

GEORGIA FOOD SAFETY AND DEFENSE TASK FORCE
Meeting Minutes – October 23, 2015

This meeting was held at the East Metro Health District office in Lawrenceville. Please see the “Sign In Sheet” for the full list of attendees. There was an estimated 35 people in attendance.

- 1. The FSTF Executive Committee met before the official task force meeting, from 9-10 a.m.** The goal was to review and discuss the task force grant for Georgia, with an update provided to all members during the meeting.
- 2. Opening Remarks by Priya Nair.**
The meeting was called to order at 10:02 am; Deanna Glisson provided welcoming remarks on behalf of Jason Reagan for the District Office. Priya reminded everyone about the task force mission, followed by a round table of introductions.
- 3. FSTF Grant & Mobile App Update**
 - Jessica Badour gave an update about the task force grant, which was approved in Sept. 2015. The grant provides funding in the amount of \$10,000 per year for three years (up through FY 2018). The funding primarily will go toward hosting a larger conference each year. Details for the FY2016 conference are pending. Volunteers are needed to help with event/agenda planning. Anyone who is interested may reach out at Jessica.Badour@agr.georgia.gov.
 - Additionally, the FSTF mobile application is under development, created with resources for members of industry and regulators alike. Input is open as regulations, outreach materials and other resources are incorporated into the app (available on Google Play and Apple Stores, search “Georgia Food Safety and Defense Task Force.”)
- 4. Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) Update**
 - **Cameron Wiggins** said the new Food Code will go into effect on Nov. 1: They recently provided a webinar to GA Restaurant Association members and provided in-person training to local environmental health specialists (EHS) on the updates. [A new brochure on the major changes is available on their website](#). In terms of phasing this in, the first inspection would be an educational opportunity. There are not a lot of changes, but there have been questions about the basic understanding of what the updates mean.
 - **Hope Dishman** provided an overview on epidemiological investigations: The biggest outbreak was over the summer for [cyclospora](#) (a parasite that can be foodborne and is usually associated with imported fresh produce). There was a big increase in Georgia cases this year – we usually have 5-10 per year, we are up to 34 reported cases currently. That summer outbreak was tied to cilantro from the Puebla region of Mexico; the RRT was activated and DPH worked with GDA and the counties where the restaurants were located. Multiple farms were involved and the investigation was not tied to one farm specifically. Looking ahead, the fall and winter sees more norovirus outbreaks, usually in nursing homes. Single cases aren't reportable but outbreaks are. She introduced Mark Rosenberg, a food safety fellow in DPH's epi section (can he help FSTF members with any projects?).
- 5. Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) Update**
 - **Natalie Adan** said the GDA finalized updates to the revised [Retail Regulations](#) in accordance with the 2013 Food Code on Oct. 1; this is the first time GDA/DPH are working off the same Food Code and there will be a lot of industry training and outreach. Currently, GDA Retail Food Safety Program has three standardized inspectors and many more are working to become standardized. GDA is in Year 4 of a five year grant for the [Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards](#) (MFRPS) and the state has achieved major conformance within many of the standards; currently working on a standards enhancement project now, more details will be forthcoming.

- **Brandon Saucedo** gave an update on the Rapid Response Team (RRT): Georgia’s RRT just got a new three-year grant award (there are [18 states nationally](#) with grant funded RRTs, plus a few non-funded states). Working to develop a response team that encompasses an “integrated food safety system” (IFSS). The next three years will focus on the Incident Command Structure (ICS) for multi-agency response, with a team that covers everything from environmental assessments and sampling to traceback investigations, using ICS to establish plans and assignments. He expanded on Hope’s discussion about the cyclospora outbreak and gave a short presentation (find it uploaded to the website). The investigation was led by DPH but expanded with GDA support and became a multi-agency response. Because it became an official RRT response, Georgia worked with others states, including Texas, to determine the produce had come from Mexico.

6. Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) Update

- **Dr. Paul Williams** said GEMA and the Dept. of Homeland Security have hosted nine [workshops](#) this year focusing on critical infrastructure and continuity of operations and business in Georgia. The most recent was a workshop where GEMA supported various stakeholders from USDA and GDA in preparation for the possibility of [High Path Avian Flu hitting Georgia](#). By streamlining the response efforts, the state is ready for action with emergency contracts as needed. There will be a 2016 workshop/transportation exercise about how the food system moves. In May, the HURREX workshop will work with industry within an impact hurricane zone ([see more from the 2015 HURREX here](#)).

7. Presentation – Byron Lopsinger, Environmental Health Emergency Planner

- See uploaded presentation, “Environmental Health Strike Teams” to learn more about what the Strike Teams in Georgia do, with specific events highlighted from 2015.

8. Additional Comments:

- CDR Christopher T. Smith, FDA Atlanta District Office State Liaison, was introduced to the group.
- There is now a link to access to [FSMA Preventive Controls Public Meeting Slides](#) (held in Chicago, on October 20), which includes access to the FSMA Technical Assistance Network (TAN) At A Glance Document – both available via www.fda.gov/fsma.
- Reminder: The **FDA Southeast Regional Retail Food Safety Seminar** will be held Nov. 30-Dec. 3 in Baton Rouge, LA. The primary contact for more information is Chris.Smith@fda.hhs.gov, (404) 253-1264. [Learn more via this link](#) and register NOW if you haven’t yet, time is running out!
- Industry challenge was raised to DPH & GDA to consider combining the Food Code to be applicable for both agencies (so industry only needs to comply with one version, versus two) – this would build a smoother system; Utah and Minnesota have done this and could explain the process to Georgia.
- Update! Check out the CDC’s surveillance system with its new name, [National Environmental Assessment Reporting System](#) (NEARS, formally known as the National Voluntary Environmental Assessment Information System or NVEAIS). The program is targeted to jurisdictions that inspect and regulate restaurants and other food venues such as banquet facilities, schools, and other institutions. The system provides an avenue to capture underlying environmental assessment data that describes what happened and how events most likely led to a foodborne illness outbreak. *The FSTF is looking to have more information about this shared with members in 2016 through a formal presentation.*

9. Closing remarks: Next meeting dates for 2016 TBD.