

## Meeting Minutes – North Carolina Food Safety and Defense Task Force

Wednesday, November 14, 2018

NC Emergency Management Operations Center – Media Room

1636 Gold Star Drive

Raleigh, NC 27607

The meeting was called to order at 9:36 am by Steve Tracey.

### I. Agenda

- A. The meeting opened with each member introducing themselves. A sign-up sheet was provided so current and new members could provide contact information.
- B. The minutes from the September 2018 Task Force Meeting were reviewed. A motion was made to accept the minutes and they were approved.
- C. Food borne Illness Outbreak Update  
Nicole Lee reported a norovirus outbreak at El Zapatillo in Nash County. The Cabarrus Health Alliance is addressing an outbreak of vomiting and diarrhea from a church barbecue. Approximately 9500 pounds of barbecue and 5-600 gallons of Brunswick stew were served. A toxin is expected due to the rapid onset of symptoms. Stool and Food samples have been sent to CDC for analysis.

### II. Business

#### A. Committee Reports

- a. Executive Committee – Beth Yongue
  - i. The executive committee met in October. Discussion centered around next year's conference. The theme is food traceability. Suggestions for speakers and topics are encouraged. Updating the website was also discussed. Daniel Gaines remarked that we received confirmation that grant monies may be used for this purpose.
- b. Food Emergency Response and Communication Committee – Sean Silva
  - i. Recall effectiveness checks are being conducted on two recalls: Duncan Hines cake mix and Frito Lay popcorn. The Frito Lay recall is due to an undeclared allergen. Cheddar popcorn (containing milk) was packaged in bags that did not have that flavor popcorn on the label.
- c. Crop/Produce Committee – Chip Simmons
  - i. Twenty-three PSA workshops have been completed and seven more are scheduled. 415 farmers have been trained. Five on-farm readiness reviews have been done and more scheduled. Mock reviews at research stations have been conducted so reviewers can correlate.
  - ii. Lots of discussion has centered around Hurricane related flooding. They may put together a workshop on Hurricane Preparedness. Debbie Hamrick is organizing it. Friday before last, FDA released long-awaited guidance on how to interpret FSMA requirements. The comment period is open for 50 days. FDA will hold four listening sessions. The closest is in Atlanta in December. One can also participate by webinar.
  - iii. Chip asked when the Produce Safety Task Force's annual report was due. Steve Tracey responded he would like it no later than the first

week of December, as the Task Force's annual report is due to the Governor by the end of the year.

- d. Dairy / Egg / Poultry Committee - Daniel Gaines
  - i. This committee is still in development. Daniel is receiving many calls about the cow shares law passed this summer. Karen Beck asked if any rule changes were required in the NC Administrative Code. Daniel replied that he was unsure.
- e. Conference Planning Committee – Steve Tracey
  - i. The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference will be held Tuesday and Wednesday, May 7-8 at the NC Biotechnology Center in RTP. This year's theme is Recalls, Outbreaks and Traceability. We hope to have a speaker on Block Chain Technology. Other suggestions for speakers are welcome. Chuck Martin suggested discussing current recalls such as the Johnston County Ham recall and how firms use shopper cards to notify customers. He also discussed how FDA and FSIS classify recalls. Ben Matthews offered to look for a speaker on food preparation and delivery in shelters. Daniel Gaines suggested Michelle Howard from FDA as a speaker. Steve Tracey suggested a panel discussion. Chuck suggested discussing microbiological sampling of products already in commerce: what are the sample results and how many resulted in recalls?
- f. Education and Exercise Committee – Steve Tracey
  - i. Kevin Hardison's job responsibilities have changed and he has transitioned off the task force. Another person to chair this committee is needed. If anyone is interested, contact Steve. Our January speaker will be Ben Chapman of NCSU. Speakers are needed for March and July. Steve suggested members give presentations on their agencies. Contact Steve if you have a topic or speaker recommendation.
- g. Web site Update – Steve Tracey for Veronica Bryant
  - i. Veronica is out sick. Steve reiterated that grant monies can be used to update the web site. He thanked Veronica for the work she has done so far and the work she will do in the future.

