



FoodBytes

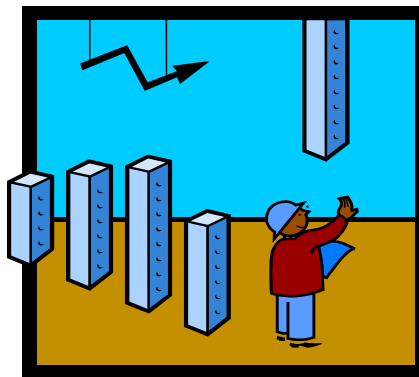
Indiana State Department of Health

Time to raise the bar for inspectors?

A nationwide pilot study is underway that will eventually lead to a higher standard for food establishment inspectors. Volunteer state and local health departments around the country are presently reviewing forms and procedures devised by the Conference for Food Protection.

The training program would meet Standard 2 of FDA's Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards. In theory, the comprehensive program would cover everything a new inspector needs to know to perform the job, including requirements for specific training courses and the number of joint inspections to be completed with a fully qualified trainer.

It is generally agreed that the



level of competence for food establishment inspectors needs to be higher than that of those being inspected. This program is a step toward that objective. A properly trained inspector would be known as a Food Safety Inspection Officer.

The Indiana State Department of Health and the Howard County Health Department are participating in the study.

Training requirements proposed

Training for new "Food Safety Inspection Officers" would be extensive and would include all aspects of the inspector's job. Proper training will include 25 joint inspections with a *Standardized* inspector. The trainer will take the lead for the first inspections, then

the trainee would take the lead on the remaining inspections while the trainer evaluates.

Training would also include proper written and oral communication, sampling techniques and the completion of many FDA courses.

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Vigo Co. Health Department acts on state police tip

Following a routine stop of a food delivery truck recently in Vigo County, Indiana State Police officers suspected something was wrong. A strong odor was emanating from the back of the truck.

Officers detained the truck and contacted the Vigo County Health Department where Environmental Health Specialists, Travella Myers and Theresa Jackson sprang into action.

When they arrived and the truck was opened, they were shocked to find literally thousands of pounds of potentially hazardous foods like raw beef, pork, chicken and eggs plus produce, noodles, and other items. The truck had no functioning refrigeration.

Closer inspection found temperatures of potentially hazardous foods well into the danger zone. The inspectors also noted the walls and floor were quite soiled, and found many flies.



The minimal amount of ice covering raw chicken was not nearly enough to keep the proper temperature. This was part of the contents of a food delivery truck intercepted by Vigo Co. officials that had no refrigeration.

Health department officials felt they had no choice but to order the entire contents of the food to be discarded, and they notified the truck's owner of their intentions.

The inspectors and state police officers escorted the truck to the nearest landfill and observed the food being unloaded and disposed. They reported that more than **three and a half tons** of food were discarded.

The truck was reportedly heading for Asian restaurants in Vincennes.

Meanwhile, inspectors at the Dearborn County Health Department reported that they had a similar experience with an unrefrigerated food delivery truck and had to order the contents discarded.

The shipment of food headed for a Vincennes restaurant was escorted to a landfill when Vigo County officials discovered the truck had no working refrigeration. The perishable foods found included raw chicken, pork, beef and eggs.

Photos courtesy of the Vigo Co. Health Dept.



Despite company's claims, signage not necessary

An Indianapolis company has been contacting Indiana restaurants and telling them they may be subject to a fine of \$2,500 because they don't have the proper signs at their handsinks. But don't worry, the company says, they have just what you need to get you into compliance.

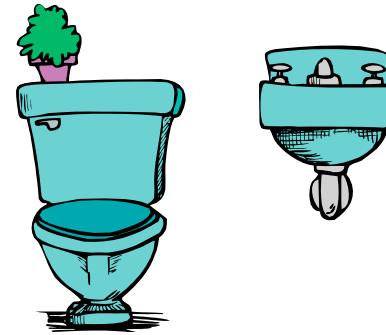
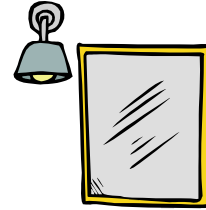
Company sales representatives cite references from FDA's Model Food Code to support their claim but fail to note that the food code in Indiana, 410 IAC 7-24, does not

require such signage. Also, the FDA code is not law unless adopted by each state.

