

The AFDOSS Biannual Newsletter

Spring Edition 2009

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia

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AFDOSS President's Message



The overall objectives of this organization have never been more valuable than it is today. Our mission of protecting the public health has never been taken lightly yet we have seen recently how vital our role truly is. It has been an honor and privilege to serve this organization as president and to promote and foster our overall objective of improved laws and the effective enforcement of all laws for the protection of the public health within the area of food and drugs.

Both on a local and national level, food and drug safety have captured many headlines and in the

process projected us into the spotlight. Our challenges of late have allowed us to reflect and also focus on necessary changes needed to insure the public of a safe and secure food and drug environment. We also had to execute these objectives in very challenging budget environments that stretched our resources and made each of us look for new and better ways to provide our services within those constraints.

In closing, let me challenge each of you to continue to meet our objectives by maintaining an environment that fosters innovation and new ideas. Let us embrace and encourage new people to become involved in our organization and its ideals. Expectations will remain high and I feel confident that we will answer the challenge as we always have.

Many thanks for the opportunity to serve.

Best Regards:

Joseph W. Reardon

AFDOSS Media Committee wishes to acknowledge and express our appreciation to WAFDO for their support and help. Their newsletter served as a guide in the development of our newsletter.

Articles for the Fall Edition are due to the AFDOSS Media Committee by October 2, 2009. Please send articles to wendy.campbell@ncagr.gov

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Special Interest Articles (continued)

Noro Noro from South
Carolina

Alabama adopts regula-
tions requiring mandatory
Food Manager
Certification

Presidential Inauguration:



FDA Southeast Region Food Specialists Assist with Food Safety and Defense at the Inauguration

Picture shown left: President Obama Speech at
Easter States Ball

From January 15 - 22, the FDA Southeast Region Retail Food Specialists provided food protection support to the FDA Central Region during the 2009 Inauguration. The Central Region was asked by the D.C. Department of Health and Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to provide food safety and defense support for the caterers and hotels involved in all National Special Security Events during the Inauguration. A total of sixteen events including luncheons, candlelight dinners, and balls were covered by a team consisting of FDA Central, Southeast, and Northeast Region Retail Food Specialists and Consumer Safety Officers from FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN), Office of Regulatory Affairs/Division of Human Resource Development (DHRD), and Baltimore District Office. All aspects of food preparation and delivery were continuously monitored by the team. Approximately 84,000 meals were served. In addition, the caterers and hotels that were inspected provided over 200,000 other meals that were prepared under FDA observation. FDA also provided support in inspection of Temporary Food Establishments in conjunction with outdoor events. Samples were collected of all finished products that were served at the National Special Security Events. There were no reported foodborne illness outbreaks.



By Alan M. Tart
FDA SER Regional Retail Food Specialist
E-mail: Alan.Tart@fda.hhs.gov
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Kentucky Public Health Division Director receives National Recognition

Association Objectives

To promote and foster the enactment of improved laws and the effective enforcement of all laws for the protection of the public health and prevention of fraud and deception in the production, manufacture, distribution and sale of foods, drugs, cosmetics, therapeutic devices and consumer products.

To encourage the adoption of uniform administrative procedures.

To encourage cooperation with respect to the enforcement of federal, state, district, county, and municipal laws and regulations.



Picture shown left: Guy F. Delius, Director of the Kentucky Department for Public Health, Division of Public Health Protection and Safety, displays the Eugene Holeman Award.

Guy F. Delius, Director for the Kentucky Department for Public Health, Division of Public Health Protection and Safety, received national recognition last week from the Association of Food and Drug Officials of the Southern States (AFDOSS). Delius was named the recipient of The Eugene H. Holeman Award at the association's Spring 2009 Annual Educational Conference in Franklin, Tennessee.

The Eugene Holeman Award was established by AFDOSS in 1977. To be eligible for the award, a nominee must have demonstrated that he/she has served the Association and made a valuable contribution to food, drug, cosmetic, and consumer products and administration and enforcement.

