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United States Department of Agriculture

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

1400 Independence
Avenue, SW.
Washington, D.C.
20250

MAY 26 2017

RE: FOIA-2017-00102
The Beacon

This is the final response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, dated February 6, 2017, to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). You requested access to a copy of each issue of *The Beacon* during Calendar Years 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017 to date. We received your request in our Office on February 7, 2017.

The FSIS FOIA staff works with subject matter experts across the Agency to locate responsive documents. For this request, we conducted a records search in the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education. FSIS' search began on February 8, 2017. Our search includes responsive records in FSIS' control on that date.

We have located 524 pages that are responsive to your request. After a thorough review, we have determined that portions of these documents are exempt from disclosure under (b)(6) of the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552, as amended. Accordingly, this request is granted in part.

Portions of the responsive records are exempt from disclosure under FOIA Exemption 6, 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6). Exemption 6 protects information that would constitute an unwarranted invasion of an individual's personal privacy. The types of information withheld under Exemption 6 include the names, addresses, or cell phone numbers of employees of Establishments and third parties, including, but not limited to interviewees or customers.

You may appeal this determination within 90 days from the date of this letter. Your appeal should include copies of your original request and this response, as well as a discussion of the reasons supporting your appeal. The envelope should be plainly marked to indicate that it contains a FOIA appeal. If you decide to appeal this determination, please send your appeal to:

Alfred V. Almanza
Acting Administrator
Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Room 2168, South Building
Washington, D.C. 20250-3700

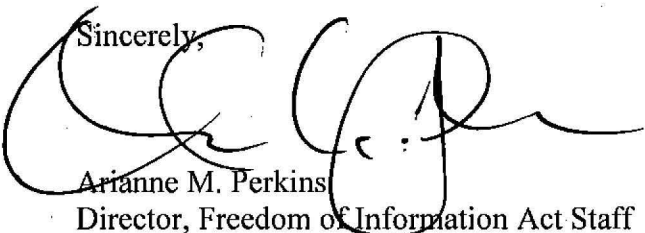
Please be advised that your FOIA request, including your identity and the information made available, is releasable to the public under any subsequent FOIA requests. However, FSIS does not release your personal privacy information, such as home addresses, telephone numbers, or Social Security Numbers, all of which are protected from disclosure under FOIA Exemption 6.

If you have any questions about the way this request was handled, please contact Tiffanie Newman at 202-708-8172 or via email at Tiffanie.Newman@fsis.usda.gov. If you have general questions about FSIS' FOIA procedures or regulations, please contact our FOIA Public Liaison, Mark Brook, at 202-690-1787 or via email at Mark.Brook@fsis.usda.gov.

Additionally, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is as follows: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road-OGIS, College Park, Maryland 20740-6001, e-mail at ogis@nara.gov; telephone at 202-741-5770; or facsimile at 202-741-5769.

Thank you for your interest in FSIS programs and policies.

Sincerely,



Arianne M. Perkins
Director, Freedom of Information Act Staff
Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education
Food Safety and Inspection Service

Enclosure

Be Food Safe: CLEAN: Wash Hands and Surfaces Often SEPARATE: Separate Raw Meats from Other Foods
COOK: Cook To The Right Temperature CHILL: Refrigerate Food Promptly

Inside This Issue

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

You can tell the stories of FSIS better than anyone! Send us your articles, photos and feedback. It's simple. Just prepare an article and include: who, what, when, where, why and how. Clear your article through your program area. Then send your article to Beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Candid photos preferred. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



INSPECTOR AIDS PLANT EMPLOYEE

FI Brian Machalk recently administered vital first aid to a plant employee. To read about his efforts, go to page 4.

Photo contributed by Dr. Jenna Sing, OFO

Implementing Hazard Analysis Verification Tasks

*By Dr. Dan Engeljohn
Assistant Administrator, OFO*



The Hazard Analysis Verification (HAV) tasks are an integral part of ensuring that the American public's food supply is safe. By performing these tasks, Inspection Program Personnel (IPP) are specifically concentrating on verifying that the establishment has conducted its hazard analysis in accordance with the applicable regulatory requirements. IPP are also considering what their findings show about the overall effectiveness of the establishment's food safety system by verifying that the establishment has met regulatory requirements by considering whether the hazards relevant to its products are reasonably likely to occur in its operation and addressing those hazards that are.

During the past fiscal year, FSIS conducted a pilot program on the performance of the HAV task in 30 establishments that produce comminuted poultry products. Feedback from that pilot has since been received and reviewed. This feedback has been very valuable in helping us revise Directive 5000.6. While I was pleased to hear that the HAV training and instruction in the directive was adequate, I did hear that there were some areas in need of some

additional review. I learned that it was quite time consuming to complete the HAV task due to the need to review multiple Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plans. Also, the data highlighted that often the effort really required a coordinated team approach among IPP and their supervisors to ensure that policy instructions were clearly understood, and the verifications properly performed.

