

Lecture Hall

Session Abstracts

National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)
72nd Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition

Food Safety and Protection

Wednesday, June 25

8:00 – 8:50am

The 2008 Samuel J. Crumrine Consumer Protection Award Winner Presentation

Alicia Enriquez, REHS, Program Manager, Sacramento County Environmental Management Dept., CA

Zarha Ruiz, REHS, Supervising Environmental Specialist, Sacramento County Environmental Management Dept., CA

Sonia Lee, REHS, Senior Environmental Specialist, Sacramento County Environmental Management Dept., CA

Over the course of six years, the Sacramento County Environmental Management Department (EMD) has implemented several multifaceted enhancements. These program improvements were intended to both increase food safety practices at retail food facilities throughout Sacramento County and simultaneously reduce the occurrence of major violations identified as risk factors for foodborne illness by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). EMD collaborated with stakeholders from the retail food industry, local governing bodies, and the public to put three objectives into place: 1) increased inspection frequency based on risk, 2) accurate and timely disclosure of inspection results, and 3) increased retail food operator understanding of CDC risk factors and their prevention. The Retail Food Program Enhancements were implemented in two phases.

Elements of Phase I:

- Requirement to post inspection report at food facilities for public disclosure
- Posting of inspection reports on County website
- Food Safety Awards of Excellence Certificates for facilities with exemplary inspection history
- Risk-based inspections and increased inspection frequencies for restaurants from 1x to 2x per year
- Added personnel
- Mandatory Food Safety Education for facilities with poor compliance

Following a subsequent program review, EMD staff found that over 40% of restaurants and 25% of retail markets in Sacramento County had major violations since initiation of Phase I. This finding prompted the implementation of additional enhancements, including a local ordinance requiring the posting of a green, yellow, or red placard at fixed food facilities following each routine or follow-up inspection. This proposal was modeled after a similar system instituted in Toronto, Canada.

Elements of Phase II:

- Posting of Green/Yellow/Red Placards to disclose inspection results

- Increased Inspection Frequencies for Restaurants (3x per year) and Markets (2x per year)
- Added personnel
- Outreach/Education for Stakeholders
 - Public Workshops
 - Compliance Assistance Bulletins
 - “How-to-Get-a-Green” Classes in multiple languages and DVD
 - Standardization Training/Inspection Field Guide
- Enforcement Measures
- Web Posting of Placard Results (www.foodinspect.SacCounty.net)

Notable improvement of food safety practices in retail food facilities is evident and reflected by the reduced occurrence of major risk factor violations documented during inspections.

9:30 – 10:20am

Exploring the World of Indian Food

Vickie Church, MPA, REHS, Supv. Environmental Health Specialist, County of San Diego Dept. of Environmental Health, CA

Come explore the world of Indian food. Learn about the geographic and cultural influences on Indian cuisine. What is the allure of all those colorful spices from India? What comes to mind when you think “tandoori” or “naan” or “chutney”? What are the challenges facing the novice inspector? Expand your horizons as there are no borders when it comes to food safety.

11:00 – 11:50am

Ensuring Beef Is Still for Dinner: Food Safety and the Beef Industry

Michelle Rossman, MS, Beef Safety Research Director, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, MN

Beef safety has been, and will continue to be, a top priority of the beef industry. Two million dollars of Beef Checkoff funds are invested every year researching beef safety. This presentation will present the latest knowledge on beef safety, which includes new technologies and interventions that are being used to enhance the safety of U.S. beef products.

1:30 – 2:20pm

Food Safety Training in Restaurants for Special Populations

Ken Pearson, EdD, CP-FS, Food Safety Training Consultant, Sherwin Food Safety Consultants, TN

Restaurants are hiring more and more people that have some type of disability to work in food service establishments. These may include the physically handicapped, the visually impaired, mentally challenged and many others whose impairments limit their ability to comprehend basic food safety training. This presentation will examine some methods that have been used to reduce the learning curve for these individuals.

