Green onions were identified as the most likely source of two recent East Coast hepatitis A outbreaks this year. In September over 300 people became ill in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia with hepatitis A. In late October another hepatitis A outbreak in Pennsylvania occurred with over 600 confirmed cases and three related deaths.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) investigation of these outbreaks implicated raw green onions that originated from Mexico as the most likely source. Early in the investigation of the Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia outbreaks there was evidence that multiple restaurants were involved and the common food consumed was onions. One item that investigators found that is disconcerting about this outbreak was the fact that the restaurant staff had attempted to wash the onions but apparently had been unsuccessful in removing the virus that causes the illness from the product. The issue may be more easily understood when you consider that green onions are grown in the soil with the edible part either underground or close to the surface where it can be easily contaminated if raw manure is used as fertilizer. Additionally, green onions are also predominately eaten raw and they are multilayered making them difficult to wash thoroughly.

Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) authorities agree that the most likely source of the hepatitis outbreak in Pennsylvania was also green onions from Mexico. During the investigation of this outbreak the health authorities noted the onions were shipped in large boxes containing multiple bundles of onions. The onions were stored in refrigeration for approximately five days in a bucket of ice that came with the shipment, then rinsed, chopped and refrigerated for two additional days. The chopped onions were added to freshly made salsa and also to other restaurant menu items.

According to the outbreak report, two processing operations that may have contributed to this outbreak included the following: there were multiple opportunities for inter-mingling uncontaminated and contaminated green onions in a common bucket with the ice that the green onions were shipped with, and serving contaminated food items with a relatively long shelf life (mild salsa) to a large proportion of patrons over several days.

The CDC has indicated that there is an increasing proportion of reported...
Foodborne outbreaks linked to fresh produce. They also note that the contamination of fresh produce can be reduced by the application of “Good Manufacturing Practices” control measures which include providing sanitary facilities for field workers, controlling water quality, using properly treated manure of biosolids, and ensuring worker health.

**Note:** Hepatitis A is a disease that is characterized by jaundice (yellow discoloration of the skin), fatigue, and abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea, diarrhea, and fever. The average incubation period for the illness is 28 days and you may remain ill, in severe cases, for several months.

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**Yelm Food Handler Classes**

There are now two food handler classes in Yelm each month to choose from. We are there on the **Second and last Wednesday** of each month at 6:30 pm. The classes are held at the Yelm Senior/Multi-Purpose Center located at 201 Yelm Avenue East.

In **November** and **December** we will only be having one class each month due to the holidays. Our classes will be held on **November 17th** and in **December** on the **15th** — ONLY one class each month in **November** and **December**!

(If you need a Food & Beverage Worker’s Manual they can be picked up at the Yelm Senior Center, Yelm City Hall, and Yelm UCBO.)

**FOOD SERVICE CERTIFIED MANAGER CLASS**

Once again we will be offering our Certified Food Service Manager course to those who might be interested. The class will be held on two Saturdays in March. The dates are **March 6th** and **13th** from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm each day. The classes will be held in Building 1, Room 280. The cost for the class will be $90.00 and will include a text book.

This course will cover a variety of food safety subjects, such as basic food microbiology, food borne illness, and prevention, HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) food safety concepts, dish washing and sanitizing methods, rodent and insect control, food service laws, self-inspections, and problem solving.

Registration for this class must be received by **March 1st**. For your convenience you will find a registration form on the last page of this newsletter. If you are interested in taking this class please complete the form and send it in along with your registration fee to the address noted.

If you have any questions regarding this training opportunity, please call our office at (360) 754-3355 extension 7392 or the TDD line at (360) 754-2933.
Food Handler Classes at the Courthouse

Place:
Thurston County Courthouse
Building #1, Room 152
2000 Lakeridge Drive SW
Olympia WA 98502

Time:
Tuesday, 3:20 PM & 5:20 PM
Thursday, 8:20 AM
1st Thursday, 7:00 PM
3rd Saturday, 10:00 AM

Cost:
$10.00 cash or check (All returned checks will be charged a $15.00 service fee.)

Before coming to class, the Food Handler's manual should be read. Be sure to bring identification with you. Parking can be limited, so please plan ahead by arriving early, car pooling, or taking the bus.

CLASSES START PROMPTLY
AT THE TIMES INDICATED

Do you operate a food service establishment in rural Thurston County? Do you have an on-site sewage system that treats your wastewater? Do you know how to maintain that system so that it doesn’t create a health risk to your customers, or even as importantly so you don’t have to repair or replace it at a cost of $15,000 - $75,000?

Here are some things you should know about your on-site sewage system:

1. Did you know that running toilets and leaky faucets could overload your system with excessive water?
2. Did you know that some “older” ice machines are water-cooled and can add an on-going source of water to your system?
3. Did you know that some cleaners, degreasers, and sanitizers might be harmful to the bacteria in the septic tank, breaking down the proper treatment of the wastewater?
4. Do you know when it is time to pump your septic tank?
5. Did you know that pouring grease down the drains will clog the soil in the drainfield?
6. Do you have a “pretreatment” device for your on-site sewage system? Do you know how to maintain it?
7. Do you have a current “Operational Certificate” for your system?

These are just a few of the things that you should know to keep that system functioning properly, which ultimately helps you avoid exposing the public to the health risks of “raw sewage” and avoiding the expense of costly repairs. If you want to know more about how your system works and how to maintain it properly we have a specialist who can answer your questions. Dale Tahja, an Environmental Health Specialist with the Thurston County Health Department, has years of valuable experience working with both homeowners and food service operators who want to be proactive rather than reactive in the maintenance of their on-site sewage systems. If you have questions, please give Dale a call at (360) 786-5460 for answers about your septic system.