As a result, Directive 5000.6 is being updated and will be reissued to revise the instructions so that the routine HAV task will be performed on only one HACCP plan at the establishment each quarter. Each quarter when the HAV task is assigned, IPP are to follow the instructions in Directive 5000.6 to select a HACCP plan to verify for adequacy that quarter, unless the agency issues supplemental instructions to focus on an additional HACCP plan because of a special public health need. The agency will instruct consumer safety inspectors (CSIs) to begin performing HAV procedures in all establishments nationwide very soon. The agency will correlate with supervisory personnel through webinars to communicate what their responsibilities are under this directive. OFO will provide official time to IPP to review the directive and revisit the training they were

Continued on page 2 ...

The Beacon is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Office for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

February issue – due Jan. 1
March issue – due Feb. 1
April issue – due March 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
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We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to e-mail.

ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN



Al Almanza

It's January, which means a lot of talk about New Year's resolutions. It's supposed to be the time to think about setting new priorities and concentrating on the principles that we hope will lead to improvements in our lives. Many of us may pledge to eat less and exercise more. So for this column, I would like to look at goals we're setting for FSIS in 2014.

As I mentioned last month, I'm pleased by the significant progress we made this past year, which is why I'm optimistic that we'll be successful in meeting this year's goals. Our 2014 Annual Performance Plan (APP) provides the American public and FSIS employees with a clear list of agency priorities and a detailed roadmap to achieve our mission. I hope you'll all take some time to review the plan and join me in resolving to commit to its success.

As you'll see, our APP is an ambitious plan that's consistent with USDA's efforts to modernize the department with innovative ways to better serve our customers and our employees. We need to introduce technologies and methods that match the best scientific and public health knowledge that's available in 2014. And that means being willing to explore changes in the way we conduct our business at FSIS. As we all know, change isn't always easy, and it's sure to have its critics. That's what makes our *One Team, One Purpose* philosophy all the more important in 2014. We wouldn't be doing this if it weren't entirely consistent with our mission of providing the public with products that are safe, wholesome and properly labeled.

One major piece of the APP is the *Salmonella* Action Plan (SAP). This plan ensures that food safety activities align with existing and emerging risks. Our goal is to use the SAP to combat *Salmonella* illnesses by, among other things, modernizing inspection activities, improving *Salmonella* sampling programs, implementing new enforcement standards and developing new enforcement strategies. The SAP allows us to effectively use science to understand foodborne illnesses and emerging trends, and, in return, create effective and appropriate regulations that ensure the increased safety of our food supply.

Let's also be resolute in our efforts to have all of us more fully engage the public and promote food safety practices. With all that we know as food safety professionals, and the public and media more attuned than ever, let's be sure to share that knowledge – whether it be in formal public education campaigns, local school and scouting troops or just with our friends and neighbors. Families need to know proper safe food handling, and we can help them.

Finally, with the new year, let's renew our commitment to do the best we can to reduce foodborne illness and ensure that our meat, poultry and processed egg supply is wholesome and safe.

I'm looking forward to working with you in what should be an exciting year with tremendous promise. Happy New Year!

HAV Tasks

... Continued from page 1

provided on HAV. Further information will be provided to supervisors during the upcoming monthly webinars.

I thank all of you who provided feedback from the pilot. I appreciate everyone's efforts

in making this a seamless implementation. As I said, the HAV requires teamwork to be effective, and I know I have a great team that I can count on. If you have any questions, please feel free to get in touch with me, or raise them to your supervisor so we can get back to you as soon as possible.

Presenting Capt. Chau Vu

By Felicia Thompson, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

Dr. Chau Vu holds many titles: FSIS Supervisory Enforcement Investigations and Analysis Officer (SEIAO), a Captain with the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS), a Doctor of podiatry and pharmacy, and wife and mother.

Dr. Vu began her career with FSIS in 2005 as a consumer safety officer. She wanted to make a difference in the lives of others while making sure that the nation's meat, poultry and processed egg products are safe, wholesome and properly labeled and packaged. "It's very rewarding knowing that what I do at FSIS has an impact on the majority of Americans," she explains.

Dr. Vu and her Alameda district team visit more than 700 USDA-regulated plants in California, Arizona and Nevada. These establishments include red meat and poultry slaughter plants, beef grinding operations and ready-to-eat and egg processing facilities. She provides leadership to 13 Enforcement Investigations and Analysis Officers (EIAOs), who conduct food safety assessments at the plants in the district, including potential recall investigations and consumer complaints. "The EIAO team, as a whole, is comprised of many individuals with numerous years of experience in evaluating food safety programs," she explains. In addition, she interacts with establishment's management regarding FSIS enforcement actions and food safety assessments.

The EIAOs conduct comprehensive reviews of the plants' food safety programs, investigate for potential food safety hazards, handle food recalls and determine the plants' overall regulatory compliance. The EIAOs also perform outreach activities to assist small and very small plants in understanding FSIS' regulations.

