP approaches because it eliminates lengthy flow charting and hazard analysis for every type of food product.

**Objectives**

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- Identify possible hazards associated with retail and food service operations and the control measures available to prevent, reduce, or eliminate the risks of these hazards.
- Apply the "process approach" of HACCP to routine inspections of retail and food service operations.
- Identify appropriate techniques and methods for applying HACCP principles to inspections and offering intervention strategies for controlling risks to operators (those with and without HACCP plans).

**Prerequisites**

Prerequisites for the course are knowledge of HACCP concepts and to read the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods HACCP Principles and Application Guidelines which can be found at [www.fda.gov/ Food/GuidanceRegulation/HACCP/ucm2006801.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ Food/GuidanceRegulation/HACCP/ucm2006801.htm).

**Registration**

Class size is limited. Registration details, including number of seats available and registration procedure, will be sent to supervisors at each delegated agency. If you have any questions, please contact Angie Cyr at angie.cyr@state.mn.us or 651-201-4843.

**FSP Videoconferences**

The Food Safety Partnership (FSP) is a consortium of environmental health professionals, industry partners, and other stakeholders, founded in 2001. FSP members work together to protect public health in the area of food safety.

The next FSP videoconference will be held from 10:15 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday February 11, 2015.

You’ll want to make sure to attend at one of the many sites throughout the state, or stream the presentation to learn valuable information about retail HACCP plan validation and verification.

Registered Environmental Health Specialists/Registered Sanitarians (REHS/RS) can receive continuing education credit by preregistering for Course ID# 1054862 in MN.TRAIN. Certificates will be available online for preregistered participants who sign in or stream.

For registration details or site information, contact Jennifer Rief at 651-201-5408, jennifer.rief@state.mn.us.

**FSP+ Videoconferences**

Food Safety Partnership Plus (FSP+) videoconferences are opportunities for the regulatory community, industry and consumers to meet and learn about current issues impacting various environmental health issues.

Three FSP+ events are planned for 2015. Watch for details in future issues and by viewing the PWDU training calendar at [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/pwdu/training.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/pwdu/training.html).

**Regulators’ Breakfast**

The purpose of the Regulators’ Breakfast is to establish a forum that will contribute to statewide uniformity and consistency among regulatory staff and management (local agency and MDH) in the interpretation and application of statutes, rules and procedures. This event is for regulatory agencies. Contact Sarah Leach for more information sarah.leach@state.mn.us, 651-201-4509.
Food Safety Classroom Training

Minnesota Department of Health, Food, Pools, and Lodging Services Section (MDH FPLS) has developed and provides Food Safety Classroom Training sessions on a regular basis to inspection and management staff from MDH and local delegated health agencies. This training is provided to advance knowledge, encourage standard procedures and promote uniformity between inspection staff. It is considered “Core” training, so continuing education contact hours are not being offered.

Dates and topics covered include:

- Wednesday, January 14, 2015 — Current Minnesota food code (chapters 1 through 3)
- Thursday, January 15, 2015 — Current Minnesota food code (chapters 3 and 4)
- Friday, January 16, 2015 — Current Minnesota food code (chapters 5 through 8)
- Monday, February 23, 2015 — Equipment Usage (including hands-on equipment learning lab), Communication, Basic Report Writing
- Tuesday, February 24, 2015 — Risk Based Inspections
- Wednesday, February 25, 2015 — Risk Based Inspections

Over the six days of classroom training, we build upon the learning. The last day we take what has been learned and in teams, document a complex flow chart, identify hazards and CCPs, determine applicable Minnesota food code rules, practice demonstration of knowledge in relation to the food identified in the flow chart and write a risk control plan using the examples provided.

All training takes place at the MDH Freeman Office Building in St. Paul.

Contact Jim Topie (james.topie@state.mn.us; 218-302-6154) for information.

South Central Public Health Partnership

The South Central Public Health Partnership is an ongoing collaboration with the vision of a prepared public health workforce able to perform the essential public health services and respond to natural disasters, infectious disease outbreaks, bioterrorism, and other public health emergencies.