The company has been contacted by the ISDH Food Protection Program and advised they are misquoting Indiana law.

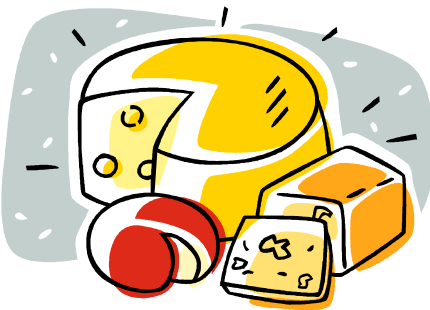
Local health department inspectors should inform establishments in their jurisdictions that they should question any such legal claims made by companies in an effort to sell a product or service.

Signs like this are not required for retail food establishments in Indiana.



Inside Story Headline

For years, inspectors have been advised to look for proper date marking of potentially hazardous food held cold for more than 24 hours. This is addressed in Section 191 of 410 IAC 7-24 and in the FDA Model Code that requires



Because hard cheeses have a lower water activity, they won't require date marking.

food meeting this criteria be marked to show a seven-day consumption date.

The underlying public health reason for doing this was the risk

Some commercially prepared foods may not pose a threat for *Listeria monocytogenes* as previously believed.

of *Listeria monocytogenes* that could grow at refrigeration temperatures. Date marking was the means of controlling this growth.

But new research has shown that some commercially prepared foods previously believed to pose a *Listeria monocytogenes* risk may not present such a hazard after all.

Risk Assessment Conducted

In 2003, the Food and Drug Administration, along with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the US Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service, released their assessments of the risks associated with *Listeria monocytogenes* in various foods. It was determined that some foods

currently covered by Section 191 may be of low risk whereas other foods still represent a high risk.

Exceptions Expanded

Based upon the most recent research, the exceptions to date marking are being expanded. It was learned that deli salads prepared and packaged in a food processing plant contain enough acid, plus preservatives, to prevent *Listeria monocytogenes* growth. Such salads include ham salad, chicken salad, egg salad, potato salad, and various pasta salads. However, any deli salad prepared in the food establishment must still be date marked.

Hard and semi-soft cheeses like Cheddar, Swiss, and Monterey Jack don't need date marking because of several factors that can control the growth of *Listeria monocytogenes*. These include

(Continued on page 4)

Make your own supper, and pay for the privilege!

A food trend that apparently started on the west coast has not only made its way to Indiana, but there are now hundreds of such businesses across the country. Customers can prepare their own food with the ingredients provided by the food establishment operator.

Many of these businesses are franchises that go by such intriguing names as “Super Supper,” “Dream Dinners,” or “My Girl Friend’s Kitchen.”

The concept seems simple enough: The owner/operator provides all the ingredients needed for preparing a particular dish, and the customer makes it. A sampling of various offerings from such businesses show that most menu items would be considered gourmet, not strictly “meat and potatoes.”

The operator will provide the recipe, all ingredients needed to make a particular dish, and the expertise to guide the customer. Typically, a reservation is required so the business can have the necessary ingredients on hand and work stations available.

Why would customers want to pay to make their own food? There are many answers.

Some view it as a group social activity, but more often, it is a way for someone to make a



recipe they might not otherwise find practical either because their own kitchens are limited, or they don’t have the ingredients on hand.

Amy Black, owner of All About Food, soon to open in Kokomo, says it’s also about convenience. She says her customers will be able to make a number of meals at a time that can then be frozen. This, she says, means lower

cost per meal.

But what are the unique food safety concerns for inspectors?

Inspectors should determine food flow and check how the ingredients are provided. Employees should provide pre-measured items rather than customers helping themselves from bulk containers. Food once “served” can not be reserved to another person. It would be especially important to assure that customers don’t help themselves to raw meats.

Any food containing raw or partially cooked meats will need the “safe handling” instructions, according to the Board of Animal Health. Such foods will also need complete preparation directions.

Since customers are preparing their own food, handwashing and gloves can be suggested, but not required.

At some point, says Black, customers need to take responsibility for their food preparation actions.

Date Marking exceptions expanded (continued)

(Continued from page 3)

competing organisms, salt, water activity, and pH.