#### B. Other Reports

- a. World Equestrian Games – Shane Smith
  - i. There were over 58,000 meals served, 250 daily inspections and 37 Environmental Health Specialists involved. When Hurricane Florence arrived, about ½ the staff had to leave, but they adapted. There were rain and heat issues, and a few food safety concerns. One food booth had a sick worker. Potable Water was being provided in a tanker truck that was for non-potable water only. There were no reports of foodborne illness. The hurricane had little impact on the games – some rain and wind only.
- b. Academic Reports – Chip Simmons
  - i. The state extension agent conference is going on now through Friday. Candace Christian and Rachel McDowell discussed the "Safe Plant Information Center." This was developed by extension and intended to launch next year. Due to the hurricanes, it was used this year. Information on safe food handling was disseminated via social media on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Thirty different information sheets were also distributed. The hope is to make this a year round hotline for consumers to have food safety questions answered.
- c. Industry Reports – Steve Tracey

- i. Food Lion has been impacted by the McCain foods vegetable recalls and the Picksweet asparagus recall. They have been conducting effectiveness checks. Their distribution centers will have GFSI technology by the end of 2018.
  - ii. Chuck Martin stated Food Lion lost power at stores in the Wilmington area. He described having to dispose of perishables and selling some foods to salvage operators. There was extensive mold remediation work in some stores. One store was closed 2 ½ weeks.
  - iii. Chip Simmons discussed a new produce safety rule – Foreign Supplier Verification Program. A workshop will be held in Salisbury December 5 and 6.
- d. Agency Reports - None

III. In lieu of a Speaker, members gave Hurricane Impact Reports

- a. Daniel Gaines, NCDA&CS Food and Drug Protection Division, stated his agency conducted 1,530 assessments of producers they regulate. Most assessments were done by telephone. Over 600 firms reported damage and over 500 reported power outages. He feels retail organizations did an outstanding job of disposing affected product. This was not the case with Hurricane Matthew, and he has seen marked improvement.
- b. Shane Smith, DHHS, reported 28 counties were declared disaster areas. They had a good response from industry partners as emergency materials were distributed ahead of time.
- c. Wendy Pulley, NCEM, stated around 24,000 persons were housed in shelters. Most shelters do not cook, but most do serve food. In many cases, it is not known how food was handled or who served it. There is not always someone there to inspect and oversee food handling. Shane Smith remarked that some counties did not have anyone on call to inspect shelters and this needs to be improved. Wendy stated Red Cross Shelters do not allow outside groups to feed due to liability. When outside groups come in to serve food, Emergency Management knows, but the County Health Departments are not always aware so they can verify food safety.
- d. Ben Matthews of Department of Public Safety stated 170 schools were used as shelters and served over 6,000 people. If school cafeterias were used to serve food, the workers there are trained in food safety.
- e. Wendy asked how one can ensure County Health is involved and stated the state's PHPNR (Public Health Preparedness and Response) should play a major role. Shane stated he had been told the Red Cross had their own food inspectors. Wendy clarified that they do not. Steve said he would reach out to PHPNR to join the task force. Daniel Gaines stated Valerie Lott with PHPNR is on the task force and normally attends meetings.
- f. Chip Simmons of NCSU stated many produce growers were devastated by the abundance of water. Whether the water was from flooding, or just pooled water, it often did not matter as crops were either washed away or not marketable. Chip stated growers are slow to receive federal assistance and some are just now getting paid for storm loss that occurred 2-3 years ago. Hopefully the NC Legislature will appropriate more relief funds and distribute them faster. Steve Tracey asked which counties were hit the hardest? Chip remarked 28 were declared disaster areas. Crop losses depended on the produce grown and the stage it was in. Sweet Potatoes were hit especially hard. Some damaged crops could possibly be converted to animal feed.
- g. Ben Matthews reported these storms were the first time some school systems had to close "until further notice," but all were reopened now. Onslow, Carteret, New Hanover, Pender, Duplin and Robeson were hit especially hard. School property damages were 14 million dollars after hurricane Matthew, but this years' storms have

caused 55 million dollars in damages, and costs may rise to 60 million. Some schools missed 6 weeks of school. In Onslow County, every school was damaged. Nicole asked if there would be any changes in rebuilding. Ben replied they are discouraging any rebuilding any flat roofs because they do not allow water to drain and in many cases, caved in.

- h. Steve Tracey asked Gerd Ballner what the FBI's role was during the hurricane. He replied the FBI is not a first responder agency, but will assist as requested.
  - i. John Zeberan, USDA, FSIS stated when he does surveillance work, he provides industry with educational information on how to develop food defense plan.
  - j. Nicole Lee stated Emergency Department Visits are put in a database. Most visits due to the recent hurricanes involved injuries, prescription refills, dialysis and carbon monoxide exposure. Large and abundant mosquitoes were more of a nuisance than a public health hazard.
- IV. The next task force meeting will be Wednesday, January 9, 2019 at the Emergency Operations Center. Wendy will reserve a room.
- V. Adjournment: 11:15 am