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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

JAMIE CLOVER ADAMS
DIRECTOR

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Dear Operator:

Michigan has been experiencing a widespread outbreak of hepatitis A virus infections in the southeast part of the state since August 2016, and recently, it has been expanding into other counties. As of October 25, 2017, there have been 431 cases of hepatitis A infection, including 348 hospitalizations and 17 deaths. In the recent months, there has been a notable increase in infections among Michigan food workers from a variety of facilities such as restaurants, processors, retailers, and others. Hepatitis A is easily transmitted by consuming food or beverages handled by infected persons and every ill food worker situation could present a significant risk of infection to large numbers of people.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) and other state and local officials are working to prevent additional outbreaks to protect both the public and the state's food supply. Additionally, there are steps that food industry managers need to take to protect against the threat of hepatitis A outbreaks associated with their business, including but not limited to:

- Review the enclosed Food Manager Material to become more familiar with symptoms and notification requirements and ensure that food handlers are following appropriate food safety practices.
- Review the Food Handler Material with **each** food worker to ensure they have a clear understanding of the associated symptoms, notification requirements, transmission, and proper food handling practices. These materials should also be posted in a common area of your business (i.e. break room or time clock).

State and local health officials are recommending that food industry workers get vaccinated against hepatitis A. For those without health insurance coverage, it is recommended they contact the local health department to check into the availability of no or low-cost vaccination. People may also contact their health care providers or pharmacies for more information on vaccination.

Whether the firm is regulated by MDARD or the local health department, operators must immediately communicate any reports of suspected/confirmed hepatitis A worker illness or worker exposures to their local health department. It may be possible for vaccination to be given to other employees and consumers who may have been exposed by a sick worker. Illness can be prevented in those exposed, but only if they receive treatment within 14 days of exposure, so timely reporting of illness is vital in preventing additional infections. For all other questions regarding food safety regulatory requirements, contact your regulatory agency.

To locate contact information for your local health department, such as to find an immunization clinic or report symptoms, please visit:

www.mi.gov/foodsafety

For information on the hepatitis A outbreak in Southeast Michigan please visit:

www.mi.gov/hepatitisAoutbreak