



URGENT FOOD SAFETY ALERT TO PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS

November 6, 2007

Dear Licensed Food Service Establishment,

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is alerting food service establishments in Minnesota that there are numerous outbreaks occurring due to 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 norovirus, MDH strongly suggests that you take the following actions to protect your patrons, your employees, and your business:

- Report any complaints of patron illness to MDH 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 (<http://www.health.state.mn.us/foodsafety/dwi/decisionguide.html>).
- 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 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 provides the proper sanitization levels and temperatures as required.

In addition, you can refer to materials posted on the MDH web page at www.health.state.mn.us/foodsafety or call 651-201-4500. 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
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