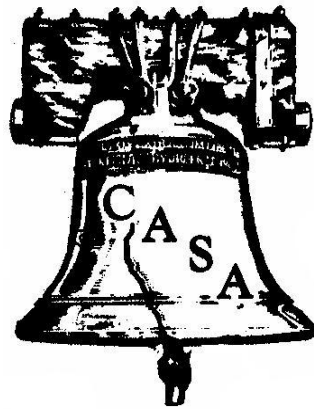


THE BELL RINGER

The Newsletter of the Philadelphia Conference of the Central Atlantic States
Association of Food and Drug Officials

Winter 2010



THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As we prepare for the long winter days ahead, I would like to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you a very Happy Holiday and a Happy New Year in 2011.

It was such a pleasure seeing so many of you at our last Quarterly Training Session! A special thank you to all the speakers who did an excellent job presenting their topics, and to our Education Committee who worked very hard to put together another excellent program!

A special thanks to Gloria Dougherty who has been great asset to our board. Gloria recently retired from the New Jersey Department of Health, and is moving with her husband to enjoy their retirement. We will all miss her smiling face and her can do attitude. Thank You Gloria!

We will continue to collect items for those in need, with more people out work and the Holidays around the corner, we can help even if it is only one can of tuna to make a meal . The following items are requested: Juice, drink mixes, canned tuna, peanut butter & jelly, jello, pudding, paper products, paper towels, toilet paper, tissues, condiments, soap, tooth paste, shampoo, and deodorant.



Sincerely,

Mary Beck
President

The last Issue of the Bell Ringer featured the Reportable Food Registry (RFR or the Registry). This Food and Drug Administration (FDA) electronic portal provides a means to “better protect public health by tracking patterns of food and feed adulteration when there is a reasonable probability that an article of human food or animal food/feed (including pet food) will cause serious adverse health consequences or death to humans or animals.

This issue will focus on inspection related concerns. While in the midst of recalls and foodborne disease outbreaks it is wonderful to get “Good News” about the current state of affairs. The October edition of the **FDA Consumer Health Information** (www.fda.gov/consumer) publication contained an article that reflects positively for all the health regulatory agencies and food industry representatives working hard to provide safe food. This article is provided below.

Ensuring Food Safety: the Cooperative Retail Food Program

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and more than 3,000 state, local, territorial, and tribal agencies work cooperatively to help keep food safe throughout the United States. These agencies regulate more than 1 million retail food establishments ranging from restaurants and grocery stores, to caterers and coffee shops, school and hospital cafeterias, and vending machines and mobile food trucks. They also regulate food facilities at events such as state and county fairs

State, local, territorial, and tribal agencies have the main responsibility for inspecting and licensing food establishments and enforcing regulations. Working closely with these agencies is the National Retail Food Team, which includes FDA food safety experts, trainers, and retail food specialists. FDA’s role in this cooperative effort includes

- developing, interpreting, and promoting the FDA Food Code and related standards
- giving food safety guidance and training to state and local authorities and industry
- identifying research needs to address emerging food safety concerns
- ensuring food safety at national special security events and in disaster areas

The Food Code

The FDA Food Code is a system of rules for retail food establishments to use to ensure that

consumers are served or sold food that is safe to eat. It includes standards for cooking times and temperatures, refrigeration temperatures, and storage requirements for many kinds of foods.

“All the rules we tell the public to follow—washing hands and food preparation surfaces, separating foods to prevent cross-contamination, cooking to proper temperatures, and refrigerating promptly—are in the FDA Food Code for food establishments to follow,” says Kevin Smith, director of FDA’s Retail Food and Cooperative Programs Coordination Staff in College Park, Md.

FDA develops, updates, and promotes the Food Code as a model for state and local agencies to adopt and use in regulating retail food establishments in their jurisdictions. FDA also encourages state, local, and tribal agencies to measure their regulatory programs against voluntary program standards that include inspection issues, response to outbreaks of foodborne illness, and complaints.

“The Food Code represents FDA’s best advice for ensuring a uniform system of regulation among the thousands of federal, state, and local agencies and tribes that are responsible for retail food safety,” says Capt. Cynthia Kunkel, M.P.H., an FDA regional food specialist based in Lenexa, Kan.

Guidance and Training

While state and local agencies have the authority to pass or fail a restaurant after inspection, remove unsafe products from store shelves, and arrest and fine violators, FDA provides the guidance and training they need to protect food in their jurisdictions.

“Training is a big part of the retail food specialist’s job,” says Kunkel. FDA’s two dozen retail food specialists work within five geographic regions covering the entire United States, with each specialist responsible for a group of states in that region.

