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June 2008: Red Tomatoes

What, Salmonella and raw tomatoes?! The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has announced that a salmonellosis outbreak has been linked to eating raw red plum, red and red round tomatoes, and products containing these raw, red tomatoes. Symptoms of salmonellosis include fever, diarrhea (which may be bloody), nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and sometimes even death. Symptoms normally appear within 12-72 hours after being infected with the bacteria and last 4-7 days. Since mid-April, there have been 228 reported cases of salmonellosis caused by *Salmonella saintpaul* and at least 25 hospitalizations from 23 states, including Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin. According to the FDA, some of the states reporting these illnesses include: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. These numbers continue to grow and spread, so check the FDA website regularly to be updated.

Salmonella spp. are often eliminated by cooking and this reason, the requirement for cooking poultry to 165F for 15 seconds. Many times, tomatoes are eaten fresh and raw. If so, your main control would be "where" you purchase your tomatoes. As of June 9, 2008, the FDA has identified raw red plum, red Roma, and red round tomatoes from Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida (counties of: Jackson, Gadsden, Leon, Jefferson, Madison, Suwannee, Hamilton, Hillsborough, Polk, Manatee, Hardee, DeSoto, Sarasota, Highlands, Pasco, Sumter, Citrus, Hernando, Charlotte)*, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Baja California (Norte), Belgium, Canada, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Israel, Netherlands, and Puerto Rico. FDA's recommendation does not apply to the following tomatoes from any source: cherry, grape, and tomatoes sold with the vine still attached. In addition to source, make sure you refrigerate the tomatoes within 2 hours, avoid the use of bruised or damaged tomatoes, thoroughly wash the tomatoes, and minimize cross contamination. Updated information regarding tomatoes can be found at: www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/tomatoes.html#retailers.

Please remember that all *Salmonella* spp. infections should be reported to state or local health authorities. If you are not sure where the tomatoes are grown or harvested, please contact your purveyor for information.

Five minutes a day of staff training would make all the difference. Why don't you try various methods to incorporate training into your work day? If you have any questions regarding sanitation or food safety, or require additional information regarding staff training, please feel free to e-mail us.