



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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DISEASE CONTROL UNIT

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

To: All Media in Santa Cruz County
From: Poki Stewart Namkung, M.D., M.P.H., Health Officer
Subject: Information on large foodborne illness outbreak
Date: November 16, 2007

INCIDENT

Environmental Health staff and the Communicable Disease staff are working together to stem an outbreak of gastrointestinal illness at a local hotel. Approximately 1000 people have been exposed at a variety of events dating from Nov. 9th through Nov. 15th. So far, over 80 people have reported being ill.

INFORMATION

- Public Health staff suspect that the cause of the outbreak is a highly contagious virus that can be passed from human-to-human. The symptoms generally include nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- Public Health staff is working closely with the management of the hotel to limit exposure.
- Environmental Health staff will closely observe an extensive cleaning of the kitchen as well as ancillary areas such as bathrooms, dining areas etc.
- Hotel staff will be monitored for illness and any ill employees will be sent home. Any employees who are ill may not report back to work until they have been symptom free for 24 hours.
- Environmental Health staff will review food handling practices with all kitchen staff.
- The Communicable Disease staff are obtaining biologic samples to determine the type of pathogen that has caused this outbreak.
- Public Health staff will contact over 1000 people who were potentially exposed, to provide information and consultation and to determine the extent of the outbreak.
- If you have any questions, please call 454-7529.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Foodborne illnesses can be prevented by observing careful handwashing and food preparation techniques.
- For detailed information on proper techniques, visit www.fightbac.org.

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.