A typical day for Dr. Vu includes working closely with the Alameda district office staff on ongoing food safety



Photo contributed by Felicia Thompson, OPACE

Dr. Vu (center) with her daughters (from left) Rachel, Alexandra and Elizabeth Lau. Also pictured are Capt. Lou Ann Rector, USPHS officer and FSIS liaison, and Dr. Yudhbir Sharma, Alameda district manager.

assessments and enforcement cases. "Communication is essential between me, my staff and the district office staff because we discuss the findings at a plant and determine whether the case rises to the level of instituting enforcement action for a non-compliance," she said. "One example of plants being non-compliant with FSIS' regulations is if they do not have an adequate Hazard Analysis and Critical Control

Point (HACCP) system in place." Dr. Vu credits her team for making her job more efficient. "Everyone knows the importance of their job," she states. "I love working beside a great group of individuals who always strive to do their best and make a difference."

Dr. Vu, her staff, colleagues and Alameda district personnel embody USDA's motto of *One Team, One Purpose*. "I feel that my co-workers, the in-plant inspection team and I are making a difference to public health each day," she said. "The EIAO team has worked tirelessly to accomplish the goal of completing a food safety assessment at all of the active plants in the Alameda district over the past 4-year cycle; our district is very proud of their great accomplishment."

In December, Dr. Vu was promoted to the rank of Captain in the USPHS. She put her pharmacology skills to use in the summer of 2010. For 6 weeks, Dr. Vu volunteered with the U.S. Navy and a group of Commissioned Corps medical providers for a humanitarian mission to Vietnam and Cambodia. While there, Dr. Vu wore her pharmacist and food safety hats. She beams, "It was a great experience! USPHS and FSIS have allowed me great opportunities to serve others, including those in other countries."

Dr. Vu states that her husband and three daughters understand the importance of her job responsibilities and fully support her commitment to keeping others safe. "My family is very proud of me," she said with a smile.

Wisconsin Inspector Aids Injured Plant Employee

By Dr. Jenna Sing, OFO
Phone: (920) 437-9341

Food Inspector Brian Machalk went above and beyond his inspection duties on Jan. 2 when he performed vital first aid on a plant employee at establishment 410, in Green Bay, Wis.

While on duty, Machalk observed the employee fall off a 6-foot-high platform and hit his head on the concrete floor below. The line immediately stopped, and Machalk rushed over to see if the employee needed assistance. The employee was in good hands. That's because Machalk served as a combat medic in the U.S. Army for 10 years, with a 6-month tour in Desert Storm, and earned his LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) license during his last year of service.

"My initial assessment was that the employee was unconscious, not breathing, did not have a pulse and had a



Photo contributed by
Dr. Jenna Sing, OFO

purple tinge to his face," explained Machalk. "I immediately informed the floor foremen that I could not find a pulse and that the employee was not breathing."

After 911 was called, Machalk repositioned the injured employee to ensure that his airway was open and then used verbal stimulation to try to get a response. The employee began to breathe and Machalk was able to find a pulse; however, the employee was still unresponsive. So the inspector continued verbal reassurance and to ensure stability until the EMTs arrived on the scene. After they arrived, he gave a report on the employee's condition, including vital signs and a history of what occurred.

Machalk then assisted the EMTs prepare the patient for transport.

Congratulations to Machalk for his quick thinking and heroic actions. He is a true example of an everyday hero.

FSIS Participates in "Safety Datapalooza"

By Steven Van Der Werff, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

Almost 400 people attended the second annual "Safety Datapalooza" at USDA headquarters on Jan 14. The event, hosted by the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy and Office of Public Engagement, U.S. Department of Transportation and USDA, recognized innovators from the private, nonprofit and academic sectors who have freely used available government data to build products, services and apps that advance public safety in creative and powerful ways.

During a breakout session, Christopher Alvares, director of ODIFP's Data Analysis and Integration Staff, told attendees that an estimated one million illnesses can be attributed to *Salmonella* every year. He further explained the agency's recently released



Chris Alvares

Photo contributed by Steve Van Der Werff, OPACE

Salmonella Action Plan and *Salmonella* Pathogen Reduction Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (PR/HACCP) testing programs aimed at reducing the number of illnesses associated with FSIS-regulated products using new standards, strategies and innovation.

"FSIS produces regular reports on *Salmonella* contamination in regulated

product, but the data had never been available in machine-readable format or in a single place," said Alvares.

"One of the agency's goals, as stated in our Strategic Data Analysis Plan, is to improve the accessibility and usability of FSIS data. We wanted to know what the public could do with the data to help prevent illnesses and what other data may be needed for better mash-ups and results."

Other organizations presented new safety data resources in the areas of transportation, food, occupational and consumer product safety, as well as tools to improve disaster preparedness and emergency response. The occasion included a series of panel discussions and brainstorming sessions regarding technology and how technology and open data are being used to create new services and applications that benefit Americans and address public safety challenges across the nation.