AFDOSS is comprised of public health officials from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The primary objective of this organization is to promote the enactment and enforcement of uniform laws for the protection of public health, and the prevention of fraud and deception in the production, manufacture, distribution and sale of foods, drugs, cosmetics, devices, and other consumer products.

Delius has over twenty years of Public Health experience. A graduate of Eastern Kentucky University, Delius began his Public Health career as a local health department environmentalist in Madison County. Delius has been employed by the Kentucky Department for Public Health since the mid-1990s. He served as Assistant Division Director and Manager of the Department's Food Safety Branch prior to his current position.

Delius is recognized both nationally and across the Commonwealth for his leadership skills and accomplishments in the Public Health arena. He has served as past-president of AFDOSS, the Kentucky Public Health Association (KPHA), and the Kentucky Association of Milk, Food and Environmental Sanitarians (KAMFES). Delius is also an active member of the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO). Delius and his wife live in Shelbyville, Kentucky.



Picture above: Mr. Cameron Smoake, AFDOSS member and past-recipient of the association's Eugene Holeman Award presents the 2009 Award to Guy F. Delius, Director of the Kentucky Department for Public Health's Division of Public Health Protection and Safety.

By Mark Reed
Kentucky Department of Public Health, Food Safety Branch

National Workgroup Develop Innovative Education Materials and Methods for Food Workers

Upcoming Events

The 2009 Fall Conference will be in Gatlinburg, TN September 13-16 at the [Park Vista Hotel Resort](#), Gatlinburg, TN

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FDA's Southeast Region Retail Food Specialist Alan Tart and Atlanta District Office Public Affairs Specialist JoAnn Pittman Co-Chair National Workgroup to Develop Innovative Educational Materials and Methods for Food Workers.

Many factors affect food workers' ability and motivation to prepare food safely including, but not limited to, receiving proper training (Green and Selman, 2005). Emerging research shows that many, if not most, of the existing training materials and posters, as well as the methods used for training, may not be effective in modifying the behavior of food workers. For instance, research by Beegle (2004) suggests that food workers are predominantly oral culture learners and that training materials and methods commonly used today are contrary to oral culture learner characteristics. The purpose of this project is to improve the effectiveness of training related to the control of foodborne illness risk factors by developing educational materials and exploring methods more appropriate for oral culture learners. Funded through grants and contracts from the FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN) and Office of Regulatory Affairs/Division of Human Resource Development (DHRD), a project team consisting of FDA Regional Retail

Food Specialists and Public Affairs Specialists, as well as over 40 stakeholders from the retail industry, trade and professional organizations, academia, and the state/local regulatory community, will develop and field test educational materials designed specifically for oral culture learners. Results from a 2008 pilot led by a leadership project team from the Atlanta Federal Executive Board Leadership Government Program suggest that using stories, sayings, and pictures with vivid examples that allow food workers to "feel" the impact of a behavior, as well as using interactive demonstrations and two-way communication provided in a focus group format, may assist with motivating food workers to change their food safety practices by helping them to understand "why" proper behaviors and practices are important in preventing foodborne illness. More research is needed to determine the long term effectiveness of the materials in changing behavior.



Poster show above "Easy to Protect Me" used as one of the examples to show food workers the impact of food safety.

By Alan M. Tart
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The AFD OSS Media and Public Affairs meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 10:00 a.m. EST.
Dial-in information:
1-866-756-1317
Passcode: 2899174

AFDOSS presents two \$1000 Mary Logan Scholarships

Jason Pelzel

Jason Pelzel is from Pilot Point, TX and attends Texas A & M University. He is majoring in nutrition and has a 3.82 GPA. His goal in life is to help people and he has chosen the field of nutrition to do this. He feels there is a great need to spread nutrition awareness and encourage healthy lifestyles. His past summer he worked with the Texas A & M Extension Service's Food Protection Management program which includes the food managers certification program. He developed an on-line food safety course for users to obtain a food handler's permit. Upon graduation, he plans to pursue a Master degree combined with a dietetic internship so that he will be able to help those with health issues and problems to adopt healthier habits and overcome their complications.

