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LICENSED ESTABLISHMENT GUIDANCE

- HYGIENE: PERSONAL CLEANLINESS AND HEALTH IN AN EMERGENCY –

This guidance is for all workers of a licensed establishment experiencing an emergency. Any situation which requires a change in your usual operations can be considered an emergency, including a sewage back-up, power outage, fire, flood, earthquake, winter storm, tornado, explosion, chemical spill, vandalism, or transportation wreck. Contact your local sanitarian if electricity, gas, safe potable water or sewer service is interrupted to determine if your business or part of your business can remain open. Establishments continuing to serve the public during an emergency must practice and maintain good personal hygiene etiquette to prevent the spread of germs (disease-causing microorganisms).

Excellent hygiene will reduce the chances of spreading illness that will add problems for people already dealing with a demanding emergency situation. Yet, emergency situations can shift your focus from normal routines and result in a loss of the usual conveniences for personal hygiene. It is important to remember human feces and dirt contain germs, including viruses, bacteria, and parasites. These germs can be spread from hands to food and beverages, then to other people. Also, many illnesses are "communicable", and are spread from person to person. Extra awareness and efforts for personal hygiene will go a long way in keeping you and those around you healthy.

Handwashing

Hands need to be washed after any activity that could contaminate them, such as using the toilet, changing diapers, caring for someone who is sick, handling dirty linen and towels, touching animals, animal food or animal feces, handling garbage, touching your nose, and coughing or sneezing into your hands. Even if you think your hands are clean, always wash them before preparing food and eating.

Every step of handwashing is important in removing germs. Handwashing sinks need to be conveniently located, always available for handwashing, with adequate running warm water, and supplied with hand soap, paper towels, and waste container. Contact your local sanitarian on how to set up a temporary or portable handwashing station if necessary.

Effective handwashing includes scrubbing, rinsing, and drying. Be sure to scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails for at least 20 seconds. Rinse well under clean running water. Dry your hands with a clean paper towel. Do not share cloth towels. It is equally important to avoid recontamination of your hands. Use paper towels to turn off sink faucet handles and to touch door handles when leaving a bathroom.

See back side for more information.

Good Etiquette

Sneeze into your sleeve and cough into your clothes such as your elbow area. If you use a tissue, place it in the trash immediately. Do not store used tissue in your pocket for future use. When discharges from the nose, coughing, or sneezing cannot be controlled, the worker must be assigned to duties that are removed from food preparation, food service, and any duties with direct contact with other people.

Food Preparation

Always wash hands thoroughly before preparing food, when changing tasks, and when finished. Use disposable gloves or utensils to avoid bare hand contact with ready to eat foods such as sandwiches. Do not use an apron to clean or dry hands. Dirty clothing, especially dirty aprons, can contaminate hands and food being prepared. Remove jewelry such as rings, bracelets, and watches because they can collect germs and transfer them to food. Tobacco use, eating, or drinking can potentially contaminate hands, food and food-contact surfaces. Trim fingernails to avoid harboring germs or breaking into food. Keep hair restrained to keep it out of food.

Hand Sanitizers

Washing hands with soap and running water is the best way to remove germs. However, if soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Apply the product to the palm of one hand. Rub your hands together. Rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do not remove soil, or eliminate all types of germs. Also, sanitizers are not considered a safe food additive, so may not be used when touching food.

Sensitive Occupations

Some types of work are considered sensitive occupations because they are activities more likely to spread disease. Examples are direct care of children and the elderly, and food or beverage preparation, service, or handling. The goal is to maximize public health protection with minimal disruption to workers, so exclusions or restrictions are based on the type of illness and the level of risk to others. Exclusion or restrictions may be necessary if a worker is sick with symptoms of nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, or sore throat with fever. If a worker has no symptoms, but has been diagnosed as a carrier or exposed to a communicable disease, exclusion or restrictions may be required until clearance from a health care provider is given. Contact your local sanitarian for specific information.

Stay Healthy

Make sure you prevent dehydration, eat healthy, get enough sleep, stretch, exercise, and take breaks as needed. Taking good care of your health and practicing good personal hygiene will keep you, and those around you, healthy while you respond to the challenges of the emergency situation.

References

For more information, please refer to the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM), Title 37, Chapter 114, subchapters 1 & 2, regarding communicable disease control, ARM Title 37, Chapter 110, subchapter 2, standards for retail food service, and 2009 FDA Food Code.

Local Contact Information:

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