A key part of the process is a combination of training and “standardization.” Standardization is a field exercise that involves six to eight inspections with a standard and a candidate. If the candidate successfully completes the exercise, he or she becomes certified as an FDA Standardized Food Safety Inspection Officer.

How do you know the food at your local restaurant is safe to eat? Or your neighborhood grocery store?

Or your child's school cafeteria?



At FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition in College Park, Md., agency retail food specialists from around the country become qualified—or "standardized"—by passing a battery of tests on national standards for food safety and sanitation in retail food establishments. After qualifying, these specialists go home to administer the same tests for state officials, who, in turn, test county and local inspectors.

Any retail establishment with a kitchen may be subject to an inspection by a standardized food safety inspection officer. FDA retail food specialist Larry Edwards in Falls Church, Va., tested the officer who works in the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. That food safety inspection officer inspects the many kitchens that serve Congress, its employees, and the millions of people who visit federal buildings.

"Whether the kitchens serve pizza, fast foods, or sit-down dinners for Congress they are all inspected by people standardized (or qualified) by FDA," says Edwards.

Research and Assistance

In addition to training, FDA offers help to state and local agencies. In the summer of 2009, FDA collaborated with the Illinois Department of Public Health to curb an outbreak of hepatitis A. The liver-damaging viral infection can be spread by consuming food or drinks handled by an infected person. In this case, two infected employees at a fast food restaurant in Milan, Ill., handled food served to the public. The infection spread to 34 other people, including 14 who needed to be hospitalized.

Jayne Nosari, a food program manager in the Illinois Department of Public Health, says FDA helped guide the state on hepatitis A control measures during the outbreak and provided a six-step disinfection process designed for hepatitis A virus cleaning and sanitizing. The state and county health departments then worked together to carry out the disinfection, allowing the restaurant to reopen after a three-day closure. FDA experts also identify research needed to address emerging food safety concerns, and they often work cooperatively with other federal agencies to conduct research. For example, FDA is working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to study practices for cooling foods in school cafeterias and to develop educational materials that highlight the most effective methods. "Without rapid cooling, bacteria can grow in foods and cause foodborne illness," says FDA's Smith.

National Special Security Events

FDA is called upon to help ensure that safe food is served at special events held in the United States, such as meetings of world powers, U.S.-based Olympic Games, and inaugural activities. Greg Abel, an FDA retail food specialist in Minneapolis, says FDA specialists routinely work with chefs, cooks, and caterers as enough food to serve thousands of people is prepared, cooked, and cooled. During large political, sports, and other events, FDA specialists collect meals at random and maintain a food "library" that is available for laboratory analysis, if needed. Because of the work done by retail food inspectors at every level, events all over the country from state fairs to sporting events usually come off without a hitch. "I like to think, and I do believe, we contribute to minimizing risk factors for foodborne illness," Abel says.

Find this and other Consumer Updates at www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates
Sign up for free e-mail subscriptions at www.fda.gov/consumer/consumerenews.html

Another positive boost to our food safety efforts were exemplified in the recently released **The FDA Report on the Occurrence of Foodborne Illness Risk Factors in Selected Institutional Foodservice, Restaurant, and Retail Food Store Facility Types (2009)**. This report prepared by the FDA National Retail Food Team published this October serves to provide a national Food Protection Report Card. This report reflects improvement and some great areas for focused efforts. The FDA 2009 report is the third report in a series and presents findings based on data collected in 2008. The FDA the study called for conducting data collection inspections of various types of foodservice and retail food establishments at five-year intervals to observe and document practices and behaviors that relate to the following CDC contributing factor categories associated with foodborne illness outbreaks within foodservice and retail food establishments, herein referred to as foodborne illness risk factors (risk factors):

- Food from Unsafe Sources
- Poor Personal Hygiene
- Inadequate Cooking
- Improper Holding/Time and Temperature

- Contaminated Equipment/Protection from Contamination

The data presented in this 2009 report indicate that two the risks factors significantly reduced in occurrence or otherwise demonstrated significant improvement on how these risk factors are being managed by the food industry. These factors are:

- Food from Unsafe Source
- Inadequate Cooking

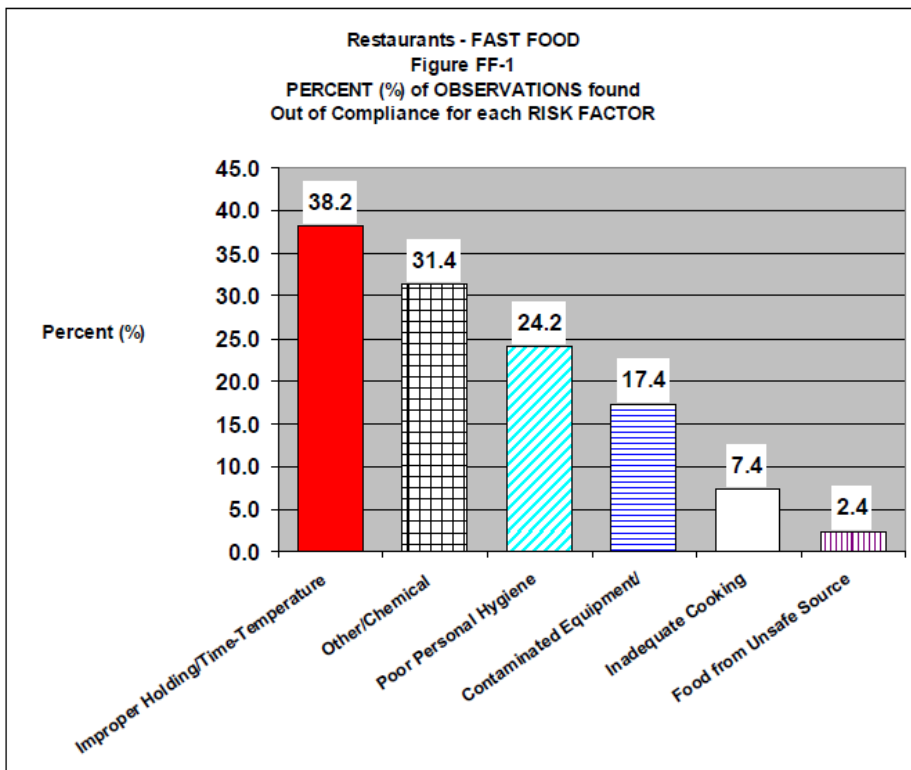
The remaining three risk factors and data items identified as problem areas in the 2000 and 2004 Reports remain in need of priority attention. This indicates that industry and regulatory efforts to promote active managerial control of these risk factors must be enhanced. The Out of Compliance percentages remained high for data items related to the following risk factors:

- Improper Holding/Time and Temperature
- Poor Personal Hygiene
- Contaminated Equipment/Protection from Contamination

These statistics are exemplified in the following figure:

Restaurants – FAST FOOD

A. Percent of observations found Out of Compliance for each RISK FACTOR



Additional Kudos from the FDA Report need to go to the food industry, regulatory agencies and trainers that are demonstrating the value of food safety training. A recent article, 11/08/2010, in the Nation's Restaurant News, <http://nrn.com/article/fda-recommends-site-food-safety-managers-restaurants>, entitled **FDA recommends on-site food safety managers at restaurants - Agency plans to add provision to Food Code**, October 25, 2010 | By [Alan J. Liddle](#) included the quotations,

“In looking at the data, it is quite clear that having a certified food protection manager on the job makes a difference,” said Michael R. Taylor, the FDA’s deputy commissioner for foods. “Some states and localities require certified food protection

managers already, and many in the retail industry employ them voluntarily as a matter of good practice. We think it should become common practice.”

Donald Kraemer, the FDA’s acting deputy director for operations, was also referenced in the article to indicate that the agency plans to add a provision requiring restaurants to employ certified food protection managers to a future edition of the federal “FDA Model Food Code.”

The statistics from the study that initiated these interview statements are represented in Table 32 of the Study.

Table 32

**Impact of Manager Certification on the Overall Percent IN Compliance by Facility Type
(2008 Data Collection Form: Sections 1-16 (42 Data Items)***

Facility Type	Manager Non Certified				Manager Certified				Difference (% IN)
	Total Obs.	# IN	# OUT	% IN	Total Obs.	# IN	# OUT	% IN	
Hospitals	276	211	65	76.4	1610	1317	293	81.8	5.4
Nursing Homes	680	561	119	82.5	1171	967	204	82.6	0.1
Elementary Schools	543	459	84	84.5	983	819	164	83.3	- 1.2
Fast Food Restaurants	667	496	171	74.4	1223	974	249	79.6	5.3
Full Service Restaurants	959	555	404	57.9	1038	731	307	70.4	12.6
Delis	602	386	216	64.1	1279	1009	270	78.9	14.8
Meat and Poultry	498	425	73	85.3	877	791	86	90.2	4.9
Seafood	437	356	81	81.5	905	795	110	87.8	6.4
Produce	409	322	87	78.7	923	792	131	85.8	7.1

* The figures in Table 32 do not include the Supplemental Data Items found in Sections 17-23 of the Data Collection Form (pages 25-26).