FSIS Management Holds Training Needs Assessment

By Anthony L. Thompson, OOEET
Phone: (202) 720-6238

The OOEET Organization and Employee Development Branch recently conducted interviews with FSIS executives and a needs assessment with supervisors to gather information regarding the training needs of agency employees. All agency supervisors were invited to participate in the survey.

Supervisors were asked questions, such as “What specific workforce challenges or opportunities do you foresee?” and “What are specific training needs, concerns or potential opportunities that you would share with us?” Information collected was compiled and is under review to determine how best to create or enhance “mission-focused, value

added” training programs during FY 2014 and beyond.

Based on feedback received from the surveys, in addition to Office of Personnel Management mandates and departmental regulations, several new and expanded training programs will be launched in 2014. Stay tuned for articles and program announcements to learn about future employee development opportunities.

Merit Promotion Policy Changes

By Thomas Reimler, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8593

An organization succeeds or fails, in large part, on how effectively it manages the selection and promotion of its employees. In August, FSIS began implementing key changes to how we find and select the best people for the job. These changes affect everyone in FSIS, but they are especially important to you if you plan to apply for positions announced under merit promotion. Unless you understand these changes, you may miss promotion opportunities.

For the first time in 20 years, on August 20, 2013, the USDA issued comprehensive merit promotion regulations covering all mission areas. Departmental Regulation 4030-335-002, “Merit Promotion and Internal Placement,” supersedes FSIS Directive 4335.1, “Merit Promotion Plan.” The new guidance focuses on efficiency and consistency. Each agency in USDA must follow this guidance. This means that each agency, including FSIS, must change its merit promotion policies to conform to the new regulations.

Key Changes for Applicants

While it is always important to follow instructions on vacancy announcements, this is especially critical given the changes to application procedures. Requirements may vary based on bargaining unit status and competitive status, but everyone should be aware of these major changes.

In general, as part of the application package, you must submit:

- A copy of a recent SF-50 (Notification of Personnel Action);
- A copy of official transcripts (if qualifying based on education); and
- A copy of your most current performance appraisal.

In general, by the closing date of the announcement, you must:

- Provide all required documentation;
- Meet all time-in-grade/time-in-band requirements; and
- Meet all qualification requirements.

If you apply under merit promotion and fail to provide required documents by the closing date, you may not receive further consideration. To help ensure full consideration, use eOPF (electronic Official Personnel Folders) to access and obtain these documents in advance of a vacancy, and then submit them when you apply to a merit promotion announcement.

Key Changes for Selecting Officials

Changes in the selection process will help ensure that candidates are fully and fairly considered based on merit factors, and that officials have as much information as possible to help with the selection decision. In the past, reference checks were optional. Under the new policy, selecting officials must conduct reference checks on the top candidates. In addition, if interviews are conducted, the selecting official (or designated interviewers) must interview at least five applicants. In the past, in most cases, selecting officials could choose to interview any number of candidates.

Summary

USDA merit promotion guidance continues to focus on helping agencies find and select the best applicants. However, it is important to note that the new regulations include significant changes. Requirements have changed. Application procedures have changed. To help ensure that you receive full consideration for positions announced under merit promotion, carefully follow the instructions on the vacancy announcement.