Remember, an ounce of prevention can really be worth a pound of cure when it comes to the repair and replacement cost of an on-site sewage system.
In previous newsletters we began a column that explains the red demerit violations we see during our food service inspections. We have compiled the data for 2003 and want to share that information with you. In 2003 our office completed over 1300 inspections of food service facilities. Two hundred and fifty-four red violations were noted. The major categories that were identified were as follows:

1. **8D—INADEQUATE HAND WASHING FACILITIES (17%)** Hand washing sinks were not accessible, hot water was not available, or there was no soap or paper towel for proper hand washing.

2. **5B—FOOD NOT PROPERLY REFRIGERATED (15%)** Potentially hazardous foods were held above the minimum cold holding standard of 45°F (room temperature storage or excess advanced food preparation).

3. **6A—HOT FOODS BELOW 140°F (14%)** Foods that require hot holding were being held below the 140° minimum standard.

4. **5C—NOT ENOUGH EQUIPMENT TO PROPERLY KEEP FOODS COLD (10%)** Refrigeration equipment was not working properly, or ice was not at sufficient levels to maintain food temperatures below 45°F.

5. **3B—FAILURE TO MINIMIZE HAND CONTACT WITH FOODS (9%)** Food service workers were not using tongs, spoons, spatulas, scoops, bakery tissue, or disposable gloves to minimize hand contact with ready-to-eat foods.

6. **4A—IMPROPER CHEMICAL STORAGE (8%)** Toxic chemicals were stored improperly so that foods could easily be contaminated.

7. **5A—IMPROPER COOLING PROCEDURES (8%)** Foods were not being cooled by reducing the food volume, leaving the product uncovered during the cooling process, or using an ice bath method with frequent stirring.

8. **2A—FOODS NOT PROTECTED FROM CROSS-CONTAMINATION (4%)** Raw meats, aquatic foods or poultry were improperly stored above ready-to-eat foods, or “pooled” eggs were handled incorrectly.

The red item violations must be corrected during the time the inspection is being conducted. Please review these trends and share this information with your staff. Hopefully, this will identify the key food safety issues before they become a red demerit violation for your facility.
A few things for Certified Food Service Managers to remember:

- Each participating establishment must employ a “Certified Food Manager” who holds a valid “Certified Food Manager Card” issued by Thurston County.
- A sanitation self-inspection form must be submitted monthly (even during months when our staff have been there to inspect the facility). The certified managers must sign their name to the inspection report prior to submittal to our office.
- The certified food manager can only inspect one (1) food service facility.

We would like to take this opportunity to recognize those certified facilities that submitted all their self-inspections and met the program requirements in 2003:

Bailey’s IGA Supermarket, Bayview Market Place (Deli), Buzz’s Tavern, Cascades Camp & Conference Center, China Town Restaurant, Dairy Queen (Hawk’s Prairie), Dairy Queen (Rochester), Dept. of Labor & Industries - Bienvenu Café, Farm Boy Drive-In, Lacey Senior Center, “Los Tulenos, McDonald’s (Tumwater and Yelm), O’Blarney’s Inn, Ramblin Jack’s, Rochester Senior Center, Schlotzsky’s Deli, The Spar.

Thank you all for your efforts!

Note: If you need more self-inspection forms—contact our office at (360) 754-3355 extension 7386.

DIRTY HANDS
SPREAD DISEASE
WASH THEM

Certified Manager Renewal Classes — 2004

This year our office is offering our Certified Food Manager Renewal Class two times, Saturday, April 10th from 10 am—2pm and Wednesday, October 27th from 5—9 pm! The classes are an opportunity for those Certified Managers out there with expired cards to renew them. This is also a chance for people who have current ServSafe Certificates to obtain a managers card and participate in Thurston County’s Certified Food Manager Program.

The class will last four hours and will cover emerging issues and regulation changes. We will also include the process for participating in Thurston County’s Certified Manager Program.

The cost for the class is $32.00 and upon completion of the class you will receive a 5 year State of Washington Food & Beverage Service Workers card as well as a Thurston County Certified Food Manager Card.

Bring your expired CFM card or your ServSafe Certificate, the $32 fee and some form of identification with you to the class. To reserve your spot in one of our classes contact Karen at (360) 754-3355 extension 7392.
**FOOD SERVICE MANAGER CERTIFICATION TRAINING CLASS SCHEDULE:**

The two classes will be held on Saturday, March 6th from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM, and March 13th from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

The registration fee for the 2 day class is $90.00 and is non-refundable. This includes the cost of the text book, *ServSafe Essentials, 2nd Edition*.

**LOCATION:** Thurston County Courthouse • Building #1 Room 280
2000 Lakeridge Drive S.W. • Olympia, WA 98502

**PARKING:** Parking is available in the public parking areas in front of the Courthouse, across from the Red Lion, and along the streets.

**REGISTRATION:** Please complete the attached registration form & send with the course fee to:

Thurston County Health Department
Attention: Karen Bryan-Nielson
2000 Lakeridge Drive SW
Olympia, WA 98502

The class is limited to 20 people. Registration will be on a "first come, first served basis" -- so DON'T DELAY !!! Registration is due by **March 1st**.

If you have any additional questions regarding this training opportunity, please call our office at (360) 754-3355 extension 7392.

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**Thurston County Health Department Food Manager Certification Course**

Name of Student: ____________________________________________________________

Mailing Address: _____________________________________________________________

Street                                                               City     State              Zip

Organization: ______________________________________________________________

Telephone: ___________________________________________________________________

[ ] Fee Enclosed ($90.00 per student – includes cost of text)

**REGISTRATION IS DUE BY**

March 1st, 2004