Better Communications, Better Public Health Outcomes

Experiences and Challenges with Outbreak Response and Investigation: A State Health Agency Perspective

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Representing: Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

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About the Association of State & Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)

Formulate and influence sound national public health policy and to assist state health agencies in the development and implementation of programs and policies to promote health and prevent disease.

Vision

- Healthy people thriving in a nation free of preventable illness and injury

Mission

- Transforming public health within states and territories to help members dramatically improve health and wellness
57 State and Territorial Health Agencies vary in:

- Structure
  - Freestanding or Part of umbrella agency
  - Authority over local public health
    - Centralized
    - Decentralized
    - Mixed authority
- Size:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
<th>Number of Agencies</th>
<th>Average Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1500 employees or less</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>$345,721,460</td>
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<tr>
<td>1501 to 3000 employees</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$1,151,535,472</td>
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<tr>
<td>3001 to 4500 employees</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$1,184,831,004</td>
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<td>4501 employees or more</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$2,219,025,041</td>
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</table>

- Program & Functional Responsibilities
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Health Function or Program</th>
<th>Agencies Reporting Full Authority</th>
<th>Agencies Reporting Partial Authority</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Water Regulation</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>81%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Health</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Regulation and Management</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Safety</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Facility Regulation and Inspection</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Health Professional Licensing</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<td>Medicaid</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<td>Medical Errors Reporting</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical Examiner</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Health Laboratories</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>96%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tobacco Prevention and Control</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>98%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse Prevention</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vital Statistics Administration</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIC</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Role of State Health Agencies in Food Safety and Health Protection

- Prevention
- Detection / Surveillance
- Outbreak Response
- Policy Development
  - Statewide
  - Nationally (through national organizations)
Role of State Health Agencies in Food Safety and Health Protection

- Key SHA Offices involved in food safety and food protection activities:
  - Executive Leadership
  - Environmental Health
  - Epidemiology
  - State Public Health Laboratory
Executive Leadership (SHOs)

- SHOs are intimately involved in foodborne illness outbreaks, especially ones that are not limited to a distinct locality and that continually grow. While the specific roles of SHOs during outbreaks may vary from state to state, there are common roles and responsibilities shared by SHOs during a foodborne illness outbreak:
  - Decision-maker
  - Governor Advisor
  - State spokesperson
  - Liaison with federal agencies and states
State Public Health Offices Responsible for Food Safety and Health Protection

- Environmental Health
  - State Environmental Health Programs prevent foodborne illness by ensuring that foods prepared and served by food establishments are safe, unadulterated, and prepared under sanitary conditions.
  - Regulation, Inspection, and/or Licensing
    - Food service establishments
    - Food processors
  - Food Safety Education
State Public Health Offices Responsible for Food Safety and Health Protection

- Epidemiology
  - Surveillance
  - Investigation
  - Interpretation
  - Coordinate intervention necessary to prevent further spread of illness
  - Dissemination of Information
State Public Health Offices Responsible for Food Safety and Health Protection

Laboratory

Public health laboratories screen specimens from patients being treated for suspected foodborne illness. With few exceptions, state and local public health laboratories are the primary facilities responsible for confirming the presence of foodborne microbes and toxins in clinical specimens, and for characterizing these agents in support of epidemiologic investigations.

Association of Public Health Laboratories: “A Recipe For Stronger Food Safety Testing Programs: Findings & Recommendations from the APHL Food Safety Laboratory Capacity Assessment Project”
Responsibilities are often shared across agencies...

Food Protection Activities Shared with other units in SHAs

- Foodborne illness response – 22% of states reported responsibility shared (not in a single unit).

Source: Ensuring Health Communities, ASTHO 2007
Beyond State Public Health: Other State Agencies Responsible for Food Safety and Health Protection

- State Departments of Agriculture
  - State inspectors
  - Agriculture Laboratories

- State Departments of Environmental Quality or Natural Resources
Local Public Health Departments
The Challenge!

Patient consumes contaminated food

Patient goes to hospital/ER

Doctor suspects foodborne pathogen/ sends sample to clinical lab for testing

Clinical lab results initially indicate foodborne illness has occurred.