FSIS RETIREES: Dec. 15, 2013 - Jan. 15, 2014

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Allen, Roy M., FI	Holcomb, KS	27	Loulis, Dianne T., SCSO	Vero Beach, FL	24
Anwar, Muhammad, SVMO	Morton, MS	25	Loulis, Paul E., SCI	Sunrise, FL	31
Bair, Richard D., CSI	Kossuth, PA	20	Mack, Yosheika E., FI	Gainesville, GA	5
Behney, Jan T., DM	Philadelphia, PA	40	Mason, Brian M., CSI	Schenectady, NY	25
Bouillon, Michael R., SVMO	Fresno, CA	24	Matthews, Gary D., CSI	Phoenix, AZ	37
Brown, Dimple V., FI	Live Oak, FL	7	McClain Lewis, Eulamae, Secretary	Beltsville, MD	38
Burke, Warren S., SVMO	Tuscaloosa, AL	16	McConahay, Billy D., CSI	Nebraska City, NE	40
Cook Jr., Lecil V., Lead Microbiologist	Washington, DC	35	McDonough, Joan M., FI	Lacey, WA	26
Duncan, Robert O., CSI	Jasper, AL	23	Monsebaiss, Abelino, FI	Cactus, TX	4
Garrett, Jack W., SVMO	Carthage, MO	25	Moore II, Duane D., FI	Greeley, CO	5
Gordon, Donald E., Supvy. Supp. & Samples Handling Spec.	St. Louis, MO	41	Morrison, James S., CSI	Russellville, AR	32
Gregory, Madeline, CSI	Yeadon, PA	24	Nelson, Ronald C., Prog. Anal.	Lakewood, CO	30
Hebert, Russell J., CSI	Hazlehurst, MS	22	Nicholas, Frank K., CSI	Waco, TX	34
Hobbs, Herbert D., CI	Nashville, TN	38	Nieboer, Michael J., FI	Plainwell, MI	4
Huyck, Steven O., CSI	Lansing, IL	29	Ortiz, Raul G., CSI	Corpus Christi, TX	45
Iskandar, Saied K., CSO	Orlando, FL	27	Pence, Richard R., CSI	Wolverine, MI	36
Iske, Lawrence G., CSO	Lincoln, NE	37	Pruka, Kenneth M., CSI	Kalamazoo, MI	42
James Arteaga, Linda, Lead Mgmt. & Prog. Anal.	Washington, DC	40	Roth, Jane E., DAA	Washington, DC	34
Johnson, Harriett, Mgmt. & Prog. Asst.	Atlanta, GA	33	Rothchild, Lyman D., FI	Cassville, MO	22
Keith, Charles M., CSI	Smithfield, VA	45	Russell, Linda S., Issues Anal.	Washington, DC	42
Kelsey, Donald J., CSI	Bloomfield, CT	43	Sample, Viola M., FI	Salisbury, MD	14
Khan, Malik A., DDM	Raleigh, NC	32	Sawyer III, Ulric A., Import Surv. Liasn. Offcr.	Swanton, VT	37
Kozak, Michael T., CSI	Dardanelle, AR	32	Scribner, Jamie-Lynne M., Sr. HR Spec.	Washington, DC	9
Lardizabal, Ernesto V., SVMO	Petaluma, CA	24	Selby, William L., CSI	Wilder, ID	30
Larey, Georgia A., CSI	Neosho, MO	30	Stanley Jr., Maurice P., IT Spec.	Washington, DC	31
Lawston, Henry, SVMO	Marshall, MN	26	Stephens, Mickey H., FI	Gadsden, AL	17
Leal Jr., Joe S., CSI	San Benito, TX	29	Unterborn, Glen E., SCSO	Buffalo, NY	42
Leathers, Brenda G., CSI	Mount Pleasant, TX	31	Wagner, Darrell R., CSO	Omaha, NE	41
Lilly, Marjorie L., Fin. Tech.	Urbandale, IA	31	Yam, Chi Chung, Accountant	Beltsville, MD	25
Louden, Wayne R., CSI	Fremont, NE	30	Yazdani, Fayyaz, SVMO	Carthage, TX	31



Read and Join in a Discussion with Al Almanza

To check out the Administrator's Blog, go to *InsideFSIS* at <https://connections.usda.gov/blogs/FSIS/>.

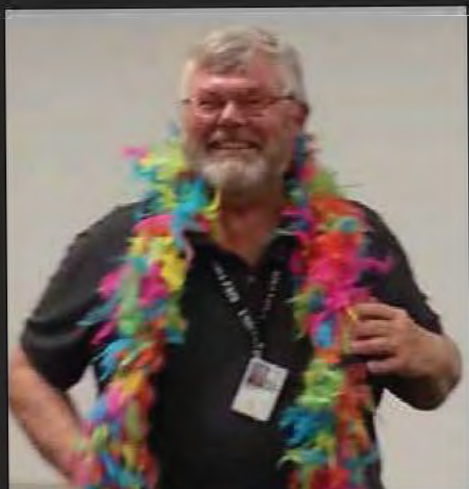


PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Employees in the Omaha, Neb., bid farewell on Jan. 2 to Darrell Wagner, Policy Development Staff's egg expert, who said his 41½ years with USDA and nearly 19 years with FSIS have been professionally and personally rewarding. He enjoyed his career and was thankful that he had the opportunity to be part of FSIS...and especially fortunate to have worked with all the people in Omaha. Eggs have been his life for a long time, but the wonderful people that he met along the way made his career. Wagner will remain in the local area and plans to keep in touch with his USDA friends.

Photo contributed by Mike McCann, OPPD

Protect Yourself Against Common Phishing Scams

*By Leigh Ann Acree, OCIO
Phone: (202) 418-8816*

Protecting your computer from malicious threats isn't as simple as it used to be. As sophisticated anti-virus software has developed, so has the sophistication and technology of cyber criminals. The best line of defense against cyber criminals is to be aware of the potential dangers out there and to know what to look for in your day-to-day computer-related activities.

Phishing

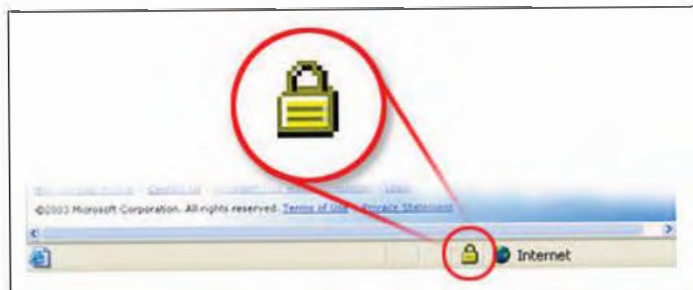
The most frequent attacks you're most likely to encounter during your daily working life are phishing scams. Reusing basic tactics that have worked for years, scammers rely on tried-and-true methods to exploit the comfort level we have today when using Internet and e-mail.