Ashley Hart

Ashley Hart is from Haymarket, VA and attends the University of Georgia. She has a 3.36 GPA and is majoring in Food Science & Technology with emphasis in Science, Technology & Engineering. Ashley is interested in food product development and has expanded her interest to include international agricultural development and agrosecurity including the development of traceability and prevention methods of bioterrorism. Last summer she spent in Washington serving a Congressional Agricultural Fellowship in Rep. John Barrow's office. Among her many experiences one was being involved with the staff dealing with the early versions of the recent Farm Bill. Her seeking this internship indicates her interest in federal regulations of food products. She plans to attend graduate school before entering the food industry.

After the storm: How to Reduce the Risk of Product Contamination in Peanut Processing Plants

There's light at the end of the tunnel, and it isn't an oncoming train. North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Food and Drug Protection Division has spent a lot of time and money tracking down peanut paste, butter, finished products, as well as inspection and environmental swabbing of peanut production facilities since January. We have been working closely with FDA and the laboratories of Food Emergency Response Network and barring any unforeseen problems, we should be finished with this endeavor in about two or three weeks. It's been a learning experience for us and producers, as well. What have we learned?

As Ben Franklin said, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". What we have found is common sense, practical hygiene practices will go a long way to prevent *Salmonella* contamination of finished product. Many of these have little cost and can be installed within days, with proper planning and training. The producer must be made aware of the potential for cross contamination and take steps to prevent it. A few of these are:

- Facility maintenance – A program should be developed for regular inspection of the facility. Roof, drains, pipes, electrical conduit, and compressed air lines should be inspected for any defaults and repaired immediately if detected.
- Cleaning and sanitation – A program must be developed for routine cleaning of equipment, floors, and walls.

- Separate raw materials from finished products – Ideally, all raw materials should be isolated for the finished product area until entry to the kill step. Many production facilities cannot do this so a sanitation plan must be developed and maintained for all equipment and personnel handling the raw material entering the production area.
- Dedicate equipment to finished product area – Brooms, mops, ladders, hand trucks, carts and other equipment used in the finished product area should stay in the finished product area. Likewise, equipment used in the raw material area and outdoor loading areas should not be permitted in the finished product area. A color code system can easily be used to identify this equipment.
- Limit personnel traffic from raw material area to finished product area – Ideally, personnel working in the finished product area should not enter the raw material area, and vice versa, during any shift. Since this is not practical, a sanitizing station should be created at every entry to the finished product area, as discussed below.
- Create a sanitation area at finished product area entry – The producer needs to develop a plan for personnel sanitizing before entry to finished product areas. This would include sanitizing shoes and requiring the use of disposable shoe covers, hand sanitizers, spray sanitize any equipment before entry, to name a few. There are a variety of EPA registered low moisture disinfectants available for this purpose.
- Require maintenance personnel to sanitize tools before entry into finished product areas – Maintenance personnel must have access to all areas of the facility, and they must be required to follow the sanitation protocol at the finished product area entry.
- Pest control – Rodents, insects, and birds can carry a variety of bacteria, molds and viruses. A pest control plan must be adopted and followed to minimize this cross contamination.

But most importantly, we as food safety specialists must educate the food producer that these and other steps are necessary to insure the safety of their product. We need to overcome the “we’ve always done it this way” attitude and convince the producer that they must implement preventative measures to limit cross contamination. It will be an investment in time and money for the producer but it will limit plant shut downs, embargoes, and recalls.

(An extensive guideline on *Salmonella* control has recently been published by the Grocery Manufacturers Association and can be accessed at <http://www.gmaonline.org/>).

