

February 2024 EHFS Newsletter

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Training Opportunities

Upcoming Webinars - *Please register in advance using the links below. Webinars are for state and local health officials, sanitarians maintaining CEs, and partner organizations only.*

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. [Register to attend here.](#)

April 16th at 9AM - Ethnic Food Safety: This presentation, given by Marion County Food and Consumer Safety in Indianapolis, will cover the basics of ethnic food safety in a variety of cuisines and some specific ethnic food safety tools that can be applied daily. [Register to attend here.](#)

If you have any further questions related to upcoming trainings or would like to be added to the Training Announcement List, please contact Kareenna at Kareenna.Doctor@mt.gov.

-Kareenna

Licensing Update

The 4th quarter payment has been made, please check to make sure you received what you expected, if not please check the database to see what inspections haven’t been paid and enter the inspection date. The clean-up payment will be made next week, and cooperative agreement payment soon after that.

If you are sending 2023 and 2024 applications and payments, please mark the application to ensure they get processed for the correct year.

When collecting late fees, please make sure the license isn’t an eStop. eStop licenses renew on their anniversary date not the calendar date like EHFS licenses. EHFS cannot collect eStop license fees.

-Gail

Welcome, Darryl and Kira!



It is an honor to be a Public Health Sanitarian for the Department of Health and Human Services. I previously worked for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality for 5 and a half years. I was involved in permitting and compliance of wastewater and stormwater systems. I also did some source water protection work for drinking water. Prior to DEQ I owned and operated an environmental consulting business for 9 years. I had contracts with EPA, DEQ, Anaconda – Deer Lodge County, the City of Deer Lodge and many private individuals. My business focused on water quality, superfund cleanup, wastewater treatment, lead prevention, site assessments, and community involvement. I was also an Environmental Health Supervisor / Sanitarian with Hood River County in Oregon. It is a rural health department, so we worked in many different areas including food safety, drinking water, wastewater, public accommodations, pools and spas, emergency

preparedness and solid waste. I am a Montana native and graduated from Montana State University with a degree in Microbiology. I look forward to working with the many professionals providing for the public health of Montana.

-Darryl



Hello there, my name is Kira (KY-ra) Flagstead Dierickx (Deer-Ricks), and I am a new Public Health Sanitarian with Environmental Health and Food Safety. I will have an office in Billings and will be conducting FDA inspections, overseeing recalls, and assisting in the eastern half of the state as needed.

I graduated from Rocky Mountain College (Go Battlin' Bears!) with a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Science and a minor in Writing in 2014. I have had a few different occupations in places like wildlife sanctuaries, conservation voting groups, building material distribution, and the oil and gas field. In July of 2020, I became a registered sanitarian at RiverStone Health. I have experience in inspecting air quality, body art, retail food, wholesale food, and public accommodations. I serve on the MEHA board and am working with the Confluence Public Health Alliance this year to launch and lead the Registered Sanitarian Mentorship Program (RSMP). I am also running for Region 3 Vice President with NEHA, so please vote for

me on March 1st if you are an active NEHA member.

In my spare time I enjoy walking my dog, Gusty Crosswinds, drinking craft beer, working on house projects with my husband, Brian, and rewatching Star Wars and Indiana Jones movies. You can reach me at 406-417-0500, or email me at Kira.Flagstead@mt.gov.

-Kira

Rizo Lopez Foods, Inc. Recall

Rizo-Lopez Foods, Inc. has recalled several dairy products because they may be contaminated with *Listeria*. The recalled dairy products have been sold on their own as well as having been included in many other food products. New products continue to be added to the list of recalled items. The most up-to-date information on this recall can be found here: [Outbreak Investigation of Listeria monocytogenes: Queso Fresco and Cotija Cheese \(February 2024\) | FDA](#)

- Recalled dairy products include ricotta, requeson, queso, panela, Oaxaca, fresco, crema, cotija, sour cream, and yogurt.
- Products recalled because they contain the recalled dairy include (but are not limited to) salad dressings, taco kits, salad kits, sandwiches, enchiladas, Costco ready-to-eat items, dips, chicken and rice bowls, corn bites, and wraps. Check the FDA outbreak investigation post regularly if you are concerned about additional food items that may be contaminated as part of this recall.

Recalled Rizo Lopez Foods, Inc. products were sold to food service and retailers. They have been confirmed to be sold in Montana stores including Costco, Safeway, Albertsons, Walmart, and Whole Foods.

This outbreak includes cases dating back to 2014 and is currently ongoing. As of February 14, 2024, there are no known cases of illness in Montana associated with this outbreak. Nationwide, there have been 2 deaths, 23 hospitalizations, and 26 confirmed cases of illness.

-Staci

Cleaners, Sanitizers, and Test Strips

A question came in recently regarding the requirement of test strips for sanitizers. Per the 2013 FDA Food Code, section **4-302.14** states “A test kit or other device that accurately measures the concentration in MG/L of SANITIZING solutions shall be provided.” While we are pretty familiar with chlorine and QUAT test strips, there has been an increase in other types of sanitizers used in food establishments (lactic acid, ready-to-use products). When responding to the question, I found myself digging for what I assumed was going to be an easy answer. “If it’s approved for use on food contact surfaces and test strips are available, it’s ok.” I began to look into the active ingredients and search for a test strip, with no luck of finding test strips available. How do we satisfy 4-302.14 without test strips? Is an EPA label considered an “other device” for accurately measuring the concentration? I reached out to Brad Tufto for clarification and here are the answers I received:

- Test strips are only required when the sanitizer must be physically mixed.

- Use caution when buying test strips you are unfamiliar with, as some are specific to a certain product and will not accurately measure concentration of a different product.
- When using cleaner/sanitizer combo products, two steps are involved. The first spray to physically remove debris and second spray to sanitize per the instructions on the label.
- Always be sure establishments are using the products exactly as stated on the manufacturer's label.

-Jenna

“The Invisible Shield” Public Health Documentary

Brad Tufto passed along some information from the Idaho Environmental Health Association about a public health documentary that might be of interest to our group. Read the description below and [watch the trailer here](#).

-Karennna

Description from YouTube: The Invisible Shield, a four-part documentary series from RadicalMedia made possible by Bloomberg Philanthropies, reveals how the field of public health has saved countless lives in the U.S., protecting people from the constant threat of disease and increasing lifespans. The series explores the hidden public health infrastructure that makes modern life possible. It highlights the thousands of unsung heroes — physicians, nurses, scientists, activists, reformers, engineers, and government officials — who work together to improve health outcomes, from the days of cholera and smallpox through the most recent battle with COVID-19. The Invisible Shield *premieres Tuesday, March 26, 2024, 10-11 p.m. ET* (check local listings) on PBS, with all four episodes available for streaming on PBS.org and the PBS App.

Contact Information

Name	Email	Phone
Darryl Barton	darryl.barton@mt.gov	(406) 444-2089
Erik Leigh	eleigh@mt.gov	(406) 444-5306
Gail Macklin	gmacklin@mt.gov	(406) 444-2415
Jenna Fisher	Jenna.Fisher@mt.gov	(406) 444-0067
Karennna Doctor	karennna.doctor@mt.gov	(406) 444-5303
Kaylie Kummer	Kaylie.Kummer@mt.gov	(406) 444-2837
Kira Flagstead	kira.flagstead@mt.gov	(406) 417-0500
Sadie Overlie	sadie.overlie@mt.gov	(406) 444-2823
Staci Evangeline	staci.evangelina@mt.gov	(406) 444-5309

