ALERT: The Basics

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Foodborne Illness From a Legal Perspective-
Lessons Learned

Food Defense Continuum

Food Defense is a term used to describe activities associated with protecting the nation’s food supply from intentional contamination. The Food and Drug Administration has adopted 3 broad strategies that encompass its food defense activities:

Prevention > Response > Recovery
**Prevention**

- Increase awareness among federal, state, local and tribal governments and the private sector to better understand where the greatest vulnerabilities lie; and
- Develop effective protection strategies to shield the food supply from intentional contamination

**Response**

- Develop the capacity for a rapid coordinated response to a foodborne terrorist attack
Food Defense Continuum

**Recovery**

- Develop the capacity for a rapid coordinated recovery from a foodborne terrorist attack

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Integrating Food Safety and Food Defense

- Efforts to integrate food safety and food defense led to a need for the development of tools to assist regulatory stakeholders, such as federal, state and local inspectors, with the task of raising food defense awareness in industry.
Integrating Food Safety and Food Defense

• This effort began with the development of FDA Guidance documents written for specific segments of the food industry.

• After the issuance of the guidance documents in 2003, it became clear that a shorter message would be useful to spark thought and discussion around food defense issues.

A.L.E.R.T.

How do I ALERT the operators of the establishments to make them more aware of Food Defense issues?
**ALERT**

**In today’s world it is important to be ALERT to protect your business.**

- **A**ssure that the supplies and ingredients you use are from safe and secure sources.
- **L**ook after the security of the products and ingredients in your facility.
- **E**mployees and people coming in and out of your facility.
- **R**eport any concerns about the security of your products while under your control.
- **T**hreat to your business and identifying suspicious behavior.

See [www.cfsan.fda.gov/alert](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/alert) for more information.

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**FDA’s ALERT Initiative**

- Intended to raise awareness of food defense
- Applies to all aspects of the farm-to-table continuum
- Identifies 5 key food defense points:
  - **Assure**
  - **Look**
  - **Employees**
  - **Report**
  - **Threat**
How do you Assure that the supplies and ingredients you use are from safe and secure sources?

- Know your suppliers
- Encourage your suppliers to practice food defense measures
- Request locked and/or sealed vehicles, containers, or railcars
- Supervise off-loading of incoming materials

How do you Look after the security of the products and ingredients in your facility?

- Implement a system for handling products
- Track materials
- Store product labels in a secure location and destroy outdated or discarded product labels
- Limit access and inspect facilities
- Keep track of finished products
- Encourage your warehousing operations to practice food defense measures.
What do you know about your Employees and people coming in and out of your facility?

- Conduct background checks on staff
- Know who belongs in your facility
- Establish an identification system for employees
- Limit access by staff
- Prevent customer’s access to critical areas of your facility

Could you provide Reports about the security of your products while under your control?

- Periodically evaluate the effectiveness of your security management system
- Perform random food defense inspections
- Establish and maintain records
- Evaluate lessons learned
What do you do and who do you notify if you have a Threat or issue at your facility, including suspicious behavior?

- Hold any product that you believe may have been affected
- Contact the Food and Drug Administration and local law enforcement as appropriate

CONCLUSION

- The nation’s awareness of terrorism has been heightened and there is an increased focus on protecting the nation’s food supply.
- It is everyone’s responsibility to recognize food defense as an important issue and to get involved.
- Being aware of the threats, identifying the vulnerabilities and taking action to mitigate the risks are activities where federal, state, local and private industry stakeholders must continue to work.
CONCLUSION

• FDA, along with its stakeholder partners, will continue to share the ALERT message and build complimentary pieces to help raise food defense awareness.

• We are encouraging all federal, state, local and private industry partners to consider ways that they can incorporate activities so that together, we ensure seamless integration of food defense across the food supply chain and enhance preparedness in the future.
Working to Keep Food and Cosmetics Safe and Promote Good Nutrition
For more information on ALERT, please visit www.cfsan.fda.gov/alert