Partnership for Food Protection’s
Surveillance, Response and Post Response Workgroup presents

Quick Start
Food Emergency Response Job Aids
(To facilitate Initial Planning in an Integrated Food Emergency Response Event)

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Executive Summary
The Quick Start Job Aids are protocols designed primarily for food emergency response coordinators and response team members including epidemiologists, laboratory and food regulatory program officials in federal, state, local, and territorial agencies (partners agencies) who have coordinated public and environmental health authority for food emergency response. Additionally, users may also include law enforcement officials in the event of intentional contamination. The job aids can also be shared with industry, food protection task forces and other stakeholders to increase awareness about the role of government in response, and to assist them in preparing their own complimentary response protocols.

Purpose Statement
The purpose of the Quick Start Job Aids is to facilitate communication, coordination and planning amongst programs and agencies early on in an investigation when an adverse food event such as an outbreak or food contamination is initially suspected or detected.

Scope
The three Quick Start Job Aids provided in this guide are flow diagrams that highlight key tasks to take into consideration when gathering information and planning in the initial stages of the investigation.

A. Initial Planning in an Integrated Food Emergency Response – General
B. Initial Planning in an Integrated Food Emergency Response – Epidemiology
C. Initial Planning in an Integrated Food Emergency Response – Environmental/Investigation

The tasks in the job aids attached are based on response best practices and principles identified by the Council to Improve Foodborne Illness Outbreak Response (CIFOR), the FDA-sponsored Rapid Response Team Program (RRT), the International Association of Food Protection (IAFP), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) National Incident Management System (NIMS), and the National Association for State Departments of Agriculture’s (NASDA) Food Emergency Response Plan Template. It is suggested to include these guides in your work planning manuals and discussions.

Benefits
The Quick Start Job Aids are meant to promote inter and intra-agency communication and collaboration, using simple visuals to remind and reinforce tasks that should be considered in initial stage of response activities in order to enhance rapid exchange of information.
Commonly Used Acronyms in Emergency Response

AAR – After Action Review or Report
CD – Communicable Disease
CDC – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CIFOR – Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response
CORE (Network) – Coordinated Outbreak Response and Evaluation Network (FDA)
DHS – Department of Homeland Security
EH – Environmental Health
EHS-Net – Environmental Health Specialists Network
EOP – Emergency Operations Plan
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency
FDA – Food and Drug Administration
FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency
FERP – Food Emergency Response Plan
FoodCORE - Foodborne Disease Centers for Outbreak Response Enhancement (CDC)
FPTF – Food Protection Task Force
FSIS – Food Safety Inspection Service (USDA)
FRMAC – Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center
HAN – Health Alert Network
HHS – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
IAP – Incident Action Plan
ICS – Incident Command System
LHD – Local Health Department
MFRPS – Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards
MOA – Memorandum of Agreement
MOU – Memorandum of Understanding
NIMS – National Incident Management Plan
NRF – National Response Framework
NVEAIS – National Voluntary Environmental Assessment Information System
OP – FDA Office of Partnerships (formerly Division of Federal State Relations – DFSR)
PFGE – Pulsed-Field Gel Electrophoresis
POS – Point of Service
PPE – Personal Protection Equipment
QMS – Quality Management System
RFR – Reportable Food Registry
RRT – Rapid Response Team
SOP – Standard Operating Procedure
USDA – US Department of Agriculture
WWOA – Working With Other Agencies (RRT Manual Chapter)

* A full glossary of terms is available in the Rapid Response Team Best Practices Manual
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Job Aids

A. Initial Planning in an Integrated Food Emergency Response – General

Planning and Preparedness Prior to Response
- CFOR Guidelines
- Written procedures, MOUs
- Food Emergency Response Plan
- Trained response personnel
- Response system self-assessment and continuous improvement process
- Laboratory accredited to AOAC/ISO/IEC 17025 or has quality system that meets regulatory program standards.

Food Emergency Event Triggers
- Foodborne illness outbreak
- Food contamination
- Intentional contamination, food threats
- Natural disasters
- Critical infrastructure impacting power, water supply etc.

Notify appropriate personnel within your agency of emergency meeting/conference call
- Epidemiology
- Environmental (food regulatory officials)
- Laboratory (food, environmental, clinical)
- Other – Food emergency response protocols
- Public affairs press officer

Identify other key response team agencies and members using emergency response protocols and contact list
- Law enforcement, if intentional, threats
- Local, department operations center, state emergency operation center
- Other stakeholder agencies – local, state, county, CDC, FDA, USDA FSIS, DHS

Facilitate emergency group meeting / conference call
- Access secure conference call line
- Issue invitation with agenda
- Ensure all participants have proper clearance if required
- Identify call facilitator and leads for epidemiology, environmental, laboratory, law enforcement agency representatives on call

Summarize incident event data currently available from each stakeholder and data gaps
- Epidemiological information
- Environmental/food information
- Laboratory information
- Law enforcement information
- Current media coverage

Develop Response Action Plan or Incident Action Plan
- Gathering of additional data
- Determine potential hypothesis if there are illnesses
- Identify response team members, subject matter experts
- Identify additional resources, equipment
- Identify leadership and coordination
- Enforcement/prevention coordination
- Schedule briefing if necessary

Review communication protocols
- Use ICS if activated
- Coordination of media and press events and releases
- Industry, consumers, public records requests
- Senior officials
- Media contacts
- Action plans and situation reports
- Scheduling of future conference calls
- Expansion of response team(s) if necessary
- Information sharing protocols
- Documentation to facilitate after action and final report