Local and State Public Health Authorities notified.

If other cases of foodborne illness occur, these are also reported to local and state health departments.

State Health Agency initiates epidemiological investigation.

CDC, FDA, USDA notified of possible outbreak by state health department.

Other state agencies brought into outbreak investigation (i.e. agriculture).

Samples also sent to CDC to conduct additional analysis, including PFGE.

Consumers interviewed to determine what source of outbreak may be.

Contaminated product identified.

USDA/FDA work with manufacturer to recall contaminated product and identify any other possible contaminated product(s).

Recall notice issued by federal government (e.g. USDA, FDA).

General public is notified by federal, state, and local agencies of recall.

State and local agencies work with local retailers and food service providers to remove recalled products.

States conduct after-action report. Results are shared with federal and local agencies involved in investigation.

State Health Agency collects and analyzes additional samples.
Barriers from recent experiences:

- Communication
  - Who knows what, when, and who can do something with it?

- Information flow
  - In all directions, on all levels—who has it? Who needs it?

- Need to strengthen understanding of roles and responsibilities of all actors, public and private.
Enhanced Communications and Collaborations Activities…

- CIFOR
- ASTHO Environmental Health Policy Committee
- ASTHO Food Safety Taskforce
- ASTHO – NACCHO Joint Workshop on improving state-local coordination in foodborne illness outbreak
- USDA Collaboration
- FDA 50 State Meeting / Food Protection Plan
Where do we go from here?

- New, innovative ways to address barriers in foodborne illness prevention and response.
- Continue to increase communication and coordination between and among all federal, state, and local agencies responsible for keeping food safe and protecting against outbreaks.
We still have much work to do...

USDA orders largest beef recall: 143.4 million pounds

By James R. Healey and Julie Schmitt, USA TODAY

The U.S. government on Sunday ordered the largest beef recall in U.S. history — 143.4 million pounds — and said the meat has been used in school lunches and food assistance programs.

The government portrayed the action as precautionary and classified it as a Class II recall, meaning there is little likelihood of illness.

The beef dates to cattle slaughtered two years ago, starting Feb. 1, 2008, at Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing, based in Chino, Calif. The USDA said it believes most already has been eaten. It will remove the rest from inventories.

LATEST: USDA will step up inspections at slaughterhouses

COMPANY REACTION: Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing website

"We don't know exactly where all the product went" but will "cast a wide net to make sure that we can find all the product that we can," Ken Petersen at the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service said in a conference call with reporters Sunday.

FIND MORE STORIES IN: United States | California | Congress | Democrats | McDonald | Humane Society | Burger King | General Accounting Office | San Bernardino County | House Education | San Diego-based | China | Labor Committee | Inspection Service | Food Safety | Hairpin | Infra-based | Jack-in-the-box | In-N-Out | Westland/Hallmark | Class II | Lowest

Listeria Risk Spurs Meat, Poultry Recall

Gourmet Boutique Recalls More Than 286,000 Pounds of Meat and Poultry: No Illnesses Reported

By Miranda Hitti

Reviewed by Louise WebMD Medical News

May 5, 2008 -- Gourmet Boutique, a company based in Jamaica, N.Y., is recalling about 286,320 pounds of fresh and frozen meat and poultry products that could be contaminated with Listeria monocytogenes bacteria.

No illnesses linked to the recalled foods have been reported, according to the Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Listeria can cause listeriosis, an uncommon but potentially fatal disease that occurs when people rarely contract listeriosis. But listeriosis can cause high fever, severe headache, neck stiffness, and nausea. It can also cause miscarriage and, in some cases, fatal infections in infants, elders, and people with weakened immune systems.

The recall includes 21 products — including chicken salads, sandwiches, burritos — that were distributed nationwide. A full list of the recalled products posted on the USDA website.

For more information on the recall, contact Gourmet Boutique's recall info hotline at 347-887-0083.

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Save the Date

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JOINT CONFERENCE
September 9-12, 2008
Sacramento, California
Questions?

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