Phishing websites mimic the look of another site in an attempt to lure you into entering personal and/or account information. Criminals especially like to spoof banks and social networks. Phishing attacks typically lure their victims by using mistyped website URLs and e-mail messages that pretend to be from legitimate sources.

Here are some simple ways to detect phishing sites:

- The URL does not match the URL of the legitimate website. If *Facebokk.com*, *Faceb00k.com* or *Facenook.com* asks for your Facebook login, you've encountered a phishing site and not a legitimate site.
- If you are unsure whether or not a request is legitimate, try to verify it by contacting the agency office or employee directly. Do not use contact information provided on a website connected to the request. Instead, check previous official information or statements for contact information.

- Most social media and financial websites use HTTPS encryption by default. Look for the lock icon next to its URL in your browser that indicates it is an encrypted site.



How Can You Protect Yourself?

- Don't click on e-mail attachments from unsolicited senders.
- Pay attention to the links for websites on e-mails, texts, social media or other mediums. Malicious websites may look identical to a legitimate site, but the website address may use a variation in spelling or a different domain (e.g., *.com* vs. *.net* or *.gov*).
- Do not reveal sensitive, personal or financial information in an e-mail, and do not respond to e-mail solicitations for this information. This includes following links sent via e-mail.
- Instead of clicking on the link provided in the e-mail, open your browser and navigate to the site directly.
- Always report suspicious computer activity immediately to the FSIS Security Operations Center (SOC) at OCIOSecurityOperationsCenter@fsis.usda.gov or by calling the Service Desk at 1-800-473-9135.

Omaha District

Red and green were the theme of the day as Omaha employees joined together to celebrate the holiday season with their annual luncheon. Many thanks to Deb Arthur and Cathy Moffitt for coordinating the event. Front row, from left: Dan Oestmann, Ilene Arnold, Ezzat Zaki, Darrell Wagner and Neal Westgerdes. Middle row: Cindy Whitley, John Filus, Ben Hunter, Cathy Moffitt, Christyn Stumps, Patsy White and Pat Knox. Back row: Dexter Reavis, Kurt Schulz, Mike Fisher, Jim Holterman, Kris Kenne, Mike Lathrop, Jose Gabiola, Steve Perigo, Ron Eckel, Mike McCann, Kim Butler and Steve Butler. Photo contributed by Deb Arthur, OIEA.



Des Moines District

FI Kathleen Findley and CSI John Rottmann at establishment 3S in Marshalltown, Iowa, took up a food collection for the local Emergency Food Box and received great response from the inspectors on the first and second shifts. The employees were glad they they could help the people in their community and would like to thank everyone who donated and collected food. From left: John Schlampp, John Rottmann, Derek Anfinson, Jennifer Rottmann and Kathy Findley. Photo contributed by Kathleen Findley, OFO.



Alameda District

OFO and OIEA employees from the Alameda district got together for a cultural transformation potluck luncheon in November. The employees enjoyed good food from different cultures, and the luncheon was a great team building event for the programs. Front row, from left: Chau Vu, Rosa Rivera-Aguirre, Nashante Barnes, Sue Newman, Ruth Gonzalez, Suong Lobato, Anna Sommers and Lisa Ko. Back row: Phillip Toy, Pedro Rodriguez, Shaun Smith, Dr. William Pipkin, Bob Kralik, Bobbie Jones, David Coler and Dr. Kristie Owler. Photo contributed by Santaniece Cross, OFO.



FROM THE **FIELD**



Washington, D.C.

HQ employees from OM's Office of Administrative Services in Beltsville, Md., spent a November morning volunteering their time at the Capital Area Food Bank. The team sorted over 7,000 pounds of food. Front row, from left: Ina Mendoza-Wilson, Janet Elm, Sue Miller, Betsy Halweg, Denise Kennedy, Kim Toppin, Lorraine Jones, Brenda Barber, Marnie Miller and Angela Thomas. Back row: Jim Miller, Madonna Montgomery, Glenn Washington, Megan Robey and Antoinette Lyles. Photo contributed by Madonna Montgomery, OM.

Springdale District

Inspection employees from the first and second shifts at establishment P-1362 in Noel, Mo., held a toy and food drive in November. The food was donated to the McDonald County's Food Pantry, and the toys were taken to the Noel Fire Department for distribution.

Top photo (sitting, from left): Vanna Moore, Kathy Dubois, Jorita Calhoun and Elizabeth Colung. Standing: Clinton Zinn, Kevin Zacher, David Murphy and John Clifford.