Cultured dairy products such as yogurt, sour cream, and buttermilk that are commercially manufactured under federal guidelines have been shown not to support the growth of *Listeria monocytogenes*, so these products

don’t need date marking. Meats that have been made shelf-stable are not required to be date marked, but any meat requiring refrigeration falls under the date marking requirement.

It is not the intent of the date marking requirement to extend the life of any product beyond that intended by the manufacturer.

Although most use-by, or sell-by dates are voluntarily set by manufacturers to assure quality, it is possible that the date is based upon safety concerns. Food establishments should be encouraged not to sell out-dated food, because inferior quality could lead to a food safety problem.

Have you checked your expiration date?

Did you know that the paper test strips used to check sanitizer strengths have an expiration date? Depending upon how the strips are stored (exposure to heat, light, humidity), manufacturers usually say that the strips are accurate for three years or so after manufacture. Micro Essential Laboratory, Inc., the maker of Hydrion QT-10 test papers, places a six digit date code (corresponding to day, month,



year) at the top of the label for its quaternary ammonium compound (quats or QAC) test papers. One can easily figure the date old strips should be replaced. A code number of "220106" would translate to "January 22, 2006." Quat test papers with codes of five digits or less are more than three years old and likely should not be used.

The strips are accurate beyond the three year limit if they



have not been mishandled, but manufacturers don't warrant the accuracy of the test papers beyond three years.

Chlorine test papers should also be considered expired after three years of shelf life, but typically there is no date code on these products. Users will need to maintain an accurate dating system especially for strips they may purchase in quantity.

Tales of the soiled ice buckets and moldy machines

Observations by many retail food establishment inspectors make it clear: ice remains the forgotten food. Why do food establishment operators treat ice and ice machines so carelessly?

It's hard to answer that question, but it may be because food service employees regard ice as always clean and safe, since it comes from only water and is not potentially hazardous. But the fact that ice looks "clean" doesn't mean it is safe.

As noted in the last issue of *FoodBytes*, a Florida middle school student's science fair project on the safety of ice in fast food restaurants included lab results that showed *E. Coli* present, and that is a serious problem.

Here are observations made during a recent inspection of a popular fast food restaurant: An employee carried two buckets of ice to the soft drink machine. The

Why not conduct a food flow assessment of ice through the establishment?

buckets were soiled on the outside and on the inside near the rim. The top of the ice bin was removed and one bucket at a time was emptied into the bin. Then the employee used the bucket, then her arm, to spread the ice in the bin. A closer look showed that the ice bin lid was dusty, and there was a black substance growing around the ice chute. Would you suspect the ice might be contaminated?

Properly trained food inspectors know to perform an analysis of the flow of any food of concern through an establishment. Why not do the same for ice?

Trace the steps of the ice from the water inlet and filters to the time it's served to the customer. Don't forget to look at how the ice is transported from ice machines to the bins where the ice will be held

and/or dispensed. Is a shovel used to scoop ice? Where is it stored and how often is it cleaned?

Did ice buckets ever contain another product? Buckets previously used for foods may be okay, if they are in good condition and properly cleaned, but buckets that were ever used to store chemicals must never be used for ice.

Inspectors, ask these questions: How often is the ice machine, bins, and buckets cleaned?

What is the procedure? Who is responsible for making sure it happens?

Inspectors must make ice a priority in inspections until operators learn to pay as much attention to it as they do food temperatures.





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Bits, Bytes, and Blurbs

Send your questions to the e-mail or postal address above.

- ◆ **Inspectors must ask questions to determine control of such areas as illness reporting. But just asking managers questions like, "What symptoms do you look for?" is not really enough. Test operators on their knowledge of the reportable diseases, then educate them if they don't know.**
- ◆ **Here's a word of caution for food establishment inspectors. Don't take action against an establishment solely because a "certified person" is not on staff. This is one violation (marked under Sec. 118) and legally carries no more or no less weight than**

any other single violation. Ask yourself if you would take the same action for any other single violation. The law requires that codes be applied evenly and fairly.

- ◆ **The National Environmental Health Association is considering changing the requirements for taking the Certified Food Safety Professional Examination. If the debated changes occur, there will be two exams, one for the food service industry and the**

other for regulatory professionals. This exam will have specific degree and science hour requirements. It is expected current holders will remain accredited.

Calendar

Oct. 16, 17, 18, 19
NCAFDO Conference
Indianapolis