NOTE: BOLDED facility types had overall IN Compliance percentages that were significantly higher in establishments with a Certified Food Protection Manager



The International Association of Food Protection (IAFP) has produced a series of food safety and allergy related icons. The icons are free to use

provided appropriate acknowledgement of the IAFP is given. These icons provide visuals that can aid workers in the food industry to identify food hazards and provide reminders of safe food handling practices. This icon for celery is an example of an allergy related icon.

Celery also is another produce item recently associated with foodborne illness outbreak. The contributing risks factors for this outbreak reflect the FDA Report risk factors that still require enhanced efforts to improve food safety.

On October 20, 2010, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) announced that it had determined chopped celery was the source of a Listeria food poisoning outbreak among Texas residents. Texas DSHS had been investigating the source of 10 cases of listeriosis, 5 of which resulted in death, for 8 months when investigators determined that the source of the outbreak was chopped celery sold by Sangar Fresh Cut Produce in San Antonio. Six of the 10 cases have been conclusively linked to consumption of the chopped celery.

Texas DSHS inspectors reported that they found sanitation issues at the plant during the Listeria outbreak investigation and believe the Listeria bacteria found in the chopped celery may have contaminated other food manufactured in the facility. The agency stated in a press release that a condensation leak had been found above the food product area during an inspection.



Wash, Rinse, and Sanitize

Food contact surfaces and utensils must be properly washed, rinsed, and sanitized

Inspectors also found soil on a food preparation table and identified hand washing issues.



No Bare Hand Contact

Do not touch ready-to-eat foods with bare hands

All of these factors could have contributed to the spread of Listeria throughout the food manufacturing plant where celery was chopped and packaged.

An FDA report released Wednesday, 11/3/2010, included 18 observations from inspectors, including failure to take necessary precautions to protect against contamination of food and food contact surfaces; failure to store raw materials in a way that protects against contamination; failure to take apart equipment as necessary to ensure thorough cleaning; and failure to take effective measures to protect finished food from contamination by raw materials and refuse.



Refrigeration/Cold Holding

Cold foods must be held at 41°F (5°C) or below.

Others observations included failure to keep foods that can support rapid growth of "undesirable microorganisms" at a temperature that prevents food from becoming adulterated and failure to provide adequate screening or other protection against pests. The report also stated that the plant is not built in a way that allows floors and walls to be adequately cleaned and kept in good repair.

Listeria monocytogenes organisms are environmentally spread and breed contaminants within the food operation and require focus on basic sanitation and the condition of equipment and surfaces subject to contamination to ensure adequate control.

CASA Membership News

We want to welcome Barbara Kitay as the new FDA Regional Retail Food Specialist. Barbara's email address is Barbara.kitay @fda.hhs.gov. No phone number is available yet as Barbara has not been assigned an office. Barbara has had an extensive food background and has worked for the Maricopa County Health Department in Colorado and is the former food program Director for the State of New Mexico.

Congratulations to:

Mary Beck on her recent promotion as the Director of Food Safety for the Summerwood Corporation.

Upcoming Events:

Annual CASA Conference: May 16 -19, 2011

The Baltimore Conference will be the host this year. Let's plan to support their efforts.

Philadelphia Conference Winter Meeting: December 10, 2010

Newport Fire Company, 2425 New Falls Rd., Levittown, PA

08:00 – 09:00	Registration & FDA Literature Table
09:00 – 10:00	Emergency Response- South Regional Task Force Edward Wurster- Task Force Coordinator Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Task Force
10:00 – 11:00	Web-based Tracking for Emergency Response John Degory- Coordinator Knowledge Center, Inc. Pittsburgh, PA
11:00 – 11:15	Break
11:15 – 12:15	Bed Bugs and Treatments Utilized Robert Baxter- Ecolab Pest Control
12:15 – 1:30	Holiday Lunch
01:30 – 2:00	Food Labeling and How it is Misbranded Virginia Wheatley- Project Specialist New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services
2:00 – 2:30	Topics of Food Safety- Wheel of Fortune Mary Beck – Food Safety Director Summerwood Corporation
2:30 – 3:00	Department of Agriculture Incidences of 2010 Jack Welte- PA Department of Agriculture
3:00- 3:30	Q & A Session

Editor's Note: Share your interests, information and announcements with your fellow professionals. If you take great notes contribute to the Bell Ringer and recount your training or meeting adventures. Please email to: George.Zameska@pastertrianing.com Space is available for advertising in the Bell Ringer. I look forward to your feedback and participation. Enjoy the Holiday Season.