Bottom photo (from left): Sandra Vaughn, Peggy Willis, Deon Ezell, Tabitha Ezell, Ammanda Pope, Mary Austen, B.J. Doolin, Vanna Moore, Carolyn Ash and Mike Looney. Photos contributed by Carolyn Ash and David Murphy, OFO.



Jackson District

The processing team in Flowood, Miss., showed their holiday spirit by spreading love and joy during the holidays. On Thanksgiving, the team provided and served meals to 140 people at the Gateway Rescue Mission. They also donated 79 toys and 3 gift cards to patients at the Blair E. Baston Hospital for Children. From left: CSIs Reginald Hulbert, Cynthia Morris, Ricky Walker and Sonya Hoffman. Not Pictured: CSIs Brian Eure, Dianne Slaughter and Annie Griffith; and FLS Damon Ranftle. Photo contributed by Christina Walker, OFO.

Rosetta Stone Available Online Through AgLearn

By Denise Gallman, OOEET/CFL
Phone: (301) 504-3346

Are you interested in leveraging your language skills to improve your business communications? If so, Rosetta Stone, a flexible online and portable program consisting of more than 30 languages, may be an ideal solution for you.

FSIS is offering full administrative access to Rosetta Stone functions, which feature predesigned lesson plans and tools that allow users to learn a new language. The program includes various levels of listening, speaking and reading features which allow you to choose your own direction. Languages offered include Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin),

Danish, Dari, Dutch, English (American), English (British), Filipino (Tagalog), French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latin, Pashto, Persian (Farsi), Polish, Portuguese (Brazil), Russian, Spanish (Latin American), Spanish (Spain), Swahili, Swedish, Thai, Turkish, Vietnamese and Welsh.

To participate in the program, talk with your supervisor and complete the application. The application can be found on *InsideFSIS* at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=eLearning1234>. For more information, e-mail RosettaStone@fsis.usda.gov.

Remember, these resources are available at no cost to you since FSIS has prepaid for your license!

Chicago Holds Frontline Supervisor/EIAO Meeting

The Chicago district office held its Frontline Supervisor/Enforcement, Investigation and Analysis Officer (EIAO) meeting on Dec. 9. During the meeting, the district honored Dr. Steve Groves, frontline supervisor of the Cincinnati, Ohio, circuit, and Dr. Gregg Fugate, frontline supervisor of the Lima, Ohio, circuit, who retired in early 2014. It also held its holiday luncheon celebration, and participants brought food for all to share and enjoy.

DM Paul Wolseley (center) recognized Dr. Steve Groves (left) and Dr. Gregg Fugate (right) for their dedication and hard work and wished them the best in their retirement.

Photo contributed by Dr. Bogdan Semtchichin, OFO



EIAO Visits Brooklyn Meat Market for MT55/MT60 Q&A



Photo contributed by Joseph Ndungu, OFO

Circuit 24 in the Philadelphia district held a work unit meeting on Nov. 13 at the FSIS offices in the Brooklyn Meat Market. EIAO John Macri, one of 4 investigators assigned to offices at John F. Kennedy International Airport, was on hand to answer questions regarding the recently issued FSIS Notice 80-13, *Clarification and Expansion of Sampling Eligibility Criteria for the Routine Manufacturing Trimmings (MT60) and Bench Trim (MT55) Sampling Programs*. Dr. Keith Wills, another subject matter expert, was also on hand.

Standing, from left: FLS Salah Ibrahim, CSI Keith Stahl, CSI Mario Winters, EIAO John Macri, CSI Gabriel Schenk, SPHV Dr. Keith Wills, CSI Pierre Herold, CSI Tyrone Brown, CSI Nick Sgobba, CSI Roy Neiderberger and Relief CSI Bob Hascup. Seated: Relief CSIs Tammy Dulude, CSI Darain Hazlet and CSI Shelina Parvin.

Benefits of Mediation vs. Litigation

By Amy Wolff Gunby, CRS
Phone: 1-800-860-8347

FSIS is a leader in utilizing Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), and, more specifically, mediation to prevent and resolve conflict. At FSIS, the conflict prevention and resolution programs are administered by the Civil Rights Staff's (CRS) Mediation and Conflict Resolution Group (MCRG) and are designed to help all FSIS employees prevent and resolve workplace conflicts. ADR is a fast and confidential process with a number of conflict resolution alternatives to assist employees, supervisors and managers in resolving workplace disputes.

The benefits of both Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and non-EEO ADR in addressing workplace disputes are well documented. For example, mediation is generally less costly to the government than litigation. It's an efficient and effective method of resolving disputes, and participants tend to be satisfied with solutions that have been mutually agreed upon instead of solutions imposed by a third-party decision maker. A mediated settlement can often preserve a working relationship in ways that would

not be possible in a win/lose decision-making procedure. Other possible outcomes of mediation can be valuable to the parties and may include new insights on the dispute, greater clarity about future choices and options and a new understanding of each other's viewpoints.

