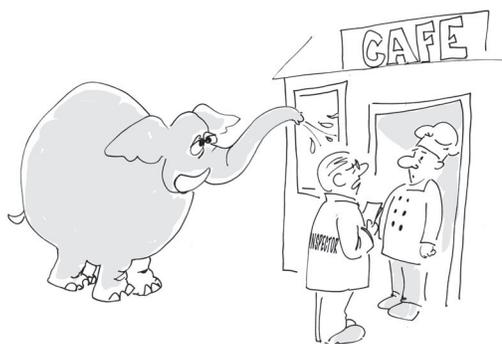


FOOD TALK



SANITATION TIPS FOR FOOD WORKERS

WINTER 2013-2014



"Sorry, that's not going to work."

What Would You Do in a Water Emergency?

Restaurants in parts of West Virginia including Charleston, the State capital, had to shut down after the health department issued a "do not use" advisory for the tap water in early January. The emergency began after a chemical spill about a mile upriver from a West Virginia American Water treatment plant that supplies the Kanawha Valley region. Health officials feared the water could be dangerous for drinking, or even for washing.

The tell-tale sign of contamination was a faint licorice smell in the water. It was very scary for consumers, who were concerned they or their families may have consumed the tainted water. The Kanawha-Charleston Health Department allowed restaurants to reopen when they demonstrated that they had a source of potable water. For the restaurants, this meant bringing in bottled water at great expense.

The emergency was also scary for health officials because they didn't have much information at first about the chemical's toxicity for humans. The symptoms included nausea, vomiting, dizziness,

You need to turn off the water valve as well as electricity circuit breakers leading to ice machines, water dispensers, coffee/tea makers and soft drink carbonators.

diarrhea, rashes and reddened skin. The director of the West Virginia Poison Center, Elizabeth Scharman, later told reporters that the rashes and feelings of nausea would soon fade.

Even after the main crisis was over, there were concerns over the flushing of water pipes to remove traces of the contaminant. Flushing out old water pipes causes sediment to be disturbed and this water can also cause nausea and other symptoms.

Would you know what to do in an emergency that affected the water supply?

In the Kanawha Valley emergency, sourcing a supply of potable water was the key. But there are other steps you need to take when the water supply is interrupted. Sometimes the health department issues a "boil water" notice (although in this case they simply said "do not use" because boiling would not help with

Also in this issue...

One in five worked while ill,
CDC Finds

Page 2

FDA changes model Food
Code

Page 3

Is that fully cooked?

Page 3

Throw away the sponge

Page 3

Test yourself on food safety

Page 4

the chemical contamination). If the water supply is interrupted, for whatever reason, you need to turn off the water valve as well as electricity circuit breakers leading to ice machines, water dispensers, coffee/tea makers and soft drink carbonators. You may need to replace the filter in the carbonators. You will also need to destroy any ice in the ice machine and clean the machine before refilling it.

Check with the health department about any other steps you need to take until they declare the water supply to be safe for use again.

One in Five Worked While Ill, CDC Says

Sick employees can mean sick customers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a study in December 2013 which reports that 20 percent of workers said they completed a shift in the past year when they were sick with vomiting or diarrhea. Employees with symptoms of foodborne illness were more likely to work if they were concerned about leaving their co-workers short-staffed or they were worried about losing their jobs if they took time off work sent because of sickness.



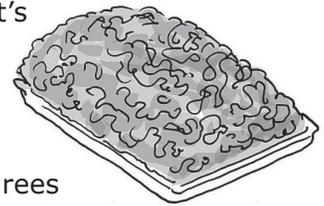
In its 2013 update of the model Food Code, the Food and Drug Administration pays increased attention to procedures for cleaning up after someone vomits or has diarrhea. Corrective actions have been required in the past, but now they will have to be written down so an inspector can review them. The required procedures include using bleach-based sanitizers, which are best for killing viruses. The worker doing the cleaning should wear gloves and a mask — because, in the case of norovirus, accidentally breathing in the virus can make them sick. Wearing a mask might sound extreme, but it's a sensible precaution.

The model Food Code requires food handlers to report to management when sick and to stay out of work until they are symptom-free for 48 hours (seven days in the case of *Shigella*). In some instances, workers may perform other

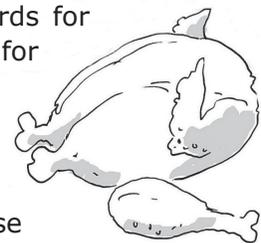
jobs — away from direct contact with food — until they are no longer ill. Whatever policies you have, you need to explain them frequently to all staff so they know what to do. A policy of providing paid sick leave is recommended.

It's also time to recheck the way your establishment handles ground beef, poultry, and fresh greens, such as spinach and lettuce, according to three additional studies by CDC. All four studies were published in the *Journal of Food Protection*.

