

# FoodBytes



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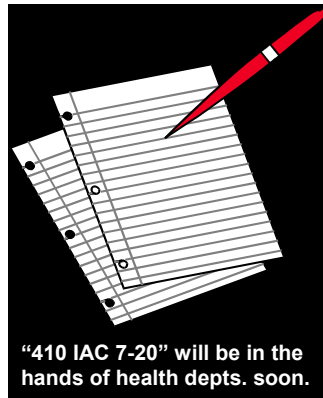
## Long-awaited food code nears reality

The new food code 410 IAC 7-20, Retail Food Establishment Sanitation Requirements, is almost here! The rule promulgation process is a long and arduous task, but having a brand new rule is just around the corner. The rule was finally adopted by the Indiana State Dept. of Health Executive Board in November, 1999, and has now cleared the Attorney General's office.

The final two steps in the process are having the Governor's office sign off, then the official filing by the Secretary of State. The effective date should be this April.

There are many differences from the rules currently in use, and all regulators are advised to proceed slowly with implementation. A strong educational focus is recommended to help the industry grasp and understand the new concepts and their responsibilities. Timely interpretations by ISDH of topics in the rule that may cause confusion will assist local health departments to

use the rule correctly. Stay tuned,....an official announcement will be forthcoming with official effective dates.



### What takes so long? Here are the basic steps to having a new rule.

1. A 'Notice of Intent' to adopt rules published in the Indiana Register.
2. 30 day Comment Period.
3. Write Draft Rule.
4. Internal/External Reviews (optional).
5. Preliminary Adoption by Executive Board.
6. Fiscal Impact Analysis-LSA, State Budget Agency.
7. Proposed rule published in the Indiana Register.
8. Public Hearing.
9. Respond to Comments from Public Hearing.
10. Final Adoption.

11. AG - 45 days for review.
12. Gov. - 15 to 30 days.
13. Filing w/Secretary of State - 3 days.
14. Rule becomes effective 30 days after filing w/Sec. of State.
15. Final rule printed in the Indiana Register.

### New food safety newsletter begins

*Scott Gilliam, MBA*

"FoodBytes" is the new newsletter from ISDH's Food Protection Program. This newsletter will have two purposes. One will be to help you find out more about our program, and secondly to provide insight in dealing with those special problems that you encounter as a regulator of food safety laws.

Our intent is to offer you a newsletter each quarter with a variety of tips, hints, and information to help you protect your citizens when it comes to food safety.

Feel free to send along your comments.

# ISDH Foods mission explained

*Scott Gilliam, MBA*

The Food Protection Program at ISDH is the agency statutorily charged with regulating food establishments in Indiana. Program staff work with the Food & Drug Administration, United States Department of Agriculture and the Centers for Disease Control at the

**There are approximately 25,000 retail food establishments in Indiana. Most are inspected by local health departments.**

federal level, and the 94 local health departments in Indiana to accomplish this goal. The program is responsible for promulgating rules that regulate the food industry. Then local health departments (LHD) adopt these regulations by county ordinance and use them to inspect and regulate the retail food establishments in their counties. There are approximately 25,000 retail food establishments in Indiana with the bulk of these being inspected by the local health departments.

The Food Protection Program is divided into two sections. One section is the **Retail Food Program** that employs ten food scientists. Seven of them are stationed in strategic parts of the state to conduct inspections of food establishments on state property such as the state parks, state hospitals, the Indiana Toll Road, and the Indiana State Fair. The staff also provides training and education for LHD staff, consumers, and industry. The staff can become involved in catastrophic events such as fires, floods, truck wrecks and foodborne illness outbreaks.

The other section is the **Wholesale Food Program**. This section employs six food scientists who regulate wholesale food manufacturers, distributors, and warehouses in the state. The program covers all food other than meat and dairy products, which is regulated by the Indiana Board of Animal Health. There are approximately 820 facilities covered under this program and range from large food processors, such as a large soft drink bottling

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plant, to an apple cider mill that is operated seasonally.

The remaining central office staff is responsible for handling

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## Indiana State Fair crowds are hungry



Indiana's largest rural gathering lasts 12 days and happens in Indiana's largest city, and judging by the statistics, those who participate have appetites to match the occasion.

According to the Indiana State Fair, the nearly 730,000 visitors in 1998 consumed 14,000 pounds of pork chops, 14,285 pounds of hot dogs, 56,000 ribeye steaks, 4,350 pounds of

popcorn, and 37,160 milk shakes.

Also eaten were 7,698 servings of frozen yogurt, 20,000 dips of ice cream, and 3,360 pounds of smoked sausage.