3:00 – 3:50pm

Description of the Hotel Food Safety System and How It Compares with HACCP Standards

Stephanie Fletcher, MPH, Regional Food Safety Coordinator, North East Regional Health Authority, Jamaica

Jamaica is highly tourism dependent. The Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) food safety system that has international recognition, was introduced in Jamaica as part of a structured intervention program to reduce the incidence of Travelers Diarrhea in 1996. It involved a series of training and technical assistance to staff of selected hotels for the implementation of HACCP principles for monitoring food safety standards. This study seeks to describe the Hotel Food Safety System and how it compares with HACCP standards.

Methodology: A cross sectional descriptive study was done of Hotels in St. Mary and St. Ann that served food routinely, utilizing quantitative data was obtained from food and beverage/sanitation staff involved in the Food safety system and qualitative data was obtained through in-depth interviews with hotel managers. Observation of the food safety operations was also done.

Findings: Larger hotels were more likely to have a better quality Team approach, HACCP plan, monitoring of critical control points and were more likely to receive higher scores ($p < 0.05$). More than two thirds of hotel staff were knowledgeable of HACCP. Significantly smaller hotels (87.5%) received less than 70% in overall score ($r = 0.75$, $p = 0.01$). Identification of CCPs and Monitoring of CCPs explained 96.6% of the change in the overall HACCP scores ($p = 0.001$). There was general consensus among Hotel Managers that the Food Safety Systems surveyed were in keeping with the fundamental principles of HACCP even though the “structure” was absent at the smaller properties.

Larger hotels received significantly higher total scores and were more likely to have a better quality Team approach; HACCP plan and monitoring of critical control points. While there were some components of the HACCP system in place in larger hotels' food safety system, there were serious shortcomings in its comparison. While hotel managers feel that the larger properties are ready for mandatory implementation of HACCP, sector specific policies would have to be developed for smaller hotels and implementation done on a phased basis. Due to the marked differences between small and larger hotels, there is the need for set policies and guidelines specific to the type of business.

4:00 – 4:50pm

Glimpses of the Other Side—Food Safety from a Restaurant Perspective

Cindy Alemian Rice, RS, CP-FS, MSPH, CEHT, Food Safety Consultant/Writer, Daydots/Ecolab; President, Eastern Massachusetts Food Safety, MA

Restaurant staff often face many challenges and though far from perfect, have made great strides towards implementing safer food safety practices following implementation of mandatory Foodhandler Certification in most states.

However, much misinformation surrounding food safety is aimed at foodhandlers, and it comes from all sides- other restaurant workers, salespeople and often the food inspectors themselves. Also, there is still somewhat of a disconnect in the relationship between food workers and inspectors, and this impacts compliance and satisfaction on both sides.

Results of a recent survey of Massachusetts foodhandlers will be presented which reveal their opinions about food safety, the issues that “keep them up at night,” and their ability to communicate and relate to health inspectors. Owners, managers and food workers perceive variations in the inspection process, depending on the inspector or region, and this inconsistency can undermine the credibility of the many outstanding inspectors who are working to protect the public health.

As a Registered Sanitarian, and food safety trainer/consultant with many years' experience in the restaurant industry, I see both sides of the equation, and am often the sounding board for both foodservice and regulators. We, as trainers and inspectors, need to partner with foodservice operations and offer practical solutions to the food safety challenges they face and their benefits to applying them. In addition, these practices should be based on science and improving operational efficiency, not just because someone said so, or because of some subjective interpretation of the Food Code.

How can an establishment cool foods easily if you there is no ice machine? How can a single dishwasher handle dirty and sanitized dishes safely in a timely fashion that won't disrupt his flow? And who knew that buttering toast safely could cause such a fuss?

Through better communication and understanding on both sides, we can build trust and stronger partnerships between restaurants and regulators. And the benefits will be more satisfying work experiences, and a safer food supply for all.