

The HQ Exchange Food & Drug Safety/Defense Team Would Like to Wish Everyone Happy Holidays!

As the holiday season approaches, we wish all of you a year of health and happiness and thank you for your collaborative efforts in protecting the health of our customers.

Winter and Rodents:

It's that time of the year again for those pesky rodents to be searching for shelter from the cold. What better place than a food facility? Keeping these critters out of your facilities can be challenging. A rat can fit through an opening as small as a quarter, while a mouse can squeeze



through a hole smaller than a dime. Rodents can be a huge problem because they can contaminate food, destroy property, and spread serious diseases. Therefore, it is

important to be vigilant and proactive to keep these pesky critters from taking control. To help prevent them from gaining entry:

- Install screens over vents and openings
- Dispose of garbage regularly
- Seal cracks and holes including areas where utilities and pipes enter the building
- Replace loose mortar and weather stripping around basement foundations and windows
- Install gutters or diverters to channel water away from buildings
- Store items in plastic sealed containers versus cardboard boxes
- Install weather strips at the bottom of exterior doors
- Keep doors closed when not in use
- Plant vegetation at least 12 inches from the perimeter of the building. Trim tree branches to prevent them from hanging over the roof
- Contact pest management immediately if you find rodent feces, hear sounds of scurrying in the walls or observe structural damage consistent with rodent activity

What is a Dietary Supplement?

Although dietary supplements are regulated by the FDA as foods under 21 CFR 111, they are regulated differently from other foods and drugs. Dietary supplements are intended to supplement the diet and contain one or more dietary ingredients (including vitamins, minerals, herbs, amino acids and other substances). They are taken by mouth as a pill, capsule, tablet, or as a liquid. Many

products may not seem like they are dietary supplements since they aren't in the typical "pill or capsule" form.

Coffee products in particular are often labeled as dietary



supplements if they contain certain added ingredients. Many of these coffee products advertise that they promote weight loss, increase energy levels and sexual enhancement. Some herbal teas may contain prohibited ingredients resulting in positive urinalysis tests.

The Exchange takes the safety of dietary supplements very seriously and therefore sales of dietary supplements are only authorized in Exchange direct retail stores, GNC and Vitamin World concession activities.

Approved Food Sources and Food Defense:

From a food defense standpoint, unapproved sources is arguably the biggest vulnerability the Exchange faces today. For our retail stores and NBFF (Name Brand Fast Food) restaurants, ordering is done centrally at our headquarters with a staff that understands the Approved Source process. However, at the installation level the oversight and responsibility for our food concessions is our Service Business managers who also oversee our barber/beauty shops, flower shops, alteration shops, etc. Pretty much all of the local contracts fall under their area of responsibility and unlike our food folks, they don't have the same level of training in Approved Source requirements.



Food delivered in POVs subverts the installation commercial vehicle inspection procedure

Because many small vendors are mom and pop, they may bring in their own food versus having it delivered in a commercial vehicle. These vendors may be transferring food unpackaged in the back of their car and bring product on base through the POV gate – thus bypassing the Commercial delivery gate where deliveries are inspected. Plus, if temperature control is required, they may not be transporting foods in containers designed to maintain

temperatures in the safe zone. Receipt inspections are needed on every delivery received for two main reasons:

1) To make sure that what we ordered is what we got

2) To make sure it is showing up in the condition it is supposed to be in with no evidence of tampering

Flu Season:

Flu season is here! Unpredictable as to when it will strike, the season usually starts around October and may run as long as late May with the peak usually occurring in January or February. The flu virus is spread mainly by droplets disseminated by coughing, sneezing and even talking. The droplets land in the mouths or noses of those nearby.



Picking up the virus from touching contaminated surfaces and objects occurs less frequently but is still possible. The virus can survive outside the host for several hours under normal household conditions. Most adults are capable of transmitting the flu virus a day before symptoms even appear and

up to 5-7 days after becoming ill. In other words, you may be contagious before you even know you're sick or after you feel back to normal. Even worse, you may be infected and yet show no symptoms at all. The most effective preventive measure you can take to avoid contracting the flu is make sure you get your annual flu shot. Knowing the proper way to cough or sneeze will also help cut down on the transmission. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or if you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands. Properly dispose of your used tissue and wash your hands with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Installation Food Vulnerability Assessment Teams:

Vulnerability Assessment Teams (VATs) identify and make recommendations to correct areas of weakness that might make us vulnerable to intentional contamination of food. Vulnerability assessments vary from installation to installation. Some assessments may be more stringent than others, but the most common areas reviewed are:

- ❖ Snack Avenue bulk food/drink containers and dispensers to include bulk ice dispensers
- ❖ Bulk CO2 tanks and/or access to CO2 ports
- ❖ Visitor controls (sign in/out sheets, escorts)
- ❖ Gasoline dispensers and containers
- ❖ Sanitation practices

The VAT meets quarterly at a minimum, and conducts an annual inspection and reports on vulnerabilities throughout the installation to comply with DoD

regulations. Every three years, a Joint Service Assessment is conducted on each installation by a third party. Local GM's should be partners in the VAT decision-making process. By being proactive participants of the meetings, concerns over any challenges of implementing recommended/directed changes are more likely to be



taken into consideration. It also presents the opportunity to discuss funding of any proposed changes, since many would likely be the responsibility of the installation and not

the Exchange. Most VAT meetings require a security clearance before you can attend these meetings, so check with your local Anti-Terrorist Officer (ATO) to determine what the requirements are at your installation. Once the final decisions are made on how to prevent credible threats, the Exchange should support those decisions fully to protect our customers from potential harm.

The Exchange Food Safety & Defense Internet Portal

Looking for past newsletters on food safety, food defense and barber/beauty/spa sanitation? Previous editions can be found by accessing either of the Staff Vet/Food & Drug Safety links at the end of this newsletter. Associates are also able to consult the site for quick access to commonly required Air Force and Department of the Army regulations, references, Exchange policies, and guidance.

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Useful links (control-click to use links):

- [Worldwide Directory of Sanitarily Approved Food Establishments for Armed Forces Procurement](#)
- [Staff Vet/Food & Drug Safety Program \(AAFES Associates Only\)](#)
- [Veterinary and Public Health Newsletters: Staff Vet/Food & Drug Safety Program \(Non-AAFES Associates\)](#)