Ground beef: If workers handle raw ground beef with bare hands, they should wash their hands immediately, to prevent cross contamination of other foods. In the study, this requirement was ignored by 62 percent of restaurant workers. In addition, it's important that thermometers are used so as to be certain hamburgers are cooked to 160 degrees F. (71 degrees C.) to avoid illness from undercooking. In the CDC study, some 80 percent of managers said that they did not always do this. Chain restaurants and restaurants with kitchen managers certified in food safety had safer ground beef practices than the others, the study found.



Chicken: It's really important to use assigned cutting boards for chicken and raw meat — for example colored and specific to the type of product — as well as to wash and rinse surfaces before sanitizing them, and to use a thermometer to be sure the final cook temperature is 165 degrees F. (74 degrees C.) CDC reported 40 percent of 448 interviewed restaurant managers said they did not assign special cutting boards for raw chicken and raw meat, 29 percent said they did not wash and rinse surfaces before sanitizing them, and more than 50 percent said they did not check temperatures with thermometers.



Leafy greens. It's important to reject risky leafy green shipments, especially those that are wet and leaking; and for refrigerating cut greens at 41 degrees F. (5 degrees C.) or below — something most restaurants in the CDC study did not do.

ServSafe Adopts Changes from 2013 FDA Model Food Code

The Food and Drug Administration recently released the 20th anniversary edition of its model Food Code. The 2013 version includes some changes that the National Restaurant Association Education Foundation is adding to its ServSafe training program for food handlers and food safety managers.

In one revision, food handlers will not need to wear gloves when working with a food or ingredient that will be further heated. NRA cites as an example that cheese or pepperoni topping can be placed on a pizza with bare hands

Food Code

U.S. Public Health Service



2013

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service • Food and Drug Administration
College Park, MD 20740

because the pie goes back into the oven for additional cooking. But, remember, bare hands must still be washed thoroughly.

Another 2013 Food Code change allows establishments to reuse containers that customers return for refills of items such as soda or salad. ServSafe will teach how to inspect the containers to be sure they have been thoroughly cleaned, says NRA consultant Catherine Adams. No visible food residue is allowed, for example. Employees may choose to sanitize the containers to be extra safe, she says. In addition, if the establishment offers self-serve wrapped sandwiches, salads, yogurt, cut fruit and such, the items will be deemed packaged foods requiring a nutrition information panel and a list of ingredients.

(Note: Regulatory requirements in your jurisdiction may vary from those suggested in the 2013 FDA model Food Code, so be sure you know and comply with your local requirements.)

Is it Fully Cooked?

It's important to check that cooked or reheated food has reached a safe temperature.

You can't always tell by looking whether a food has reached the proper temperature for food safety. Browning of the crust, melting of cheese, or rising steam might mean that the product is cooked thoroughly, or it might not.



Perhaps you use a microwave oven in your kitchen. A simple way to check if a product cooked in a microwave has reached the proper temperature is to use a thermometer. You need to measure in more than one place, because some foods can have hot and cold spots.

If a food label says the product should sit for a specific time after cooking in the microwave, it is important to let it sit, because that extra time allows the heat to reach every part of the food.

Some years ago, an outbreak of *Salmonella* was linked to pot pies that were not fully cooked, when some microwave ovens did not reheat the pies enough to kill the pathogen.

Part of the problem was that some sections of the pies were not fully reheated. In some cases, the microwave ovens were not strong enough to kill the bugs in the cook time suggested on the product label.

So use a thermometer. It will help you serve safe food!



Throw the Sponge Away

The 2013 FDA model Food Code says "Sponges may not be used in contact with cleaned and sanitized or in-use food-contact surfaces."

Bacteria can easily hide in the holes of the sponge and can cause serious cross contamination. So it's not a good practice to use sponges in your kitchen.

Test Yourself on Food Safety

Try this quick test of what you learned in this issue of **Food Talk**.

1. If the water supply to your establishment is interrupted, you need to:
 - a. Shut off the main water valve.
 - b. Turn off electricity at the circuit breakers leading to ice machines, water dispensers, coffee/tea makers, and soft drink carbonators.
 - c. Throw away any ice in the ice machines.
 - d. All of the above.
2. Which of the following statements is false?
 - a. The FDA model Food Code is mandatory for adoption in any new food safety regulations.
 - b. The FDA model Food Code provides ideas for consideration by state and other authorities for adoption as part of their food safety requirements.
 - c. The FDA model Food Code was first issued 20 years ago.
 - d. The latest version of the FDA model Food Code was issued in 2013.
3. Sponges:
 - a. May not be used in contact with cleaned and sanitized or in-use food-contact

- b. Allow bacteria to hide and cause cross contamination.
 - c. Are not a good idea for use in your kitchen.
 - d. All of the above.
4. Which of the following statements is false:
 - a. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most restaurant managers say they assign special cutting boards for raw chicken.
 - b. According to the CDC, 62 percent of restaurant workers say they don't wash their hands immediately after handling raw ground beef.
 - c. According to the CDC, 80 percent of restaurant managers say their establishments don't use thermometers to check that hamburgers are properly cooked.
 - d. None of the above.

Answers: 1(d) 2(a), 3(d), 4 (a)

Sources for this issue: 2013 FDA Model Food Code, Journal of Food Protection, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

