

(Mailing Address place holder)

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Dear Operator:

Michigan is experiencing a widespread outbreak of hepatitis A virus infections in the mid- and southeast part of the state. The State Emergency Operations Center has been activated to coordinate Michigan's response to the outbreak. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has also activated the Community Health Emergency Coordination Center to direct the response and provide guidance to the multiple local public health jurisdictions in the prevention and investigation of cases.

The outbreak began in August 2016, and has expanded to cases in 10 counties and the City of Detroit. As of October 31, 2017, there have been 457 cases of hepatitis A infection in Michigan, including 370 hospitalizations and 18 deaths. In the recent months, there has been a notable increase in infections among Michigan food workers from a variety of facilities such as restaurants, processors, retailers, and others. Hepatitis A is easily transmitted by consuming food or beverages handled by infected persons and every ill food worker situation could present a significant risk of infection to large numbers of people. Up-to-date information on the outbreak, including the current outbreak area, is available at www.michigan.gov/hepatitisAoutbreak.

MDHHS, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) and other state and local officials are working to prevent additional outbreaks to protect both the public and the state's food supply. Additionally, there are steps that food industry managers need to take to protect against the threat of hepatitis A outbreaks associated with their business, including but not limited to:

- Review of the enclosed information to become more familiar with symptoms and notification requirements and ensure that food handlers are following appropriate food safety practices.
- Review of the Food Handler poster with **each** food worker to ensure they have a clear understanding of the associated symptoms, notification requirements, transmission, and proper food handling practices. The poster should also be posted in a common area of your business (e.g., a break room or near the time clock).

State and local health officials are recommending that food industry workers within the current outbreak area get vaccinated against hepatitis A. Vaccine is available through most healthcare providers and pharmacies. Those without health insurance coverage should contact the local health department to check on availability of free or low-cost vaccination.

Hepatitis A is a reportable disease. Whether your firm is regulated by MDARD or the local health department, you must immediately report any suspected/confirmed hepatitis A worker illness or worker exposures to your local health department. It may be possible for vaccination to be given to other employees and consumers who may have been exposed by a sick worker. Illness can be prevented in those exposed, but only if they receive treatment within 14 days of exposure, so timely reporting of illness is vital in preventing additional infections. For all other questions regarding food safety regulatory requirements, contact your regulatory agency.

Contact information for your local health department and information on the hepatitis A outbreak in Michigan is available at: www.mi.gov/hepatitisAoutbreak