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The Everclean Report

Where Does Your Food Come From?

Investigations by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have commenced as a result of an outbreak of food borne illness caused by *Salmonella typhimurium*. The pathogen was found in peanut butter and peanut paste made at a peanut-processing plant in Blakely, Georgia. *Salmonella* is a bacteria which resides in water, kitchen surfaces, raw meats, raw poultry, humans, and animal feces.

The recalled products such as peanut butter and peanut paste are common ingredients in cookies, crackers, ice cream, and other foods. The onset time is 6-48 hours and symptoms include nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, fever, and headache. The CDC estimates that there are a total of about 1.4 million illnesses, 15,000 hospitalizations, and 400 deaths from *Salmonella* infection in the United States every year.

Approximately 40,000 of those infections are confirmed each year by isolation of the *Salmonella* strain. For a list of the recall product please visit <http://www.fda.gov>. To keep your brand and your customers safe please make sure that your suppliers are all licensed and can legally operate and distribute food. This will assist in ensuring a safe product as well as preventing food borne illness.

The Importance of the Hand Sink

A designated hand sink must have hot and cold water, antibacterial soap, single use paper towels or an approved hot air drying device (cloth towels are not acceptable), proper signage, and must not be blocked. Hands must be washed for at least 20 seconds and follow proper technique (scrubbing between the fingers and under the nails). Turning the faucet off with paper towels instead of bare hands will go along way in preventing contamination. Direct hand to food contact and improper hand washing are leading causes in the spread of illnesses such as the common cold, Norovirus, and Hepatitis A.

Improper hand washing is a common violation as well as hand sinks becoming blocked. Hand sinks should be free and clear at all times, well maintained and clean so that employees are not getting their hands or any other items soiled from using the sink. If the sink is located near a food prep or storage area, splashguards should be in place on the sides to avoid possible cross-contamination. Hand sinks must only be used for hand washing and should never be used for food prep, utensil washing, disposal, rinsing and/or storage because this impedes employee hand washing.

An employee is less likely to wash his or her hands if there is something blocking the sink (i.e. a cart an employee must move in order to wash their hands); this further contaminates the area. Food borne illness can be avoided if employees are properly trained and hand sinks are kept clear, clean, and usable.

Holding Equipment - FYI's

Did you know that reach-ins, line drawers and cold tops are designed to maintain a temperature of 41°F; not cool Potentially Hazardous food's (PHF) to below the danger zone? It is important that all of the PHF's that are placed into any of these pieces of equipment are already at 41°F or below. Properly training employees to place prepped products into a blast chiller or walk-in to cool to 41°F (prior to placing into one of the above holding units) will help ensure proper holding temps. As the summer months approach us, make sure all holding units are in good working order- check defrost times, gasket seals and ensure the reach-in and drawers open and close properly. Let's keep PHF's cool this summer.

Special Interest Articles:

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Come From?*

Hand Sinks

*Holding Equipment-
FYI's*

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