

December 2023 EHFS Newsletter

Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| Training Opportunities..... | 1 |
| Cottage Food | 2 |
| Job Openings | 2 |
| Task Orders | 2 |
| Wanabana Update | 3 |
| SIT Orientation | 3 |
| PHEP F3 Deliverable: Backup Sanitarians..... | 4 |
| Morel Mushroom News Article | 4 |
| EHFS Form Help..... | 4 |
| Contact Information | 5 |

Training Opportunities

Webinars

January 16th at 9AM – Special Processing at Retail Part 2: Brad Tufto, FDA Retail Food Specialist, will be joining us again to talk about special processing methods as they relate to the smoking and preservation of fish. Additional webinars will be held on other special processes.

February 6th at 9AM – Morel Mushroom Outbreak and Investigation: This webinar will go over last year’s mushroom-related outbreak from beginning to end including the perspectives and actions of sanitarians, epidemiologists, and communicable disease specialists, all of which were involved in the outbreak response.

March 5th at 9AM – Fire Codes: Dirk Johnson, the State Fire Marshal, will be joining us to give an overview of fire codes and the role of the State Fire Marshal’s Office in enforcement. There will be a specific focus on the changes to the mobile food unit requirements. Please come with any questions you may have.

Other Opportunities

AFDO Inspector Bootcamp (Free, Virtual) – January 10th, 17th, and 24th, 2024: These 3 sessions will cover some essential technical and communication skills for retail/manufactured food inspectors with less than 2 years of experience. Registration for each session is separate, so you choose what is relevant to you. More information and registration links can be found on the [AFDO Inspector Bootcamp website](#). CEUs are offered by AFDO.

AFDO Advanced Inspector Bootcamp (Free, Virtual) – February 14th, 21st, and 22nd, 2024: These 3 sessions for experienced retail/manufactured food inspectors (2+ years of experience) will cover topics like foodborne illness outbreak investigation, specialized processes, plan reviews, and food safety culture. Registration for each session is separate. More information and registration links can be found on the [AFDO Advanced Inspector Bootcamp website](#). CEUs are offered by AFDO.

Zoom links to live webinars and recordings of previous webinars can be found on the [EHFS Training Resources page](#). If you have any further questions related to upcoming trainings or would like to be added to the Training Announcement List, please contact me at Karena.Doctor@mt.gov.

-Karena

Cottage Food

Happy New Year,

When sending a Cottage Food application, please send a product list. This list can be found on the Sanitarian Resource Page and is named [Product List](#). Please do not just send recipes, it is too easy for me to miss one and not put it on the Cottage Food certificate.

[Cottage Food Operation Guidance and Registration Form](#)

-Gail

Job Openings

Flathead County:

Flathead County has an opening for a sanitarian. Please see the link for more information. [Flathead County RS Job Opening](#)

EHFS:

Our office has a sanitarian position open. Please share with anyone that might be interested. See the link for a full job description. [Public Health Sanitarian/Environmental Health Specialist](#)

Task Orders

We began sending Task Orders (2024 Cooperative Agreements) to commissioners mid-December. Earlier this year, we asked lead sanitarians to identify liaisons and reviewers. Once the contract is signed, anyone listed as a liaison or reviewer will receive a signed copy.

Due to the timing of these contracts being released, we realize that it might not be possible to get them signed prior to January 1st. Please get them signed before the end of the 1st quarter. Late signatures will not affect payments.

-Staci

Wanabana Update

Wanabana apple cinnamon fruit pouches were recalled by the company due to reports of elevated levels of lead found in the product. These products were sold in Montana at Dollar Tree Stores. They may also have been available for purchase online.

Local sanitarians have been a huge help in ensuring that the recalled product was not on store shelves in Montana. On November 9, 2023, the FDA requested audits of Dollar Tree locations. Local sanitarians provided us with the information requested for these audits. On December 4, 2023, the FDA asked again that states confirm there was no recalled products on shelves. This request came after it was discovered that distributors were continuing to ship recalled product to stores. Once again, local sanitarians checked in with their stores. A big thank you to all of you that performed these audits.

As of December 13, 2023, there are three Montana cases associated with the recall. Previously, we stated there were five. Since then, two have been removed from the case count. Cases are children ages 12 months to 4 years. The children were identified through routine blood lead screen tests performed at a private clinic or Head Start. The reported blood lead levels ranged from 3.5 to 16.5 micrograms per deciliter. We will provide updates on case counts as we get more information.

-Staci

SIT Orientation

At the end of November, EHFS invited 4 SITs (Sanitarians in Training) to our first SIT Orientation. The orientation took place over 4 days (2 half days, 2 full days) in Helena. SITs received classroom and field training in the programs that EHFS oversees including licensing, pools/spas, trailer courts/campgrounds, body art, public accommodations, wholesale, and retail foods. Training included program fundamentals, plan reviews, and inspections at various establishments in Helena. In addition to formal training, the Orientation provided SITs with the opportunity to connect with peers, discuss situations they have encountered in the field, and get any questions answered.

Training costs like transportation, hotel stays, and meals were covered by EHFS. In the future, EHFS would like to host additional SIT Orientations. If you or a colleague are interested in attending a future SIT Orientation or have any questions, please email Karena.Doctor@mt.gov.

EHFS also wants to thank Nina Heinzinger and Lewis and Clark County Environmental Health for their help with the November SIT Orientation.

-Karena

PHEP F3 Deliverable: Backup Sanitarians

As part of this year's PHEP deliverables, you are required to have a backup sanitarian. This year's PHEP F3 deliverable is: Confirm backup sanitarian for emergency situations.

This requires that each jurisdiction has a backup sanitarian who is aware and agrees to be the backup in events where the primary sanitarian cannot be reached, such as during a truck wreck incident or other public health events.

For counties with more than one sanitarian, the secondary sanitarian is assigned as the backup, and should be aware of the responsibilities.

If your county is looking to work with other counties to secure sanitarian services as backup, we have uploaded a memorandum of understanding template on the sanitarian resource page. This document is a mutual understanding that can help establish arrangements for your counties. You can access the document through the Sanitarian Resource Page under [PHEP](#).

For jurisdictions that are having difficulties securing a backup sanitarian, this deliverable will be approved if the jurisdiction's PHEP coordinator contacts EHFS to state their inability to secure a backup sanitarian. Please reach out via email at elvis.tanyi-arrey@mt.gov.

-Elvis

Morel Mushroom News Article

Included in this section is a link to the Kaiser Health News article by Keely Larson related to Dave's Sushi. Jon Ebelt, DPHHS Communications Director, provided responses to Keely's questions in October and November. The link below is to the article published on CBS News via KFF Health News on December 13, 2023.

[Mysterious morel mushrooms at center of food poisoning outbreak](#)

EHFS Form Help

Database Access:

If you have someone in your county that needs access to the FCS/EHFS database, please email me at kaylie.kummer@mt.gov and I will send over the form to have their account made.

Change Forms:

In addition, all change forms can be sent to the HHS FCS email address or to me directly.

Thank you!

-Kaylie

Contact Information

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