

FoodBytes

"A newsletter designed to support all Hoosier health department food safety programs."



Indiana State
Department of Health

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Food safety vehicle hits the road

The USDA Food Safety Mobile has a mission to bring food safety to consumers young and old.

Traveling the nation on a multi-state tour, the bus depicts foodborne bacteria being pursued by "food safety messengers" that give a critical look at the steps consumers must take to keep food safe: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill.

The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) decided to use this ingenious "mobile messaging" to get food safety information directly to consumers. Thus far, the mobile has visited many public events like county fairs, grocery stores, pa-

rades, and cooperative extension offices. The 35-foot recreational-style vehicle visited the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and participated in the 500 Festival Pa-

government, state, and local agencies are doing to keep food supplies safe.

The current coast-to-coast tour will continue into next year.



The USDA's Food Safety Mobile tours the country promoting food safety.

rade this past May.

The idea of a mobile messaging vehicle was developed because of the CDC's findings that over 76 million citizens get sick

from food each year, and thousands die. It's expected that millions of Americans will get a close look at food safety and learn the important lesson that foodborne illnesses are preventable if they take proper steps.

Visitors will also learn what the federal

Local health departments play a key role in promoting food safety inside their jurisdictions. Federal and state agencies cannot do it alone. Too often, too little time and manpower are devoted to local food protection programs, or it is assumed that inspections are not needed.

Remember, the food protection program is a core function of every local health department. Regular inspections provide a balance with industry needed to protect public health. Be proactive in developing a viable food inspection program. Your ISDH Retail Food Specialist can help.



Indianapolis area students tour the food safety bus during a stop at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway last May.

Chemical labels define usage

“It is a violation of federal law to use this product in a manner inconsistent with its labeling.”

This statement appears on every toxic chemical product manufactured for sale in the United States. But some food inspectors don't realize that this statement has an impact on their inspections.

When chemicals are found in a retail food establishment, inspectors must read the labels to determine the product's proper usage.

Whenever chemicals are found in a retail food establishment, an inspector should read the labels to determine what the product is, how the manufacturer intends for the product to be used, and if the product is approved for use in a retail food establishment.

Products not approved for use in a retail food establishment should not be present at any time where or when food is being prepared. An exception is that “unapproved” chemicals may be displayed on store shelves intended for retail sales.

Chemical products that are approved for use may only be used as their label instructions indicate.

Take a chemical sanitizer such as “bleach,” for example. If the label doesn't state clearly how to mix the product to achieve a concentration of not greater than 200 ppm Sodium Hypochlorite, then use of the product would likely be a violation of Section 411 and possibly Section 413.

Note that the problem is in the labeling, not the ingredients. Unless the label is clear, it would be unknown whether the manufacturer intended the product to be used on food contact surfaces.

Other chemicals like cleaners may be labeled as approved to use in food services, but when the instructions call for a “rinse” step, this must be followed. Misusing an approved chemical is still a violation of the code.

Inspectors should encourage establishments to use only approved products and to use them correctly. Misuse of chemicals can lead to toxic conditions.

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Calendar

November 18, 19, 20
FDA Workshop
“Managing Retail
Inspection Programs”

March 9, 10, 11 (2004)
2nd ISDH
Food Protection Workshop

Good solution to a “solution” problem

Single tank dish machines automatically add needed chemicals to the water during the wash, rinse, and final rinse cycles. With this type of machine, you can see the water flow through the machine and observe detergent, rinse agent, and sanitizer being added at the appropriate times. But what if the machine fails to perform the sanitizing function?

Then do what this innovative restaurant employee did. When an

inspector discovered that the dish machine was not sanitizing, the employee put sanitizer into a clean, condiment-type squeeze bottle and added two “squirts” to the final rinse. A check by the inspector showed a sanitizing concentration of between 50 and 100 ppm chlorine, right on target.

It was a good remedy to the problem until a repairman could arrive and allowed the inspector to mark the violation corrected.

Are you performing inspections too fast?

One of the most common errors made by experienced inspectors is to assume that a retail food establishment is doing something it isn't. Or *not* doing something it is.

Vital questions to be asked on every inspection concern the menu.

