



INCREASED RISK OF FOODBORNE/WATERBORNE ILLNESSES DURING POWER OUTAGES

TO: West Virginia Healthcare Providers, Hospitals and other Healthcare Facilities

FROM: Marian L. Swinker, MD, MPH, Commissioner for Public Health and State Health Officer, WVDHHR, Bureau for Public Health

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LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY HEALTH PROVIDERS, HOSPITAL-BASED PHYSICIANS, INFECTION CONTROL PREVENTIONISTS, LABORATORY DIRECTORS, AND OTHER APPLICABLE PARTNERS

OTHER RECIPIENTS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO ASSOCIATION MEMBERS, STAFF, ETC.

With the widespread power outages affecting the state, and the potential for compromised water systems, the risk for foodborne and waterborne illness-related outbreaks is increased. Symptoms of foodborne and waterborne illness may occur within minutes to weeks after exposure, depending on the causative agent. A foodborne/waterborne disease outbreak is defined as an incident in which two or more persons experience a similar illness **after ingestion of a common food or water source**. Exceptions include one case of botulism, Salmonella typhi, chemical poisoning and cholera. A positive laboratory confirmation of a disease-causing organism is not necessary to determine that a foodborne outbreak has occurred nor is a confirmed lab report needed to begin an investigation.

If you start to see more cases of gastrointestinal illness than usual, please contact your local health department immediately. Immediate reporting of outbreaks is required from health care facilities/providers, schools and camps under 64-CSR-7. For further information visit the DIDE website at (www.dide.wv.gov) or call 304-558-5358 or 800-423-1271 (in WV).

The Office of Laboratory Services (OLS) can test stool for a variety of foodborne and waterborne diseases. Please coordinate specimen collection efforts with your local health departments before submitting specimens to OLS.

This message was directly distributed by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health to local health departments and professional associations. Receiving entities are responsible for further disseminating the information as appropriate to the target audience.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

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.