

# RESTAURANT FOOD SECURITY

November 1, 2001

## INTRODUCTION:

Recent terrorist attacks in New York and Washington have increased the awareness of food security throughout the food industry. Many food companies, government officials and trade associations have been actively involved in sharing information and expertise among themselves and with government agencies overseeing U.S. food security. Ensuring the safety and integrity of the nation's food supply is a shared responsibility by government and industry from farm to table. Recent events have prompted many in the restaurant industry to review and reassess their food security systems within their facilities and with their suppliers.

The restaurant industry's longstanding focus on food safety and security has successfully addressed the prevention of food borne illness and contamination, as well as tampering. The restaurant industry maintains active lines of communication with all federal and state regulatory agencies involved with food safety and in particular the U. S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Together we have a strong, ongoing interest in new technologies and programs that can provide an even greater level of food security and safety.

Many of the food security controls in place today in the restaurant industry may be confidential and very site specific. Therefore, the disclosure of specific procedures or control systems in place to prevent tampering of the intentional contamination of food in a facility may be inappropriate as a general rule. However, the basic principles of food security and the systematic approach used to identify potential risk and effectively address those risks are and should be actively discussed. To fully address the wide range of issues in food security a "TEAM" approach is needed.

## THE “TEAM” APPROACH:

The Threat Evaluation, Assessment and Management (“TEAM”) approach to food security is a systematic approach developed by the National Restaurant Association to assist in the identification and control of potential threats to food security in restaurants or anywhere in the food chain. The “TEAM” approach is similar to the widely used and successful Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) approach, developed to address food safety concerns. The TEAM approach consists of six basic steps.



Six Step Processes of Threat Evaluation, Assessment and Management

1. Identify the potential hazards at each step in the flow of foods from production to delivery to the end customer
2. Assess the risk at each critical exposure point within the flow of food that could have the greatest impact or affect the largest amount of food
3. Analyze risk control measures and establish management controls or procedures at each critical exposure point to reduce or eliminate the risk
4. Make control decisions and establish management monitoring of each critical exposure point
5. Implement risk controls if there is a break in the management control of the critical exposure point
6. Supervise and review the system to verify that “TEAM” is working

## Evaluate the potential threats at each step in the flow of food from production to delivery to the end customer

Unfortunately there are many steps in the food chain from farm to table where food security can be compromised. Start with individual restaurant sites and work back, identify all the foods used by the company and chart the flow of food, farm to table. The contamination can generally be of four types, bacterial, viral, chemical or physical. Each food producer and supplier to the company should be identified. Critical exposure points should be identified at each step from farm to table. The restaurant may not be responsible for each point but the point should be identified any way.

## Assess the risk at each critical exposure point within the flow of food that could have the greatest impact or affect the largest amount of food

It would be very easy to spend all of ones time eliminating minor threats to food security and never get to the exposures of greatest risk. Therefore, the one key to TEAM is to identify the threat that is most likely and will cause the greatest impact. The threat evaluation matrix will help you analyze the threats of greatest concern.

|                                      |              | Probability |                |            |        |          |        |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|------------|--------|----------|--------|
|                                      |              | Frequent    | Likely         | Occasional | Seldom | Unlikely |        |
|                                      |              | A           | B              | C          | D      | E        |        |
| S<br>e<br>v<br>e<br>r<br>i<br>t<br>y | Catastrophic | I           | Extremely High |            | High   |          | Medium |
|                                      | Critical     | II          |                |            | Medium |          |        |
|                                      | Moderate     | III         | High           | Medium     |        |          |        |
|                                      | Negligible   | IV          | Medium         |            |        |          | Low    |
|                                      |              | Risk Levels |                |            |        |          |        |

## SEVERITY

*Catastrophic* – Complete business failure due to food product contamination resulting in deaths.

*Critical* – Major business degradation, due to food product contamination resulting in severe illnesses.

*Moderate* – Minor business degradation, due to food product contamination resulting in minor illness.

*Negligible* – Less than minor business degradation, and illness.

## PROBABILITY

*Frequent* – Occurs often in career to individual and population is continuously exposed.

*Likely* – Occurs several times in a career and population are exposed regularly.

*Occasional* – Will occur in a career and occurs sporadically in a population.

*Seldom* – May occur in a career and occurs seldom in a population.

*Unlikely* – So unlikely you can assume it will not occur in a career and occurs very rarely in a population.

## THREAT EVALUATION AND EXPOSURE MANAGEMENT RULES

1. Accept no unnecessary risk
2. Make risk decisions at the appropriate level
3. Accept risk when benefits outweigh the costs
4. Integrate TEAM into planning at all levels

## **Analyze risk control measures and establish management controls or procedures at each critical exposure point to reduce or eliminate the risk**

Effective control will reduce or eliminate one of three: probability, severity or exposure, control measures may be rejected if cost exceeds benefit. This is the most critical and most difficult step. All food suppliers should be contacted to establish communication and a dialogue regarding food security. Security and control of the fields, plants and transportation is critical. Cooperative food security controls should be established to assure that the product delivered to the restaurant is the same product that left the supplier. Depending on the food item it may be as simple as using security tamper proof tape on boxes or simply checking all incoming packages. However, many food items come to restaurants in porous containers or packages. Unique or innovative controls may have to be established in these instances to address food security. In no case should any restaurant purchase foods from unapproved suppliers or food suppliers that have not been pre-approved and evaluated for security.

## **Make control decisions and establish management monitoring of each critical exposure point**

After controls have been selected to eliminate threats or reduce their risk, determine the level of residual risk for the selected course of action. Management must take an active role in establishing control procedures and assuring that each critical exposure point under management control is monitored. In most cases premise security and work rules will be under the restaurant manager's control. The manager must also ensure that all established protocol for food deliveries is followed, as well as strict security controls of all traffic of food and non-food personnel within the restaurant. Many restaurants have established a two person rule which dictates that two people must be present all times when food preparation is ongoing. The exact duties and responsibilities should be developed and established in a written plan and reviewed regularly with employees.

## **Implement risk controls if there is a break in the management control of the critical exposure point**

Once the risk control decision is made, assets must be made available to implement specific controls. Part of implementing control measures is informing the personnel in the system of the risk management process results and subsequent decisions. Careful documentation of critical steps in the risk management process is important. If there is a break in the management of a critical exposure point, management must clearly establish actions to correct the situation. Depending on the break, the range of action could involve destroying food or simply making necessary inquiries. In all cases, the actions should eliminate any potential exposure from the lack of control at the break point.

## **Supervise and review the system to verify that the “TEAM” is working**

Testing the system is one of the most important parts of the plan. A top to bottom review and supervision of the entire plan is essential to “TEAM” success. Establish a critical control audit plan and evaluate the plans effectiveness and organizational impact. Modify the plan based upon plan failures, organizational impact or employee input. All good plans need to be tested regularly to ensure that they are controlling the exposure. Audits should be accomplished by trained professionals or management staff on a regular time table.