

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
News You Can Use
Conference for Food Protection Executive Board
August 27, 2008

Epi-Ready Course

The Office of Food Safety, in collaboration with the National Environmental Health Association, successfully piloted a live web- and camera-based distance learning system of the Epi-Ready course. This markedly increased the reach of this popular foodborne illness team training course. Over 1400 local and state officials have now attended an Epi-Ready training. The next course is in Canton, MS, August 26-28th with another in Bloomington, IL, in October.

Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response

Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response (CIFOR) is accepting comments until October 15 from the public on the draft Outbreak Guidelines that are available on the www.CIFOR.us website. Additionally, four CIFOR workgroups will hold face-to-face meetings in September with funds from FDA. The CIFOR Industry Workgroup has formed three working subgroups: the Employee Health Task Group, the Recall Task Group, and the Traceability Task Group. New projects will be discussed at the face-to-face meetings.

New Norovirus Contact

The Viral Gastroenteritis Team has recently added Aron J. Hall, DVM, MSPH, Medical Epidemiologist to assist Dr. Marc-Alain Widdowson, who presented the agency report to the 2008 Conference in April, with norovirus investigations. His contact information is the Viral Gastroenteritis Team, CDC/NCIRD/DVD/EB, (404) 639-1869, ajhall@cdc.gov.

EHS-Net

- Max Zarate, PhD, joined us this summer as a full time FTE. Max is an **environmental scientist** and will be working on EHS-Net water and other Branch water research activities. He will be focusing on the impact of wastewater disposal on drinking water and agricultural water for EHS-Net.
- The *Journal for Food Protection* has accepted another newly completed EHS-Net study for publication on the relationships between the results of routine restaurant inspections in Iowa and the presence of a **certified kitchen manager** (CKM). Data for 4,461 restaurants inspected during 2005 to 2006 (8,338 total inspections) and suggests that the presence of a CKM is protective for most types of critical violations, and we identify areas for improving training of CKMs.
- **Current EHS-Net studies** in various stages of data collection and analysis include the:
 - Leafy green handling study in restaurants
 - Ground beef grinding log study in grocery stores
 - Microwave useage study in restaurants
 - Chicken Handling study
 - Ill worker study
- The EHS-Net **tomato handling study** manuscript has been completed and is in the clearance process. We expect its acceptance for publication this year with publication expected some time in 2009. Preliminary information has been posted on the Environmental Health Services Branch website (www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs) and has proven to be one of the most popular documents on the site in recent months.

The objective of the Tomato-Handling Practices Study was to identify the types of tomatoes used in restaurants, describe tomato-handling practices, and to identify factors associated with safer tomato-handling practices. The study results showed that in interviews with managers and observations of tomato preparation indicated that tomato washing, cutting and holding were prevalent in restaurants, and that in the implementation of these practices, opportunities for cross contamination and proliferation of pathogens were common.

- Carol Selman represents EHSB and EHS-Net on the **Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response** (CIFOR). A group representing local, state and federal food safety programs will be meeting in September to discuss foodborne illness complaints received by food safety programs and exploring the establishment of a regional or national foodborne illness complaint system.

Environmental Health Services Branch

Other Environmental Health Service Branch (EHSB) activities related to the Conference for Food Protection members and activities include:

- **Environmental Public Health Leadership Institute** (EPHLI) is now accepting applications for the fifth cohort of fellows until October 31. The application may be found at www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs. EPHLI is a 1-year program of seminars and workshops, special projects, and individual study. Each year, approximately 30 practicing environmental public health professionals are admitted to the program. CDC will pay all allowable and approved costs associated with participation in the institute. Eight previous graduates have specifically chosen state or local food safety issues as their research project and their papers are available online along with all the others that may serve as blueprints for programs struggling with similar issues.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is committed to supporting the adoption and use of National Public Health Performance Standards (NPHPS) as the blueprint for strengthening the infrastructure that supports public health systems. To better assist environmental public health agencies with their own program assessments, complementary comprehensive draft national **Environmental Public Health Performance Standards** (EnvPHPS) based on the *Ten Essential Services of Environmental Public Health* have been developed. The draft program assessment instrument has recently started through the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance process.

The draft national EnvPHPS and an online training program on them are available through www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs. For specific environmental public health programs, like food safety, where standards such as FDA's Draft Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards exist, CDC recommends that they be used to provide even more clarity about the program being examined.

- The very popular training course, **Environmental Health Training in Emergency Response** (EHTER), is going into its next generation of training this week. The comprehensive training program on all aspects of environmental health emergency response is being video-taped again in front of a live audience at CDC to refresh the free online training program that has been in high demand. We are very pleased the CAPT Wendy Fanaselle of FDA/CFSAN could teach the food safety section.
- Two national water safety initiatives that impact food safety at retail are underway at CDC/NCEH/EHSB and the Office of Water Safety. The first is a multi-year project that addresses community '**Boil Water Advisories**'. It will provide a detailed examination of how to improve this commonly occurring public health threat advisory system in working with all partners and consumers. The second project that will include a September workshop involves '**Public Health Response to Drought**'.

- EHSB sponsors a column in each issue of the *Journal of Environmental Health*. The September issue will feature ***The Psychology of Food Safety*** written by our EHS-Net behavioral scientist, Dr. Laura Green.
- **Dr. Frank L. Bryan** was sponsored by the EHSB for a guest lecture this summer on his work as a pioneer in foodborne illness prevention research. His 50-year endeavor which resulted in over 275 publications to improve our investigation of foodborne illness and eliminate the causes lead to the founding of the branch and the EHS-Net applied research program. His interview by *CDC Connects* and his last *Journal of Environmental Health* article may both be found on www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs.

Vessel Sanitation Program

The Vessel Sanitation Program (VSP) highlights include:

- A **new Operations Manual** based on the changes in *Food Code* and other environmental health areas of these massive *cities at sea* is being developed in collaboration with the cruise industry. The program has recently been instrumental in working with the World Health Organization in improving the international *Guide to Ship Sanitation*.
- Eleven **new cruise ships** are being constructed in 2008 in compliance with the VSP Construction Guidelines. This pace of construction is similar to the last large expansion of the fleets and is projected to continue with all of the capacity of the shipyards already booked for at least five years. The average ship size and passenger and crew capacity is however substantially larger than the previous 5-year fleet expansion cycle, and the ship-board amenities offered are even wider.
- Nine **gastrointestinal illness outbreaks** of have been reported to date in 2008. Eight of these outbreaks have been related to norovirus and two, including one of the previous eight, were Enterotoxigenic *E. coli* (ETEC). This number compares to 20 GI outbreaks in 2007 and 34 reported in 2006 out of the over 5,000 embarkations annually and 9 million passengers sailing each year from US ports. VSP must be alerted immediately when 2% of the passengers or crew has GI symptoms and audited reports must be filed at the end of each cruise even if no one has symptoms. Detailed norovirus control guidelines are being developed and will be posted on the VSP website, www.cdc.gov/nceh/vsp.
- VSP's comprehensive **environmental health training program** for cruise ship officers and management staff, as well as corporate staff who support their operations is now available for download from the VSP website. Subjects include:
 - Overview of the Vessel Sanitation Program
 - Food Protection
 - Foodborne Illnesses
 - Microworld
 - Potable Water
 - Cross-Connection Control
 - Waterborne Illnesses
 - Swimming Pools and Whirlpool Spas
 - Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point - (*Not Just for Food*)
 - Housekeeping
 - Environmental Health: Air Systems and Child Activity Centers
 - Equipment and Facilities
 - Integrated Pest Management
 - Outbreak Investigations