Wm. Mark Cosby, MS, Ph.D.
Agriculture Programs Specialist
Food and Drug Protection Division
North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Georgia Food Safety and Defense Task Force – Progress Report 2008

ATLANTA: The Georgia Food Safety and Defense Task Force group meets quarterly to discuss current issues that require multi-agency response. The meetings are conducted to focus on food safety. Topics include: foodborne illnesses and outbreaks, data sharing between regulatory agencies, and better communication with the public, media, and consumers. Team members work cooperatively to promote uniform standards, program assessment and evaluation, laboratory operations coordination, and food safety education, training, and certification. In 2008, the meetings were held on January 9th, May 21st, and October 1st.

Communication

The Public Communications Panel, representing FDA, GDA, DHR, and Publix, was convened to discuss strategies for communicating with the media and the public. Specifically regarding multistate outbreaks, recall alerts, and assistance for small independent retailers, the need for rapid response time to requests for information was stressed. The language level (equivalent to 6th grade reading) and "message mapping" were also discussed. In addition to timely communication during outbreaks and recalls, education efforts and tools were presented by task force members and guest speakers regarding ill food workers, hand washing, and dairy pasteurization. Laurie Farmer presented the concept of FIRST – Follow, Inspect, Recognize, Secure, and Tell. This strategy is to be implemented at the employee level, notifying employees that they play an integral part in food safety defense.

National Meetings

Conference for Food Protection

Janice Buchanon presented issues covered during the biennial CFP meeting. CFP membership consists of approximately 500 members from industry, academia, regulatory inspectors, and the public. One issue mentioned specifically was that of leafy greens and temperature control. Leafy greens must be maintained at temperature control for safety once cut. To follow up on this issue, the Environmental Health Specialist Network conducted a study of restaurant handling and storage practices for leafy greens. The study has concluded the data collection phase and will enter data analysis in 2009.

FDA 50 State Meeting: Gateway to Food Protection

On August 12-14, 2008, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration hosted a three-day national meeting in St. Louis, Mo., entitled the "Gateway to Food Protection." The FDA held the meeting to build upon the integrated approach of prevention, intervention and response described in FDA's recently released Food Protection Plan. The focus of the meeting was to examine how to utilize a National food safety system to address a global food supply.

Representatives from 50 states as well as from local and tribal communities and territories were invited to attend the event. The FDA believes that the FPP will only be successful with the input and assistance from our state, local, tribal and territorial partners. The national meeting focused on four topic areas: outbreaks, recalls, risk-based inspections and roles and responsibilities. Teams of federal, state and local officials were tasked with identifying and developing a series of action items and recommendations to better coordinate and align FDA's respective programs along the lines noted in the FPP, which are enhancing efficiency and effectiveness; improving communication; increase the sharing of data and information at all levels of government, and improve the services the agency provide to its citizens. The representatives from Georgia were Tonya Gray (DHR - Environmental Health) and Van Harris (GDA - Consumer Protection Division).

Georgia Foodborne Outbreaks

Several restaurant associated outbreaks occurred in Georgia in 2008. Representatives from DHR Epidemiology Office provided updates regarding outbreaks during each quarterly meeting. Cherie Drenzek and Melissa Tobin D'Angelo updated the group that several institutional outbreaks of Shigella and Norovirus have occurred as well, including one outbreak in a school. Georgia also participated in the investigation of a multi-state Salmonella outbreak investigation. Ingrid Zambrana of FDA presented the trace back investigation for the food vehicle for this outbreak. During the trace back beginning with raw tomatoes, and ultimately leading to consumption of raw peppers. Among the lessons learned, cultural and language barriers were discussed, as the trace back process included an FDA response team to travel to Mexico. In addition, barriers to communication included coordinating the sharing of information with the US response from abroad.

Other Presentation Topics and Discussion Points:

Dr. Anilkumar Mangla from DHR Environmental Health gave a comprehensive presentation on the pathways of lead poisoning and its diagnosis being unrealized. Dr. Mangla is currently studying anemia and its correlation to blood lead.

Dr. Reuben Beverly presented information about antibiotics in seafood. Some antibiotics cannot be used in the United States due to concerns regarding antibiotic resistance emerging in pathogens. Sanitarians from the Consumer Protection Division collect samples to detect antibiotics, particularly in imports from Vietnam and China.



