



Protecting, maintaining and improving the health of all Minnesotans

URGENT FOOD SAFETY ALERT TO PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS

November 21, 2006

Dear Licensed Foodservice Establishment,

The Minnesota Department of Health is alerting food service establishments in Minnesota that we are currently experiencing numerous outbreaks caused by norovirus. Norovirus is the most common cause of foodborne disease outbreaks in Minnesota and the rest of the United States (causing an estimated 23 million cases per year).

To prevent the spread of noroviruses, the Minnesota Department of Health strongly suggests that you take the following actions to protect your patrons, your employees, and your business:

- Report any complaints of patron illness to the Minnesota Department of Health Foodborne Illness Hotline by calling 1-877-FOOD ILL (1-877-366-3455).
- Aggressively ask all employees if they are or have been ill with vomiting and/or diarrhea. Symptoms of a norovirus infection can be found on the norovirus fact sheet (<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/norovirus/noro.html>).
- Record all reports of employee illness on your employee illness log and report these illnesses to your health inspector.
- If an employee is sick with vomiting and/or diarrhea, exclude him or her from work until 72 hours after symptoms end because they can continue to shed norovirus in their stool even after they feel better.
- If you know that you have had or currently have ill employees, sanitize all food contact surfaces, equipment, and dishes with a 1,000 PPM chlorine solution (5 capfuls bleach/1 gallon of water).
- Minimize or eliminate any bare hand contact with food – use utensils and gloves.
- Remind employees to be extra mindful about proper handwashing practices.
- Test your dishwashing system to ensure that it is operational and providing the proper sanitization levels and temperatures as required.

In addition, you can refer to materials posted on the Minnesota Department of Health web page at www.health.state.mn.us/foodsafety or call 651-201-5074. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Together we can make a difference in preventing foodborne illness in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colleen Paulus", is written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

Colleen Paulus, Manager
Environmental Health Services
Environmental Health Division
P.O. Box 64975
St. Paul, Minnesota 55164-0975