Epidemiology (see Epidemiology Flow)
- Summarize known information on ill persons
- Summarize known information on etiology
- Hypothesis generating interviews
- Establish case definition & active case finding
- Conduct epidemiologic study with appropriate control group
- Refine hypothesis via study results
- Ensure collection of clinical specimens
- Communication & patient education

Environmental/investigation(s) (See Environmental Flow)
- Food/complaint information
- Facility information
- Authority/regulations/industry guidance
- Food hazards and risks
- Environmental assessment, sampling, mitigation
- Recalls and tracebacks, traceforwards
- Industry communication mechanisms, issues, concerns
- Resources available and assistance needed
- Inter-agency collaboration and coordination

Laboratory
- Assess capability & capacity to effectively test for suspected substance or agent
- Order additional materials not on-hand
- Conduct appropriate tests for target analytes
- Perform molecular fingerprinting (PFGE) on organisms under PulseNet surveillance
- Review data/quality control and report results

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B. Initial Planning in an Integrated Food Emergency Response – Epidemiology

- Summarize known information on ill persons
  - # Ill persons, # Hospitalized; # Deaths
  - Case demographics & distribution
  - Spectrum of symptoms
  - Duration of illness
  - Clinical lab results, if available
  - Food exposure history
  - Illness onset dates (construct epidemiologic curve)

- Summarize known information on source of illness
  - Suspected common exposure(s) among cases, if known
  - Suspected mode(s) of transmission, if known
  - Determine if outbreak appears to be ongoing (refer to epidemiologic curve)
  - Case clusters

- Establish response authority/roles
  - Notify investigative team per internal policies
  - Multi-jurisdictional authorities, coordination
  - Multi-disciplinary notifications (Environmental, Laboratory, etc)
  - Imminent health hazard response capability
  - Criminal investigation – chain of custody
  - Incident Command Structure, if to be activated

- Identify potential source(s) of illness & mode(s) of transmission
  - Hypothesis generating interviews
  - Develop case definition
  - Additional case finding
  - Refine hypothesis as data collected
  - Identification of appropriate control group for epidemiologic study
  - Implement control measures as appropriate
  - Pursue appropriate public education
  - Prepare to communicate findings

- Prepare to discuss epidemiologic findings and plans
  - Investigation objectives and priorities
  - Regular summaries of known information to date with expanded investigative team
  - Control/mitigation strategies
  - Investigation reports/summaries and sharing of documentation
  - Identify method of information sharing with multi-disciplinary investigation team (i.e. status meetings; email; etc)

- Prepare to discuss communication plans
  - Risk communication protocols and issues
  - Inter-agency communication and collaboration, news releases
  - Collaboration on communication with stakeholders (industry; medical; personnel; etc)
  - Political and media misinformation

- Assess resources and request assistance if necessary
  - Field investigation and support team on standby
  - Equipment available (PPE, clinical sampling materials, forms, etc)
  - Laboratory services and support
  - Continuity of care operations
  - Communication/IT resources
  - Funding for overtime, surge capacity resources
  - Subject matter experts, funding and other assistance available
C. Initial Planning in an Integrated Food Emergency Response – Environmental/Investigation

- Obtain suspect food vehicle(s) information
  - Food name, description, source
  - Preparation
  - Packaging, pictures of product/cases
  - Labeling, lot no. codes, dates
  - Storage conditions
  - Distribution and transportation
  - Method of service

- Describe suspect food facility operation(s)
  - Address, hours, employees, size, type
  - Processing operations, water supply
  - Facility vulnerabilities
  - Photos, plans or GIS maps if available and useful
  - Product rotation/turn-around timeframe for product of interest

- Establish response authority/roles
  - Facility licensed and/or inspected
  - Lead food regulatory agency
  - Multi-jurisdictional authorities, coordination
  - Food regulatory standards applicable
  - Imminent health hazard response capability
  - Criminal investigation – chain of custody
  - Incident Command Structure if to be activated

- Identify potential hazards and risk communication issues
  - High risk foods and processes
  - Volume of food processed, distributed daily
  - Employees (sick, terminated, new, lack of sick food worker policy)
  - Contaminants
  - Contamination, survival and proliferation of pathogens
  - Potential lack of preventive controls
  - Critical infrastructure affected
  - New ownership, change in management/operations
  - Change in processes, suppliers
  - Co-mingling of product
  - Compliance history, complaints, RFRs
  - Pending complaints, enforcement actions
  - Conflicts of interest

- Prepare to discuss environmental investigation plans
  - Environmental assessment and sampling objectives and priorities
  - Tracebacks, traceforswds
  - Control/mitigation strategies, enforcement actions, recalls
  - Field investigation activation and planning, collaboration
  - Investigation reports/summaries and sharing of documentation
  - Joint investigation planning meeting
  - Regulatory standards, industry guidance
  - Disposal and decontamination
  - Facility food and environmental testing data, supplier audit checks

- Prepare to discuss communication plans
  - Risk communication protocols and issues
  - Inter-agency communication and collaboration, press releases
  - Collaboration on industry communication
  - Political and media misinformation
  - ICS

- Assess resources and request assistance if necessary
  - Field investigation and support team on standby
  - Food emergency response kits/forms
  - Food and environmental sampling equipment
  - Laboratory services and support
  - Continuity of core operations
  - FERP in the event of ICS activation
  - Communication/IT resources
  - Funding for overtime, surge capacity resources
  - Federal personnel, subject matter experts, funding and other assistance