What foods are being served? What foods are prepared from a raw state (as opposed to ready-to-eat)? What foods are ingredients for other foods?

Example: Is the chicken salad made from leftover fried chicken?

A key purpose of the inspection is to determine the flow of foods from beginning to end, and to assure control of each step.

A complete inspection provides a "baseline" for future inspections.

Are you shook up over shake machines?

Equipment used in fast food businesses is becoming more complex. Machines driven by computer chips that can be programmed to perform certain maintenance tasks are replacing simple milk product machines. They also provide a readout of the machine's temperature history.

A prominent example is the new line of Taylor model "shake freezer" machines used in fast food establishments. The unit is designed to monitor temperatures and mix levels, and to perform a daily sanitizing procedure. It is also designed to automatically go to "standby" mode if dairy levels get too low.

The heat treatment step will be of greatest interest to inspectors. Taylor explains this process will allow dairy products to be safely maintained for up to two weeks. At the end of two weeks, the machine

must be completely disassembled and cleaned.

Since it's held greater than 24 hours, would the dairy mix inside the unit be subject to the date marking requirement of the food code?

The answer would be no. The requirements of date marking under Section 174 are: potentially hazardous food, prepared or opened on site, and held refrigerated for more than 24 hours. Because the unit heats the product to 151° F. for thirty minutes once daily, then the date mark is not required. (The mix is not under con-



Photo courtesy Taylor Co.

tinuous refrigeration.)

On such units, there is a digital readout that displays the status of the heat treatment step, such as the temperature reached, and the time. Typically these machines are set to perform this step when the business is closed. By the time staff arrives the next business day, the machine should have reached the proper cold holding temperature.

The readout also provides current product temperature readings in the hopper and freezing cylinder. History of the times and temperatures for the last 13 cycles can be viewed on the display.

Ask an employee to show you the readout. Pressing the wrong buttons could send the machine into a shut down mode. That could require a complete disassembling and cleaning of the machine before it would return to normal operation.

Civil penalties rule set to become law

The new civil penalties rule has cleared another hurdle and is on its way to becoming law.

The Executive Board of ISDH has granted final approval for the Schedule of Civil Penalties Rule, 410 IAC 7-23. The rule has now been sent to the Attorney General's Office for approval and then will go on to the Governor's Office for signature. It should be in ef-

fect by the first of the year.

This rule, developed in close cooperation with the food industry and local health departments, provides a schedule for consistent application of monetary penalties for violations of the Indiana food code.

Local health departments are prohibited from setting their own penalties. This rule offers flexibility with a range of fines.

By the numbers

- 2000
Number of pounds of food the average person eats each year.
- 30
Number of pounds of cheese the average person eats each year.
- 250
Number of eggs consumed by an average person each year.

"Ask Scott"

Q. I have a new thermocouple thermometer that displays the temperature in "tenths" of a degree. Is this accurate?

A. Very likely, the answer is no. Don't assume that the digital readout is as accurate as the digits imply. You must still check every thermometer for accuracy. The old dial type thermometers could be readily adjusted, but not all digital ones. If you read the information that came with the thermometer, it will tell you the amount of error that might be expected. If it is within plus or minus 2 de-

grees F., it meets the requirement of the code for a food thermometer.

Use an "ice bath," (or other accurate source of temperature), and determine how much the reading might be off. Then compensate when you take a temperature reading.

For example, if the ice bath test shows a reading of "34°F."

then every reading may be two degrees high. So adjust the reading accordingly.

Remember the error of all thermometers will vary with the temperature range, and might be different at a high temperature than with the ice bath. Thermocouples can and should be factory recalibrated.

The "tenths" reading will indicate how quickly the temperature is changing and in which direction.


Vital to every foodservice establishment inspection is determining compliance with the five Public Health Interventions. One of these is the no bare hand contact rule. Don't hesitate to mark Sec. 136 when this violation is observed. Insist on compliance.



Tip of the month

Ice bin drains may have an "air gap" or an "air break" in the drain lines. Since there is no back-siphon potential with an ice bin, an "air break" is allowed. With a sink faucet, however, there can only be an air gap because a back siphon potential may exist on the water line.

Send your questions to Scott Gilliam at <food@isdh.state.in.us>, or use the address on page 2.



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