

ATTACHMENT NO. 5

Health Update #06-04



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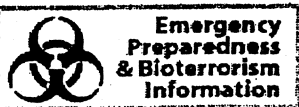


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- [Job Opportunities](#)
- [Publications & Information](#)
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PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH HEALTH UPDATE#06-04



Date: August 6, 2004
Subject: New findings in the epidemiological investigation related to the Salmonella outbreak associated with tomatoes eaten at Sheetz.
To: Health Alert Network
From: Calvin B. Johnson, M.D., M.P.H.
 Secretary of Health



This transmission is a "Health Update", provides updated information regarding an incident or situation, no immediate action necessary.

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The following is an update from previous Health Advisory # 13 Salmonella javiana Gastroenteritis Outbreak in Pennsylvania, July 16, 2004 and Health Update # 5-04, Second Salmonella serotype with human cases is now associated with tomatoes eaten at Sheetz, July 30, 2004.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) is releasing the following information related to new findings in the ongoing epidemiological investigation of the gastroenteritis outbreak associated

with tomatoes eaten at Sheetz.

Investigation continues to understand the origins of the outbreak of Salmonellosis associated with Roma tomatoes served at Sheetz stores across the region.

As previously reported to you the outbreak is largely due to *Salmonella javiana*. Approximately 330 cases are now likely linked to the same etiology in Pennsylvania, with more than 80 additional cases in neighboring states. The exact number of cases may increase or even decrease as more data are obtained, including laboratory analysis of isolates by pulse-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE).

Onsets were primarily in the first half of July, and PADOH does not currently have evidence that the common-source outbreak is ongoing. This is probably due to quick action by Sheetz to remove possibly implicated tomato and lettuce when they were initially contacted by the Health Department, even though the evidence was not yet conclusive at that early stage of the investigation.

Case-control studies conducted by several Health Departments and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) demonstrated a strong association of illness with sliced tomatoes served at dozens of Sheetz stores. Because of the manner in which Sheetz receives, distributes and serves tomatoes, it is apparent that the origin of the outbreak was "upstream" from Sheetz in the food distribution system.

A large number of food samples were collected and cultured, including from Sheetz itself as well as its produce supplier. Thus far all samples have been negative except for an unexpected finding of *Salmonella anatum* in tomatoes from one Sheetz store. Five human cases of *S. anatum* were then identified in Pennsylvania in the first half of July, compared to 0-2 cases expected monthly for this rare *Salmonella* serotype. PFGE patterns from four human cases matched the single positive food sample, and the four patients reported eating at Sheetz stores (including the store from which the culture-positive tomatoes were obtained). Thus, the outbreak was clearly demonstrated to be due to two *Salmonella* serotypes, an unusual but not unheard-of occurrence.

Continued evaluation of epidemiologic and laboratory data now suggests that another rare *Salmonella* serotype may potentially also be associated with the same source, i.e. tomatoes served at Sheetz deli counters in early July. The investigation is ongoing and it is possible an alternate source for these cases will emerge.

FDA is conducting a formal "traceback" of the tomatoes provided to Sheetz. Logically, it is possible that outlets other than Sheetz served tainted tomatoes obtained from a common source, but thus far no alternate outlets have been linked to human cases. The full extent of this outbreak will not become clear until vast amounts of epidemiologic and laboratory data are analyzed and the FDA investigations are completed.

Pennsylvania physicians are reminded to obtain stool cultures for *Salmonella* from their patients when clinically indicated. *Salmonella* isolates are routinely sent from clinical laboratories to the PADOH Bureau of Laboratories for serotyping and serogrouping. Patients diagnosed with

Salmonella infection in Pennsylvania are routinely contacted by public health investigators to obtain information on possible sources for their *Salmonella* infections; those patients who may be associated with this outbreak might also be asked to provide more detailed food histories to assist PADOH and CDC and the involved state health departments in the investigation.

Cases can be reported by calling your local health department or the PA DOH at **877-PA-HEALTH** or at the **PA-NEDSS** secure Website at <https://www.nedss.state.pa.us/nedss/>.

The List of Reportable Diseases mandated by the Pennsylvania Department of Health is available at <http://www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/cwp/view.asp?A=171&Q=230520>.

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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.

This information is current as of August 6, 2004, but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.

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