

Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals

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Governor Proclaims September as Food Safety Education Month in Iowa

DES MOINES, IOWA - Iowa Governor Chet Culver has proclaimed September as 'Food Safety Education Month' in Iowa. In his proclamation, the Governor said September 2009 is a time to focus attention on the importance of safe food handling and preparation in both home and commercial kitchens. Created by the foodservice industry in 1995, Food Safety Education Month is widely supported by federal, state and local government agencies, the food industry, and consumer organizations. Culver said Iowans should take special care to follow the theme of this year's campaign – *Food Safety Thrives When You Focus on Five* – to prevent the transmission of foodborne illnesses.

The goal of this year's Food Safety Education Month activities is to communicate to consumers that each of the five main steps in the preparation and handling of food are equally important and necessary to keep food safe. This year's theme, *Food Safety Thrives When You Focus on Five*, reinforces the following steps in safe food handling and preparation:

- **Avoid purchasing food from unsafe sources** – Food that is received from suppliers that are not practicing food safety can cause a foodborne illness outbreak. Purchase food only from an approved, reputable supplier, which has been inspected and meets all applicable laws.
- **Clean and sanitize correctly** – Food can easily be contaminated if you don't keep your facility and equipment clean and sanitized. Surfaces that touch food must be cleaned and sanitized the right way, and at the right time. Cleaning removes food and other dirt from a surface.
- **Prevent cross-contamination** – Disease-causing pathogens can be transferred from one surface or food to another. This is called cross-contamination. If you are not careful, pathogens can be spread from food or unwashed hands to preparation areas, equipment, and utensils.
- **Avoid time-temperature abuse** – Some food requires time and temperature control to keep it safe. Food that is not cooked or cooled to the proper temperature can grow high levels of pathogens. Cooking, cooling, and holding foods the right way can help to keep them safe.

- **Practice personal hygiene** – Dirty hands and clothing can transfer disease-causing pathogens to food, making people sick. The most important way to prevent this is to wash your hands. Good personal hygiene is easy, and it can help keep food safe.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 76 million persons experience foodborne illnesses each year, resulting in 5,000 deaths annually. “Although most consumers have a good foundation of food safety knowledge, problem areas and food safety gaps still exist,” the Governor said, adding: “Food safety begins with educating the public to handle and prepare food properly at home - where food safety is equally as important - whether cooking from scratch or serving take-out meals and restaurant leftovers.”

The risk of foodborne illness is of increasing concern due to changes in the global market, the aging of our population, increasing numbers of individuals at risk for foodborne illnesses, and changes in food production practices. "Ensuring safe food is an important public health priority for Iowa and our nation," Culver added.

The Governor noted that the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) is responsible for inspecting and licensing more than 18,400 restaurants and grocery stores in the state. The Department and the local health departments with which it contracts work to protect Iowa consumers from the dangers of foodborne illnesses.

Culver also acknowledged the work of the Iowa Food Safety Task Force in promoting food safety awareness throughout the state. The Task Force is composed of representatives from local, state and federal government agencies, Iowa’s commodity groups, the hospitality and grocers associations, Iowa State University and the University of Iowa. “It is through such government-industry partnerships that Iowans can be assured that the foods they eat in the state’s restaurants, as well as the foods they purchase from Iowa grocery stores are safe and wholesome,” Governor Culver concluded.

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Editor’s Note: A copy of the proclamation is available on the Department’s web site at <http://www.dia.iowa.gov/page22.html>.