Public health practitioners and academics in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi collaborate to provide training opportunities tailored to the unique needs of the region through onsite courses, Web-based courses, satellite broadcasts, conferences, and joint training activities. All training programs developed and delivered by the South Central Partnership are available free of charge.

For more information, go to www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/eLearn/EPHOC.htm.

Environmental Public Health Online Courses (EPHOC)

The EPHOC training program has been developed specifically for you - the most important frontline environmental health professional. This program will not only give you the knowledge and application of the basic subjects needed in your environmental health practice, but also expose you to the broader field, as well as introduce some of the newest concepts that will shape the future of how environmental health will be protecting our communities and our world.

EPHOC training programs are designed for:

- New hire environmental public health professional and in-service refresher training.
- Individuals preparing for a state or national credential exam.
- Environmental health and related-discipline students.
- Environmental public health professionals wanting to improve their technical knowledge or receive continuing education hours.

Online courses currently available from the South Central Public Health Partnership include:

- Facing Fear: Crisis Communication and Disaster Behavioral Health
- Risk Communication in Public Health Emergencies
- Focused Strategic Thinking
**EHS-Net Restaurant Food Cooling Practices Study**

Improper food cooling practices are a significant cause of foodborne illness, yet little is known about restaurant food cooling practices. The objective of this study was to collect descriptive data on food cooling practices in restaurants.

Specifically, the study assesses the frequency with which restaurants meet U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommendations aimed at reducing pathogen proliferation during food cooling.

EHS-Net members in California, Connecticut, New York, Georgia, Iowa, Minnesota, Oregon, Rhode Island and Tennessee interviewed kitchen managers and observed food cooling practices in 420 restaurants and found that inadequate cooling policies and practices were common. Eighty-six percent of managers described cooling processes that did not include all FDA-recommended components (e.g., testing and verification). Also, many restaurants did not follow FDA recommendations about specific cooling methods (e.g., 39% of cooling foods were not cooled in shallow pans and 34% of cooling foods were not ventilated).


To read the study findings in plain language, or to download findings and recommendations from this project in fact sheet format, go to: [www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/ehsnet/plain_language/how-restaurants-cool-food.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/ehsnet/plain_language/how-restaurants-cool-food.htm).

**Minnesota Food Code Cooling Requirements**

Minnesota food establishment operators can improve food safety by educating and training foodworkers.

Managers and employees who conduct or monitor cooling of potentially hazardous foods need to know food code requirements and how to cool using tested and proven cooling methods.

Cool potentially hazardous foods from 140°F to 70°F within two hours, and from 70°F to 41°F within the next four hours. The faster foods pass through the “temperature danger zone,” the better.

Use a properly calibrated thermometer to check temperatures during cooling. Record times and temperatures to ensure proper corrective actions are taken, as needed.

Here are some tested and proven cooling methods:

- Divide foods into smaller portions and put into shallow (less than three inch deep) containers.
- Loosely cover foods during cooling to allow steam to escape.
- Leave space around food containers to allow good air flow. Wait until foods have cooled to 41°F or below before stacking pans.

Safe food is good business. You can download and print English and Spanish language versions of the MDH fact sheet, Cooling Potentially Hazardous Foods, at [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/fs/cooling.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/fs/cooling.html).

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**EHS-Net is a collaborative forum of environmental health specialists whose mission is to improve environmental health practice. These specialists collaborate with epidemiologists and laboratorians to identify and prevent environmental factors contributing to foodborne and waterborne illness outbreaks.**

**Dave Reimann and Nicole Koktavy represent Minnesota on the EHS-Net food team. Trisha Robinson and Carol Kephart represent Minnesota on the EHS-Net water team.**
Norovirus hitting hard this season in Minnesota, with numerous outbreaks reported

As if colds, influenza and other respiratory infections weren’t enough to make Minnesotans ill in winter, this is also the time of year when digestive tract illness caused by a family of germs known as noroviruses tend to increase. This year, norovirus seems to be hitting the state especially hard.

