



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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***Salmonella* outbreak likely linked to a catered meal prepared for a private event**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health has determined that the *Salmonella* outbreak last week in Colbert County that reportedly sickened at least 99 patients and hospitalized 22 is most likely linked to a meal prepared for a private event. Eighteen of the hospitalized persons have been discharged home and the remaining hospitalized patients are recovering. Approximately 150 persons attended the private event.

The investigation is ongoing, but preliminary reports indicate the state health department laboratory has identified *Salmonella enteritidis* (a common foodborne germ) in food specimens of cooked chicken as well as green beans.

Dr. Karen Landers, Assistant State Health Officer, Bureau of Communicable Disease, states that chicken was likely the primary source of the germ as raw chicken can be contaminated with *Salmonella*. Chicken has to be cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit to kill the germ. Finding *Salmonella* in the green beans during this investigation was probably from cross contamination such as using the same serving utensils for the beans and the chicken.

Dr. Scott Harris, Assistant State Health Officer for Public Health Area 2, where the catering business was located, states that he issued an emergency order to suspend the caterer's permit last week pending further investigation. The caterer, Indelible Catering of Moulton, is no longer preparing food for the public.

Salmonella outbreaks reported by the CDC in 2016 were linked to contaminated eggs, poultry, meat, unpasteurized milk and juice, cheese, contaminated raw fruits and vegetables (alfalfa sprouts, melons), spices and nuts.

Food safety practices can reduce the risk of foodborne outbreaks. Some measures to reduce illness include keeping food properly refrigerated before cooking, washing hands with soap and warm water before handling foods, and cleaning surfaces before preparing foods on them.

Follow these practices when preparing foods:

- Separate cooked foods from ready-to-eat foods.

- Do not use utensils on cooked foods that were previously used on raw foods and do not place cooked foods on plates where raw foods once were unless the plates have been cleaned thoroughly.
- Cook foods to a safe internal temperature. Use a meat thermometer to make sure foods are cooked to a safe temperature.
- Chill foods promptly after serving and when transporting from one place to another.

Safe temperatures for food preparation are available on many websites including foodsafety.gov.

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