

Meeting Minutes – North Carolina Food Safety and Defense Task Force

Wednesday, March 13, 2019
NC Emergency Management Operations Center
1636 Gold Star Drive
Raleigh, NC 27607

The meeting was called to order at 9:34 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. Special guests from South Carolina were welcomed: Jennifer Matheny, Kara Miller and Samantha Houston.
- B. The minutes from the January 2019 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 no current illnesses or outbreaks. She remarked it has been a very active flu season.

II. Business

- A. Committee Reports
 - a. Executive Committee – Steve Tracey
 - i. The executive committee met in February. Work concentrated on preparing for the May conference.
 - b. Food Emergency Response and Communication Committee – Sean Silva
 - i. There have been a few recalls recently: undeclared milk in sausage; cereals with undeclared gluten; squash and green beans for *Listeria monocytogenes*. Sean explained how the Monday phone calls work and invited anyone wanting to join to email him. Nicole Lee remarked that the calls were short in duration, but a great way of keeping everyone in touch and informed.
 - c. Crop/Produce Committee – Chip Simmons
 - i. For the benefit of the guests from South Carolina, Chip explained the Fresh Produce Safety Task Force and the on farm readiness review program. His group has been conducting mock reviews of State owned research stations to ensure the reviewers are consistent. This has been a busy training season, as they have had around 480 growers attend. Steve Tracey remarked that the Produce Safety Task Force presents and update to our group during our September meeting.
 - d. Dairy / Egg / Poultry Committee – Joan Sims for Daniel Gaines
 - i. There has not been much activity by this committee. Veronica Bryant asked for any updates on the Raw Milk legislation. Joan remarked it is still being vetted in the legislature.
 - e. Conference Planning Committee – Steve Tracey
 - i. The 8th Annual Conference will be held Tuesday and Wednesday, May 7-8 at the NC Biotechnology Center in RTP. Speakers have been lined up. Steve summarized the speakers and topics. Connie McElroy-Bacon will

email the final agenda when it is completed. Veronica Bryant described the recall game she will lead during the conference. Registration prices remain the same as last year: \$75.00 for industry; \$50 for government and \$ 25 for students.

- f. Education and Exercise Committee – Rachel McDowell
 - i. Andrew Capps will be our speaker today. Rachel is working to line up more speakers. If anyone would like to make a presentation, please contact Rachel.
- g. Web site Update –Steve Tracey for Veronica Bryant
 - i. Veronica is still waiting for approval to purchase the website platform. Wendy Pulley offered to help.
- h. New Business
 - i. Veronica Bryant discussed the history of North Carolina adopting the 2009 Food Code in 2012. Larry Michael is trying to get the legislature to adopt the 2017 code and asked for our support. Jeff Hawley motioned that the Task Force support this measure. An oral vote was taken. All were in favor, none opposed. The task force also agreed to write a letter of support for the adoption of the 2017 Food Code. Veronica Bryant offered to assist with the letter, which Larry needs this week in order to meet legislative deadlines.

B. Other Reports

- a. Academic Reports – Rachel McDowell
 - i. Nothing to add beyond what Chip Simmons already discussed during the Crop/Produce Committee report.
- b. Industry Reports – Steve Tracey
 - i. Steve introduced Joe Doster and welcomed him to the committee. Todd Taylor stated he had changed jobs from working for Ecolab to Diversey.
- c. Agency Reports
 - i. Veronica Bryant announced that Melissa Ham has retired and DHHS is in the process of filling her position. She also discussed recent water main break in Spruce Pine, NC and how DHHS has guidance for industry when they are without water or under a boil water advisory.
 - ii. Lisa Morgan announced the upcoming Food Safety Summit held by Chatham and Lee Counties on April 8th. Topics include recalls, 41-degree cold holding, and proper cleaning up bodily fluids (in relation to reducing the spread of norovirus). Lisa stated they are having good compliance with the new 41-degree cold holding requirement. In most stores/restaurants only 1 or 2 items may be out of compliance. Lettuce is commonly found to be between 41 and 45 degrees.
 - iii. Rebecca Coats remarked that some establishments with new permits are upset about losing points. In the first inspection of 2019 for existing establishments, no points are taken for products being between 41 and 45 degrees. New permittees do get points taken off.
 - iv. Steve Tracey explained the on farm readiness reviews to our South Carolina guests. Chip Simmons clarified that NCDA conducts the inspections but FDA is funding the project.
 - v. Dianne Ducharme and Nicole Clausen of FDA explained their commissioner, Dr. Gottlieb, is stepping down and FDA will have an acting commissioner. Frank Yiannis is the new Deputy Commissioner of Food Policy and Response for FDA.

- vi. Wendy Pulley announced she will be working with NCDA&CS Emergency Programs Division to put together an agriculture emergency response plan. Wendy stated she would like to strengthen her knowledge of food safety and requested everyone inform her of any trainings they know about.

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.
 - k. Samantha Houston and Kara Miller from South Carolina stated they came to hear the presentation on CBD oil and to learn how North Carolina was handling CBD oil products.
- IV. Speaker Presentation – Andrew Capps of Bionetwork gave a presentation on CBD oil.
- V. The next gathering of the task force will be the conference held Tuesday and Wednesday, May 7-8 at the NC Biotechnology Center in RTP.
- VI. The next task force meeting will be Wednesday, July 10, 2019 at the NC Emergency Operations Center.
- VII. Adjournment: 11:36 am