



# Michigan Department of Agriculture

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# Food Digest

Food and Dairy Division Winter 2007

## Strengthening Food Emergency Preparedness

What would you do if you were told there was credible evidence someone was planning to contaminate your food products or the products of your suppliers? During a four week period in March and April 2007, representatives from the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), local public health, and food industry will coordinate an effort to test government and industry's capabilities to respond to that type of threat.

This exercise will help MDA and food industry managers to better:

- Track a commodity through its entire supply chain.
- Identify the pattern and extent of product distribution.
- Collect and test product samples using cutting edge laboratory methods.
- Increase awareness of risk reduction measures by sharing information on the FDA's ALERT initiative with food industry managers.

## Emergency Tools Now Available for Retail Food Establishments

To help Michigan businesses prepare for a food-related emergency, MDA and its local health department partners are providing retail food establishments with a practical response tool - the 2006 "Emergency Action Plan for Retail Food Establishments" (EAP).

Retail food establishments, including restaurants and grocery stores, will know what to do in the event of a power outage, loss of water, fire, flood, sewage back-up or Norovirus contamination. In addition, having a guide in place makes it easier for

regulators to work with establishments during emergencies because everyone is working from the guidebook.

"A cohesive action plan is essential to protecting the state's food supply, public health and local economies during a crisis," said MDA Director Mitch Irwin. "These guidelines ensure a quick, coordinated response during an emergency."

The emergency plan quickly became a national crisis response model during a pilot project in Southeast Michigan last year. It was used by the Centers for Disease Control during Florida's recovery from the devastating hurricane season. The booklet helped protect public health, maintained food safety standards and got businesses back on their feet more quickly.

A statewide distribution began in January and it is also available for download in English, Spanish, Chinese and Arabic on the Michigan Preparedness Web site at [www.michigan.gov/prepare](http://www.michigan.gov/prepare). In addition to the EAP, the Web site offers businesses additional emergency preparedness information.

## Late License Submittals Costs Businesses More Money

Each year, a small percentage of businesses place themselves in the unfortunate position of having to pay late fees and fines on their food licenses.

All food establishment licenses expire on April 30 each year. For food establishments directly licensed by MDA, any renewal application postmarked after that date is assessed a \$10 per day fee for each business day it is late up to a maximum of \$100. Establishments continuing to be delinquent after 10 days are considered "operating without a license" and are subject to

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an administrative fine of up to \$500 for the first offense or other enforcement action.

Tips for avoiding late penalties:

- Place a reminder on your calendar ahead of April 30 to give yourself time to mail the renewal application and fee.
- If you have not received a renewal application in the mail by March 15, call the MDA Licensing Unit to check if the right address is listed and request another one be sent or faxed.
- Be sure to mail the renewal so it is postmarked ahead of April 30.
- When notified, promptly submit any late fee in order to avoid additional fines and penalties.

For additional information or questions, contact the Licensing Unit at (517) 241-2461.

## Country of Origin Labeling (COOL)

Packages of fish and shellfish are required by federal law to be labeled as to the product's country of origin. MDA, in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture, is evaluating the labeling of fish and shellfish to determine if the country of origin has been included on the label. Business owners will be notified when MDA staff is conducting a COOL audit and the department will share the audit results upon completion. The evaluations will be conducted in retail grocery stores, warehouses and distribution centers throughout the state this year.

## Workgroup meets to revise Food Law

MDA is currently meeting with stakeholders to update the Michigan Food Law of 2000. A key piece of the update will be adoption of the 2005 FDA Model Food Code to replace the 1999 Code, which is currently in use.



## Consumer Complaint Hotline

If you or your consumers see a problem with food, please report the issue to MDA's Food and Dairy Division at:

**1-800-292-3939**

One of the many new features of the 2005 Code is a focus on additional protections against Norovirus, which has been a problem for restaurants, nursing homes, schools, and cruise ships - and continues to be widely reported in the media.

## Norovirus Outbreaks on the Rise

Norovirus outbreaks increased four-fold in Michigan in 2006 (compared to 2005).

This increase has been observed both nationally and internationally. Here are some facts about Norovirus:

- Norovirus is extremely contagious.
- People are still contagious after their symptoms have stopped.
- Norovirus is very hardy and can remain in the environment for weeks, if not disinfected.
- The virus can become aerosolized during a vomiting incident, spreading viral particles throughout the building.
- The best method of protecting oneself and others from infection is frequent, thorough hand washing with warm, soapy water.

## Food & Dairy Division Regional Offices

### Region 1 – Upper Peninsula

Escanaba, MI (906) 786-5462

### Region 2 – Northern

Traverse City, MI (231) 922-5210

### Region 3 – West Central

Grand Rapids, MI (616) 356-0600

### Region 4 – East Central

Saginaw, MI (989) 757-1501

### Region 5 - Southwest

St Joseph, MI (269) 428-2546

### Region 6 – South Central

Lansing, MI (517) 373-1060

### Region 7 - Detroit

Southfield, MI (248) 356-1700

[www.michigan.gov/mda](http://www.michigan.gov/mda)