

Inspection Report Item 5: Procedures for responding to vomiting and diarrheal events

Code Reference: FDA Food Code 2-501.11

When an employee, customer, or other individual vomits or has a diarrheal event in a food establishment, there is a potential for the spread of harmful pathogens in the establishment. Having a response plan for clean-up can help reduce the likelihood that food may become contaminated and that others may become ill as a result of the accident.

According to the CDC, Norovirus is the leading cause of foodborne disease outbreaks in the United States.

Effective clean up of vomit and fecal matter in a food establishment should be handled differently from routine cleaning procedures. It should involve a stricter cleaning and disinfecting process. Some chemicals that are routinely used for sanitizing food-contact surfaces and disinfecting countertops and floors, such as certain quaternary ammonium compounds, may not be effective against Norovirus.

It is important that food establishments have procedures for the cleaning and disinfection of vomitus and/or diarrheal contamination events that address, among other items, the use of proper disinfectants at the proper concentration.

Consumers are at risk of contracting Norovirus illness from direct exposure to vomit or from exposure to airborne Norovirus from vomit. Additionally, exposed food employees are also at risk of contracting Norovirus illness and can subsequently transfer the virus to ready-to-eat food items served to consumers.

A clean-up and response plan should address situations where a food employee or other individual becomes physically ill in areas where food may be prepared, stored or served. Once an episode has occurred, timely effective clean-up is imperative.

When developing a plan that addresses cleaning and disinfection of a vomitus and/or diarrheal contamination event, a food establishment should have specific directions for cleanup and should consider:

- 1) When a Clean-up plan will be implemented.
- 2) Who should clean up – this should be someone not directly involved in food prep or service.
- 3) How employees will be trained on the proper use of personal protective equipment and procedures to follow in containing, cleaning, and disinfecting a contaminated area.
- 4) How the effected area will be blocked off and contained to minimize the exposure of employees, customers and others in the facility to the surfaces or food that may have become contaminated (up to a 25 foot radius of the incident).
- 5) The process for removal of discharges, including airborne particles to prevent contamination of other surfaces.
- 6) What cleaning supplies are needed and how to clean. (disposable items are best).
- 7) How to disinfect (bleach solution is best) any surfaces that may have become contaminated. Steam clean items that cannot be bleached.
- 8) What procedures are in place for disposal of personal protective equipment and when to direct employees to wash hands before returning to work. Include procedures in the event that an employee comes in direct contact with infected discharges.
- 9) How an effective Employee Health policy and effective Clean-up procedures can minimize the risk of disease transmission.