Van Harris (GDA Consumer Protection Division) and Nelle Couret (DHR Environmental Health) presented an explanation of the procedures in Georgia regarding Boil Water Notifications. Communication between Georgia EPD, GDA, and DHR is critical during BWN's to ensure that permitted facilities maintain proper operating procedures and have a potable water source. Emergency SOPs and alternate water sources were discussed as potential strategies for permitted facilities to deal with temporary events. Dana Cole (DHR Epidemiology) provided an update of the Water Advisory Group. WAG consists of representatives from various agencies involved in water protection. Important points included a contact list and specific information about dialysis patients, a very high risk group.

Grants and Cooperative Agreements

FDA Grants

FDA presented the grant opportunities and awards to States by FDA in 2008. The four grants presented are to be seen as a pilot, perhaps to be expanded in 2009. The suggestion was made that Georgia should communicate with grant awarded States to examine their infrastructure. Successful submissions demonstrated utilization of the ICS framework for emergency management.

USDA/FSIS Emergency Management Cooperative Agreement with UGA

The long term goal of this agreement is to apply the lessons of Georgia on a regional basis. In the next 12 months, the plan is to execute two food emergency exercises with all of the key players involved. The perspective is from all foods, and no specific product or commodity was chosen in advance – mirroring a true food emergency, where the commodity is not known in advance. The program will examine typical high risk products such as Ready-To-Eat foods. An email group was established to keep interested stakeholders in contact.

By Nelle Couret and Van Harris

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How Puerto Rico Has Implemented the Food Code

In the year 2000, Puerto Rico adopted by reference the Food Code, in accordance to future amendments. This way we will be able to automatically implement the last version of the Code. Since that moment, we started the implementation, emphasizing on controlling risks factors that contribute to foodborne illnesses in establishments. We also emphasize on public health interventions the Code establishes to control those risk factors.

The process of implementing the Food code is more complicated, since we have to translate every document to Spanish, including the Food Code. In 2005, we were able to have in Spanish the 2001 Food Code, incorporating the 2003 Supplement amendments. Since that year, and on several occasions, Environmental Health and other governmental agency staff that serve food to high risks groups have been receiving training on the Food Code, section by section. The training is 4 to 6 days long, depending on the group. Environmental Health employees receive training for 6 days because during their course 4 quizzes and 2 exams are administered. Employees with rating of less than 70% do not obtain their certificate and have to repeat the course.

Since November 1, 2006, Puerto Rico started to use the inspection sheet included in the 2005 Food Code. Employees were trained on how to use it and in 2008 a refresher course was offered. With the collaboration of the Puerto Rico Restaurants Association, managers of regulated fast food chains and owners of supermarkets and restaurants received training on the Food Code.

In our inspections we provide emphasis on the demonstration of knowledge based on the assumption that a manager with adequate knowledge on foodborne illnesses and how to avoid them will be more conscious of the importance of preventing them.

Thirty-two (32) years of experience in the area of food safety has proven to me that education is the key factor to change habits, therefore, it is crucial that we continue educating industry personnel, regulatory agencies and the consumer. We need collaboration from everyone to reduce foodborne illnesses.

In Puerto Rico a group of federal and state agencies formed 11 years ago the Puerto Rico Consortium for Food Safety Education and during these years we have been taking the food safety message to regulators, industry and the public. During the last year we have incorporated the food defense message in our outreach activities.

Rita M. Goytía Colón, MS, CP-FS
Director
Division of Food Hygiene
Auxiliary Secretary for Environmental Health
Puerto Rico Department of Health

Keeping Food Safe in Mississippi

Voluntary National Retail Program Standards

Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) is in the process of meeting five Retail Food Program Standards.

Mississippi automatically adopts the most current edition of the Food Code, making it easier to meet Standard 1. Our Program staff gives the ORAU Applications Course twice a year, requiring all new employees to attend. This class was developed by AFDO, and is a component in our meeting Program Standard 2. Additionally, we require all Food staff to be standardized.