Approximately 40 outbreaks of norovirus illness were reported to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) in November and December. The outbreaks occurred in a variety of settings, including restaurants, schools, nursing homes, and private gatherings.

Noroviruses are the most common cause of food-related illness in Minnesota (see Figure 1) and reported cases peak during the winter months. Symptoms of a norovirus infection can include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, headache, body aches, a general run-down feeling, and a mild fever. People typically become ill 24 to 48 hours after exposure to the virus, and symptoms usually last anywhere from one to three days.

Although people commonly refer to norovirus illness as “stomach flu,” the illness is not the same as influenza. Influenza is primarily a respiratory illness, characterized by symptoms like high fever, body aches, sneezing, a runny nose or a sore throat.

When people think of “stomach flu,” they often don’t appreciate that they could have gotten their illness from food or that they could pass the virus to others through food. Prevention of norovirus infections is simple in principle, officials say. Just practice good personal hygiene and observe appropriate food-handling procedures.

Health officials stress the importance of careful hand washing and refraining from food preparation while ill to prevent the ‘stomach flu’

“People need to remember to wash their hands, thoroughly” said Dr. Kirk Smith, who heads the Foodborne Diseases Unit at MDH. “Wash your hands after using the toilet, before consuming food, and before preparing food for yourself or others. If everybody did that, we could prevent a majority of the illness caused by these viruses.”

Noroviruses are present in the stool and vomit of infected people, Dr. Smith said. They are spread primarily through person-to-person contact, or contamination of food prepared by a person with the illness.

Precautions that can help prevent the spread of noroviruses include:

- Washing your hands after using the toilet.
- Washing your hands before handling food or ice.
- Washing your hands before eating.
- Excusing yourself from food preparation duties if you have possible norovirus symptoms, and for at least a few days after you recover.
- Discarding foods that were handled or prepared by someone with possible norovirus symptoms—unless they will be thoroughly cooked before serving.
- Promptly cleaning and disinfecting any surfaces that become soiled with vomit or diarrhea.

Resources

- Foodworker Illness Awareness Materials: www.health.state.mn.us/foodsafety/dwi/
• An additional measure for those who have more than one bathroom in their home is to have all ill individuals use the same bathroom; those who are well use the others.

“People should also remember that they can continue to spread the virus for up to several days after they get over a norovirus infection,” Dr. Smith emphasized, “so they should refrain from preparing food—commercially or for their own families—for an additional 72 hours after they get well.”

The public can report suspected outbreaks of norovirus illness—or other food-related illnesses—to the MDH Foodborne Illness Hotline at 1-877-FOOD ILL (366-3455). For more information about norovirus, people can call MDH at (651) 201-5414 or 1-877-676-5414 during normal business hours, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The graph below represents confirmed foodborne illness outbreaks in Minnesota from January 1, 2014 through December 10, 2014. Norovirus is the most common foodborne illness in our state, and this year has accounted for more outbreaks than all other foodborne pathogens combined.

### In the News

**Video commemorates the 40th anniversary of the Safe Drinking Water Act**

Organizations are continuing to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act with activities to commemorate the landmark legislation, which was signed into law by President Gerald Ford on December 16, 1974.

The Minnesota Department of Health is continuing to promote a six-minute video on the significance of SDWA in Minnesota and elsewhere. The video features U.S. Representative Betty McCollum and Steve Schneider, general manager of St. Paul Regional Water Services, as well as former Minnesota Governor Al Quie and former U.S. Vice President Walter Mondale, who both represented the state in Congress when the act was passed.

The video is available at: [tinyurl.com/jwr9yjn](http://tinyurl.com/jwr9yjn).

