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# The Everclean Report

## Alex's Story

### Special Interest Articles:

Alex's Story

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Looking for the quintessential anecdote about the importance of "keeping food safe", Everclean came across a story. Our staff thought it would be interesting to introduce you to "Alex's Story" as told by Eric Schlosser in his bestseller *Fast Food Nation*.

"Alex, was infected with the bug [E.coli 0157:H7] in July of 1993 after eating a tainted hamburger. His illness began with abdominal cramps that seemed as severe as labor pains. It progressed to diarrhea that filled the hospital toilet with blood. Doctor's frantically tried to save Alex's life, drilling holes in his skull to relieve pressure, inserting tubes in his chest to keep him breathing, as the toxins destroyed internal organs. "I would have done anything to save my son's life," his mother says. "I would have run in front of a bus to save Alex."

Instead, she stood and watched helplessly as he called out for her, terrified and in pain. He became ill on Tuesday night, the night after his mother's birthday, and was dead by Sunday afternoon. Towards the end, Alex suffered hallucinations and dementia, no longer recognizing his mother or father. Portions of his brain had been liquefied. "The sheer brutality of his death was horrifying," doctors say.

This passage is meant to remind operators that food illness affects all. The stricken is faced with illness, hospitalization, or death. The manager can be devastated. Staff is left with poor morale. A restaurant's reputation can be permanently marred. Alex's story is a reminder that failures cannot be tolerated. In the end, the human and financial tolls of a food-related illness are greater than the sum of its parts.

## It's a Jungle Out There

There is a saying we use at Everclean that goes like this: "Food Section = Good; Front Page = Bad." More than ever food operators are being held to a higher standard of maintaining a clean and safe environment. There are a lot of reasons for expectations being so high but leading examples include:

- Higher customer awareness (the educated consumer; the paranoid consumer; the media)
- Closer scrutiny by the Health Department (grading, emergent diseases, more knowledgeable)
- QA audits from the corporate headquarters (performance evaluations, bonus implications)

With the increase focus on food safety, it begs the question "is all this attention really worth it?" The answer is an astounding YES!! Our global economy & increase in the number of people eating out have caused a rise in food-related outbreaks. Here are some outbreaks that occurred in the last 6 months:

- Over 100 people getting sick after eating at a casual dining restaurant in Ohio
- Over 900 people getting ill after eating green onions at a restaurant in Pennsylvania
- Over 500 people getting ill after eating sliced Roma tomatoes in the Midwest

If more people are eating out, and if more people are getting sick, should we focus less on food safety? Obviously not. Sharpen your operations focus on food safety. "Raise the Bar" by utilizing all the tools you have to increase your restaurants preparedness and knowledge.

## Working with your Health Inspector

Health inspectors work long hours, are on their feet much of the time and are not always welcomed with open arms. Some tips for smoother inspections and relations:

1. Make the initial impression positive, no matter what. Even if you're swamped, a smile helps set the tone for the entire visit.
2. Market what you *have* taken care of since their last visit. By letting them know that you took their past comments seriously, they will be more apt to trust your operation during subsequent visits.
3. Ask sincere questions.

They are one of your best resources and it's important to let them know you value their knowledge. Also, if you don't clarify the violations you do receive, it may mean repeat violations down the road.

Any comments or questions should be directed to [info@evercleanservices.com](mailto:info@evercleanservices.com).

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