



Overview of Food Incidents

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Outline

Food incidents

- What is a food safety incident?
- What is incident management?
- Why develop an incident management system?
- What are the features of such a system?

Australia's Food Incident Response Protocol

Food Incidents



What is a food safety incident?

“Any situation within the food supply chain where there is a risk, potential risk or perceived risk of illness or confirmed illness associated with the consumption of a food or foods.”

(and may/will require intervention)



Common characteristics of food safety incidents

- Risk (actual or potential) to human health
- Involves a physical, chemical or microbiological hazard
- Can occur at any stage of the food supply chain
- Requires some form of response

Response should be ...

- Scientifically based
- Effective
- Consistent
- Legally sound
- Balanced – public health, social impacts, cost-benefit
- Well communicated



...but there are challenges

- New and emerging hazards
- Uncertainties in science
- Public perceptions
- Political sensitivity
- Legal issues

What is incident management?

- Measures to manage the risk to consumers from unsafe/unsuitable food in a timely and effective manner



Management Framework

A management framework must:

- Be comprehensive and address all hazards
- Be integrated at all levels of government and with industry
- Contain prevention, preparation, response and recovery elements

Why develop a system?

- Frequency and complexity of incidents have increased worldwide
- Impacts to governments, industry and consumers can be significant
- Several agencies may need to respond
- Need for a consistent and timely response



What is required in a system?

- Integration of activities and resources of multiple agencies
- Operationally effective for any type of incident (imminent or actual)
- Supporting principles can be applied broadly to food safety management

An Effective Management System

- Defines functions
- Uses uniform terminology
- Provides an adaptable approach
- Defines incident management structure and plans
- Clearly defines roles and responsibilities
- Allocates resources efficiently
- Adopts a risk management approach
- Establishes communication flows
- Conducts routine system reviews and modifications
- Supports training

Response Protocols

- Operation, coordination and communication between agencies/jurisdictions
- Build on existing individual organisation protocols
- Embody emergency management principles
- Define roles and responsibilities
- Describe response phases and activities





An Overview of Australia's National Food Incident Response Protocol



National Food Incident Response Protocol

A guide for the coordination of Australian government agencies responsible for food safety and food issues in the event of a national food incident

Version: July 2009

Why have a Protocol?

- Ensures response and communication is timely, consistent, appropriate, coordinated
- Formalises current arrangements and links with Federal and State/Territory protocols
- Manages incidents for widely distributed foods

Scope

- A guidance document for coordinating the response of Australian food regulatory agencies during a food incident

“Any situation within the food supply chain where there is a risk, potential risk or perceived risk of illness or confirmed illness associated with the consumption of a food or foods.”

“A food incident that could, or is expected to, impact on multiple government jurisdictions.”

Structure of the Protocol

- Single coordination point
- Roles and responsibilities defined
- Consultative mechanisms involving government and industry
- Response actions designed to minimise disruption to industry/consumers while protecting public health and safety
- Graduated responses depending on the incident
- Integration of food incident and public health incident response processes

Roles and Responsibilities

- Notifying Agency
- Central Notification Point
- Food Incident Contact Officer
- Lead Agency
- National Food Incident Coordinator
- Agency Food Incident Controller
- Participating Agencies
- Risk Assessor
- Communications Controller



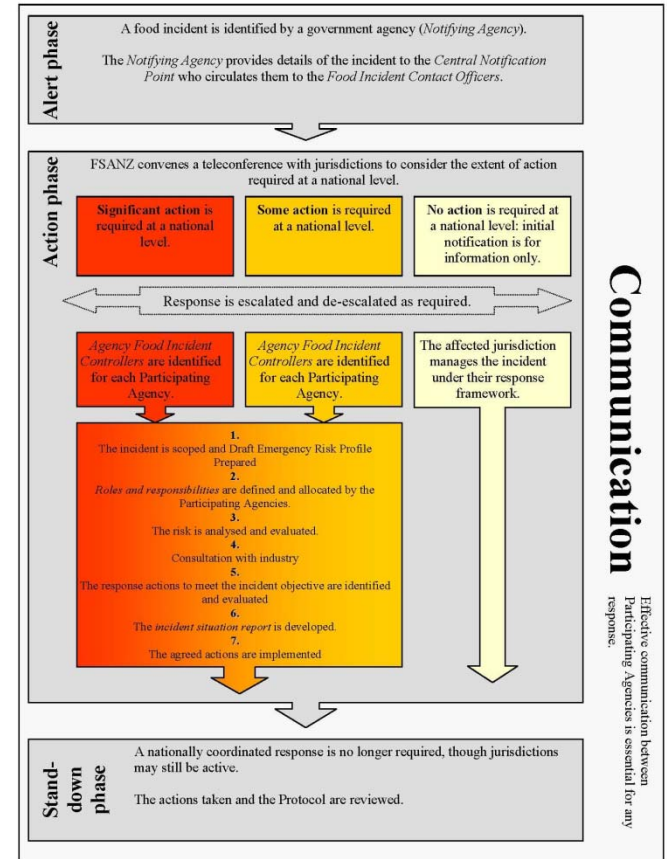
How Does the Protocol Work?

Three phases:

ALERT

ACTION

STAND DOWN





Alert Phase

- Awareness of incident from variety of sources
- Notifying agency notifies the Central Notification Point (CNP) – early notification encouraged
- CNP circulates a Food Incident Notification, including to National Incident Room (IHR obligations)
- May be only response for many incidents

Action Phase - Set up

- Actions may be restricted to the Notifying Agency or affected jurisdiction for minor incidents
- For other incidents – agencies notified of expected activities (e.g. a teleconference)
- Allocation of roles and responsibilities
- National Food Incident Coordinator
- Agency Food Incident Controllers nominated
- Lead Agency nominated

Action Phase - Response Activities

- Incident Objective established
- Risk analysed and evaluated
- Consultation with industry – early as practical
- Response action to meet Incident Objective determined (e.g. recall, communication, survey)
- Best endeavours to reach an agreed response action
- Situation Reports circulated
- Implement agreed actions
- Communication activities – developed by National Food Incident Controller
- Escalation/De-escalation – participating agencies decide depending on the changing complexity of the issue

Stand-down phase

- Participating Agencies agree that a nationally coordinated response no longer required and incident deemed to be over
- Participating Agencies should do de-brief or conduct after action review
- Outcomes considered by Incident Response Working Group, who may make recommendations to ISC on changes to the Protocol

Protocol Annexes

- Intentional interference
- Chemical contaminants
- Environmental investigation/trace back



Incidents

- 2007 – 01: *Clostridium botulinum* type A, nachos
- 2007 – 02: plastic contamination, chocolate bars
- 2007 – 03: wheat gluten
- 2007 – 04: apple juice contamination
- 2007 – 05: *Listeria monocytogenes*, meat products
- 2008 – 01: cyanogenic glycosides, vegetable crackers
- 2008 – 02: metal contamination, meat and frozen products
- 2008 – 03: Contaminated baby formula from China
- 2008 – 04: Contaminated pork from Ireland
- 2009 – 01: Hep A linked to consumption of semi-dried tomatoes
- 2010 – 01: Bonsoy milk suspected link to thyroid dysfunction



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Version: July 2009

A copy of the Protocol can be accessed at:

[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/CDA339ACBEE60CF8CA25709600193198/\\$File/National%20Food%20Incident%20Response%20Protocol%20-%20July%202009.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/CDA339ACBEE60CF8CA25709600193198/$File/National%20Food%20Incident%20Response%20Protocol%20-%20July%202009.pdf)

Thank you



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