That all contributed to 860 tons of trash hauled away in 12,000 trash bags. And you think *your* festival is large?!

*(from the Logansport Pharos Tribune)*

## Eggseptio nal Germ Fighter



Eggs pasteurized in the shell should be in markets along the East Coast in time for Easter, says a Laconia, NH, company. Davidson's Pasteurized Eggs, introduced recently at the International Poultry Exposition in Atlanta, are put through a series of warm water baths that destroy salmonella bacteria inside the shell without cooking the eggs. They'll be available in markets from New York to Georgia, then will roll across the Southeast, New England and the West Coast. The company is aiming for national distribution by the end of the year. The eggs will cost about 36 cents more per dozen than standard eggs.

*(From USA Today)*

# Is ice the "forgotten" food in your county?

Nearly all food establishments use ice, either from their own ice machines, or operators may use bagged ice. But ice is often one of the most neglected foods. (We say it's a "food" because consumers eat it.) Here are some tips for keeping ice safe that you can share with establishment operators.

◆ **Use only ice from a potable source**

Ice can only be used from a source approved for human consumption. This means bagged ice, or ice made from water from a public utility. If the water is from a private well, the water *must* be tested regularly to assure that it is safe. Ask to see the test results.

◆ **Keep ice machines and ice bins clean**

Many people believe that since ice is made from "clean" water then no action is ever needed to maintain the ice machine or

bin. But every ice machine will accumulate mineral buildup which can harbor bacteria. Use a bleach solution and a scrub brush to clean the ice machine and let air dry. Dispose of any ice in the machine.

Any establishment using an ice bin with a chill plate must remove the plate and thoroughly clean and sanitize the bin frequently.

◆ **Ice buckets: forgotten food containers**

Many food workers carry ice from the ice machine to places like the ice bins of soft drink machines. The ice is transported by way of the "ice bucket". This container should be inspected for cleanliness. Only a clean, sanitized container should be used for ice. A container that has been used for anything else should never be used to hold ice, especially if the bucket once held any toxic substances!

Ice buckets are exposed

to constant handling, often stored on floors, and scraped against the tops of ice bins when being emptied. Remember the plastic material in the bucket is the same color all the way through, so dark marks indicate the bucket is not clean! Ice buckets should be inspected as food contact surfaces.

◆ **Treat ice bags as food containers**

Tell food workers to wipe the outside of ice bags prior to opening and dumping them into ice bins. They must *never* attempt to break up ice by smashing the ice bag on the ground or floor. The ice pieces will puncture the bag and allow the ice to become contaminated.

All ice storage containers should be covered when not being filled. Look at an uncovered ice container the same way you would an uncovered food container.

## Foods mission (continued)

*(Continued from page 2)*  
consumer complaints concerning food product problems, establishment sanitation, and reports of foodborne illness. They respond to questions from industry concerning rule interpretation, business start-ups, engineers and architects, consumers, organizations, and LHD's.

The office staff also develops educational

materials for schools, consumers and industry and evaluates facility construction plans for establishments under our program. Additionally a wide variety of food samples are received by our program and analyzed for different pathogens, such as E. Coli and Listeria, and for foreign material and other adulterants.

The program staff is



extremely dedicated to its work in protecting the public's health from serious consequences of a breakdown in our food safety net. The staff is here to help you in any way that it can.

## *"Ask Scott"*

**Q. I am finding health "alerts" and "warnings" on the Internet from time to time. How reliable is this information?**

A. Although one can obtain sound health-related information via the Internet, much of what you see is nothing more than a hoax. A recent example was the rumor that certain bananas were contaminated with flesh-eating bacteria! There was no truth to this at all. Before trusting what you hear (or read) you should be able to determine if it is from a reliable and verifiable source. Always

contact your field representative or call ISDH for verification of any reports you have doubts about. And please don't spread the hoaxes!

**Q. Can I e-mail people at ISDH?**

A. Yes. And I would encourage you to do so as an alternate means to telephoning. Nearly all counties are using the GroupWise system now.

Simply check the "address book" in GroupWise to find the e-mail addresses you need. Nearly all ISDH employees have an e-mail address and they can also be accessed from another e-mail program outside the system. The only problem with this is that the GroupWise features, such as the one indicating receipt of messages, do not work outside the system.

### **Tip of the month**

During inspections, remind food handlers to sanitize the stems of their probe thermometers just *before* inserting the probe into food. An unsanitized probe could cause contamination of the food being measured. Acceptable sanitizing methods include rinsing in sanitizing solution, or using an alcohol prep and air drying.

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

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