Or, scan this QR code:

![QR Code](http://example.com/qr_code.png)

**University of Minnesota Food Policy Research Center**

The Food Policy Research Center delivers comprehensive, integrated Policy Analyses and Issue Briefs of some of today’s complex food issues. The goal is to inform policymakers, industry representatives, and consumers of the science behind the issues. Each Policy Analysis and Issue Brief involves an interdisciplinary research team comprised of at least one author and several scientific reviewers incorporating economic, environmental, social, health, governmental, and legislative considerations.

A new Issue Brief, focusing on the likelihood of livestock disease resulting from feed contamination with disease-causing agents originating from personnel involved in the feed manufacturing process, was published in December, 2014. Authors are Ong-orn Prasarnphanich, Timothy J. Goldsmith. Some background information is included below.
Issue Brief: The Likelihood of Disease Spread from Humans to Livestock Through Animal Feed Manufacturing

Background

There are two principal segments of the United States (U.S.) animal feed industry: pet food (primarily dog and cat); and livestock feed. A proposed rule from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) aims to improve the safety of animal feed products; this rule is known as the Current Good Manufacturing Practices (CGMPs) and Hazard Analysis and Risk Based Preventive Controls for Food for Animals.

The proposed rule covers five areas to ensure the safety of animal feed:

- Hygienic personnel practices and training
- Facility operations, maintenance, and sanitation
- Equipment and utensil design, use, and maintenance
- Processes and controls
- Warehousing and distribution

One component of the rule is to ensure that animal feed is safe and ill employees will not cause illness or injury to animals receiving the manufactured feed, similar to the existing standard for human food production. Section 507.14(a) of the rule would require that “employees with an illness or open lesion that could reasonably be a source of contamination of animal food report the condition to their supervisor and refrain from performing activities that could result in contamination of animal food.”

World Health Day 2015: Food safety

As our food supply becomes increasingly globalized, the need to strengthen food safety systems in and between all countries is becoming more and more evident. That is why the World Health Organization (WHO) is promoting efforts to improve food safety, from farm to plate (and everywhere in between) on World Health Day, April 7, 2015.

WHO helps countries prevent, detect and respond to foodborne disease outbreaks – in line with the Codex Alimentarius, and collection of international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice covering all the main foods and processes. Together with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), WHO alerts countries to food safety emergencies through an international information network.

Read more about World Health Day at: www.who.int/campaigns/world-health-day/2015/event/en/.

Healthy Swimming Update

Waterborne Illness Website

Have you been wondering what the symptoms are of different waterborne illnesses or what you can do to prevent getting one?

Are you looking for information on the number of waterborne outbreaks in your county or how many outbreaks there have been at pools in Minnesota in the past 10 years?

Visit the new MDH Waterborne Illness website for these answers and more!

www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/waterborne/index.html
Food Code Revision

Minnesota is currently in the process of revising the Minnesota food code, Minnesota Rules, chapter 4626. The rulemaking process involves industry, consumer and regulatory stakeholders from across the state.

A Cooperative Process

During the food code revision process, members of the advisory committee, representatives of regulatory agencies and consumers – both special interest groups and individuals – have weighed in on every imaginable food code topic. We’ve collected a lot of interesting and valuable input, and are moving forward with revisions.

Food code requirements apply to Minnesota food establishments licensed by MDH (e.g., restaurants, coffee shops, schools, food trucks), MDA (e.g., grocery stores, food pantries, bakeries) and delegated agencies.

Staff from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) are still meeting regularly as we progress down the road to a revised Minnesota food code.

Currently, we are finalizing draft language for code sections that include:

- NSF equipment requirements
- Number and types of sinks required
- Certified food protection manager provisions

We are working closely with the Revisor to incorporate changes and new language as it is drafted for all of the rule chapters.

Draft Language Available Online

As they become available, we will post updated draft chapters online. With the 2015 legislative session now underway, the Revisor’s time for our project is more limited. We anticipate that a complete draft will not be available to us until after the end of the 2015 legislative session, in June or July.

You can find current information at the rule revision website (www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/code/2009revision/).

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Linda Prail at either linda.prail@state.mn.us or 651-201-5792.

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