We meet Standard 3 since our program, and inspection process, has been risked based for many years. Also, our policies address Risk Control Plans, Enforcement action, Corrective action and variances. Most recently we have worked on Standard 9 by completing the first Baseline Survey. Some of our results surprised us, and we've made changes in our program as a result. We were also pleasantly surprised to see that the "no bare hand contact" issue was so widely accepted and in compliance at most all facilities.

We continue to work toward the remaining Standards. Working with our industry partners has helped us achieve Standard 7.

Manufactured Foods Program Standards has also been something we have recently undertaken. This year, we are working on our Program Assessment and have plans to continue working toward the Standards. We are in the first year of self-auditing under these Standards.

Disaster Response

Although Hurricane Katrina hit the Mississippi Gulf Coast more than 4 years ago, reconstruction is still underway. Our coastal District is still seeing new construction of food facilities. New trends, like free standing ice dispensers and ROP, tend to occur there before moving throughout the state.

In February, MSDH sent an Environmental Strike Team to assist with recovery after the Kentucky Ice Storm. A team of nine Environmentalists went to southwestern Kentucky for 10 days, to help inspect and re-open food facilities, and to monitor feeding centers and shelters. They worked with local inspectors, met wonderful Kentuckians, and had the opportunity to explore the beautiful countryside!

Mississippi continues to move forward, in keeping our food safe for consumers. We are fortunate to have wonderful and capable leadership, staff, and the cooperation of other regulatory authorities and industry in the state.

**Queen Swayze, Food Program Specialist,
Mississippi State Department of Health**

Noro Noro from South Carolina

Noro, noro, noro can you say no more Noro? We don't like to say this out loud, but thank goodness all our Noro cases have non-food related. Very little to report as far as food outbreaks, thank goodness!

PCA did supply raw product to one cookie manufacture in the state. How's this for luck: instead of using the FIFO SOP with the raw product, a lazy employee grabbed the newest (safe) shipment instead of the old (contaminated) shipment. So the peanut butter cookies produced prior to the recall were all safe. Hey, sometimes laziness pays off!

Budget cuts woes have of course hit our state. We have survived the first round with the early retirement of some staff, releasing some contractual staff and taking a five-day furlough.

Standardization of staff continues as we try to become more efficient with limited staff and growing numbers of facilities to inspect. We are seeking new creative training techniques, newsletters, online programs, partnerships, grants, etc.

Most of all we want to extend a warm invitation to the FDA SE Regional Seminar this coming November to be held in Myrtle Beach, SC. We promise perfect beach weather and lot's of good southern hospitality. Dates are: November 3-5, 2009. A welcome reception will be held on November 02.

Rebecca Gray Causey
Bureau of Environmental Health
South Carolina Department of Health

Alabama Adopts Regulations Requiring Mandatory Food Manager Certification

The Alabama Department of Public Health has adopted regulations requiring mandatory food manager certification effective January 1, 2010. The Department regulates approximately 23,000 retail food service establishments so developing a plan to implement this requirement was essential. When Alabama begin to think about adopting the 2005 FDA Model Food Code we sat down with each of our stakeholders and any group or organization that had any interest or might be affected by a proposed rule revision. We had face to face meetings with the State Department of Education to discuss their concerns over the impact on school lunchrooms, the Alabama Department of Senior Services on how it would affect nutrition feeding sites, the Alabama Restaurant Association, the Alabama Retail Association, the Alabama Grocery Association, and we conducted staff meetings in every area of the state to get input from local inspectors.. We started the revision process by forming a review team that included program supervisors from each of Alabama's eleven public health areas, area environmental directors, and central office personnel at the state level. We met several times over the course of about 18 months to discuss proposed revisions and changes. During this process we provided updates to the trade associations and members of the Alabama Food Safety and Defense Task Force. The Alabama Food Safety and Defense Task Force is comprised of local and state officials from various governmental agencies, trade associations, and the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service. We decided to implement the certification requirement in phases. The first phase was to allow a time period for establishment owners to implement manager certification on a voluntary basis. Alabama uses a 100 point scoring system. To encourage voluntary certification establishments could earn two points on their inspection report if they met the following criteria:

- the person in charge holds a valid certification from an accredited program
- the overall score cannot exceed 100
- the person in charge is on the premises at the time of inspection
- there are no critical items debited on the current inspection and no continuing or repeated violations from the most previous inspection
- the rating score of the establishment is 85 or above prior to any bonus points being added

We delayed implementation of mandatory certification until January 1, 2010. During this time period the Alabama Restaurant Association, Alabama Grocery Association, Alabama Retail Association, and the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service have been supporting this effort in offering accredited courses throughout the state and increasing awareness of the soon to be required training.

Because we truly wanted a mandatory food manager certification program in Alabama we only included in our rule revision the accredited course component of the 2005 Food Code and excluded the other two options in the code that satisfy the demonstration of knowledge requirement. Currently there are three accredited courses (actually the tests are accredited) recognized by the Conference for Food Protection – ServSafe, The National Registry, and Thompson ProMetric. We chose to use nationally certified programs rather than develop our own for consistency and credibility. These programs already exist so we did not have the cost of developing something new. They are nationally accepted so a certified employee could move to or from Alabama and still have their training recognized. The programs are widely available so access to a course would be less of an issue, especially for independent operators. Additionally, the Health Department does not have the staff or resources available to offer this training on a state wide basis. However, three counties in Alabama currently have mandatory training requirements and other county health departments offer accredited training as time and resources allow.

Beginning in 2010 the two bonus points will no longer be available and a five point critical item demerit will be deducted on the inspection report for establishments that do not meet the requirement. During the first year of implementation, 2010, there will be no further follow up such as legal proceedings, permit suspension, etc..., only the five points will be deducted. After 2010, establishments that do not have an employee on staff with a valid certification will receive a five point demerit on the inspection report and will have 120 days from the time of inspection to take corrective action or legal proceedings to suspend their food service permit will be initiated. Also, as part of the 2005 Food Code adoption we developed four priority category designations based on risk for our establishments. The lowest priority category includes retail outlets that only offer prepackaged foods for sale and the highest priority category includes establishments with specialized processes requiring a HACCP plan. The mandatory food manager certification requirement only applies to the two highest risk categories. We also tied our inspection frequency to the priority categories as well, the lowest risk establishments are inspected a minimum of one time per year and the highest risk category establishments are inspected a minimum of 4 times per year.

We believe this will have an enormous impact on Alabama's Retail Food Safety Program. In some ways it already has, we have developed strong partnerships with our trade associations and other stakeholders. These partnerships result in a sense of ownership in Alabama's Retail Food Safety Programs. We are mapping new territory; stay tuned to see how it turns out.

Mark Sestak, Director
Retail Food and Lodging Branch
Alabama Department Public Health

"See you Soon" from Rita Goytia

To all my food safety colleagues, especially those in the Southeast Region and members of AFDOSS, I want to inform you that after 32 years of working as the Director of the Food Hygiene Division for the Puerto Rico Department of Health, Environmental Health Secretariat, I have decided to retire effective May 29, 2009.



It has been many satisfying years at which I have tried to give the best of myself, always focusing on preventing foodborne illnesses. The job hasn't been easy, but believing that one might have avoided someone getting sick or dying due to contaminated food, has made it very gratifying and has given me the strength to continue.

I wish to thank all those that have helped me on this path, especially my co-workers at the Department, San Juan District FDA staff, and FDA's Atlanta regional food and milk specialists. I also want to thank AFDO for all I learned during the annual conferences, which has helped me immensely to focus on my goals and keep my food safety knowledge updated.

I am not saying goodbye, I am saying "See you soon". My future projects are to continue delivering the food safety message from another point of view.