In FY 2013, results from the ADR customer satisfaction survey (which captures participant responses only from cases resolved during ADR and does not include cases resolved during traditional counseling) indicate: 64 percent of the respondents believe their participation in the ADR program will help them deal effectively with future conflict; 72 percent of the participants were very satisfied or satisfied with the ADR program; and 87 percent would recommend the ADR program to a colleague. Similarly, the resolution rate for cases processed through ADR and not traditional counseling is 79 percent.

ADR has proven to be a successful program which assists employees, supervisors and managers in resolving both EEO and non-EEO related workplace disputes and issues. For more information, please contact the Civil Rights Staff at MCRG@fsis.usda.gov or 1-800-860-8347.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Simplify Your Life & Reduce Your Stress

By Jodi Hallstrom, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8597

In a time of increased workload, responsibilities at work and home and with stress levels are at an all-time high, simplifying your life is one of the best ways to refocus on what's important to you and reduce unnecessary stress. Here are some quick and easy ways to get started.

Cut the Clutter.

This not only helps to free up your space, it also frees up your mind! The less you have to look at, the less you have to think about. Donate clothes and household items you no longer use. File away important documents and recycle duplicate or outdated

information and materials. Cancel those magazines you hardly read.

Manage Your Time.

Be cautious about making promises, and don't be afraid to say "no." Agreeing to things you no longer enjoy just because you don't want to say "no" causes undue stress and takes you away from doing the things you really enjoy.

Take the Lifestyle Test.

To determine whether your lifestyle is wearing you down or the way you live is conducive to your physical, mental and emotional health, log in to the WorkLife4You website at www.worklife4you.com. (Use registration code "FSIS" to register.) Go to: *More!*

Emotional Health/Interactive Quizzes. Click on "Self Improvement" and choose "Do You Need a Lifestyle Makeover?" After finishing the test, you will receive a detailed, personalized interpretation of your score, including diagrams, information and tips.

Let the EAP & WorkLife4You programs help you simplify your life. Call the FOH EAP/WorkLife4You hotline at 1-800-222-0364 (TTY: 1-888-262-7848) or go to www.foh4you.com or www.worklife4you.com for free and confidential services, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For more information, contact Jodi Hallstrom at (612) 659-8597 or jodi.hallstrom@fsis.usda.gov.

Employees Promote **FOOD**

OIEA Senior Litigation Specialist Dierdre Shelton recently held a neighborhood outreach activity for children ages 4-7. The children learned about USDA's *MyPlate* program and the five food groups. Afterwards, the children created their own plates that showed appropriate food proportions for a healthy meal. Shelton also served as an outreach ambassador at a health and wellness education ministry fair at New Life Church, in Decatur, Ga., that supported FSIS community outreach goals and the First Lady's "Let's Move" initiative. Food safety materials reached approximately 200 children at the fair.

Photo contributed by Dierdre Shelton, OIEA



Some employees in the Philadelphia district made a "splash" for a food safety by distributing food safety materials and participating in an underwater pumpkin carving contest at Dutch Springs Aqua Park in Bethlehem, Pa. The event was originally planned as a unique team-building exercise; however, after many questions about how the government was protecting meat and poultry supplies and consumers during the government shutdown, they realized that this would be a good opportunity for FSIS to reach out to the public.



The scuba divers/underwater pumpkin carvers included: CSI Michael Piotrowski, FLS Thomas Urban and Bradley Swartz (son of CSI Lisa Urban). The surface support team included: FI Jessica Bickel, CSI Lisa Urban, EIAO William Lawler and DDM Larry Davis.

Top photo, from left: Jessica Bickel, Michael Piotrowski, Thomas Urban and Lisa Urban man the FSIS information table.

Bottom photo: Thomas Urban (left) and Michael Piotrowski participate in the pumpkin carving contest that was held under 30-100 feet of water.

Photos contributed by Thomas Urban, OFO

SAFETY Across the Country

During the holidays, CSI William Imler (left), CI Lisa Swallow (center) and CSI Angelina Schile (right) visited a local grocery store in Columbus, Ind., to hand out food safety materials to shoppers. Many of the materials were in both Spanish and English. Approximately 500 people visited the information table to ask questions and take the handouts.

Photo contributed by Angelina Schile, OFO



CSIs John Cottier (left) and Tommie Olson handed out and discussed food safety materials with employees at establishment 1300M in Ft. Atkinson, Wis. More than 325 employees from all three shifts visited the exhibit table. Several employees shared stories about family members getting a foodborne illness during the holidays. The plant manager thanked them for taking the time to distribute the materials and talk about food safety with employees. The CSIs encourage other employees to take advantage of the excellent resources available from FSIS and do similar outreach in their communities.

Photo contributed by Tommie Olson, OFO

The third shift inspection team at establishment 19112P, in Beaver Dam, Ky., rose to the challenge of holiday food safety by distributing cooking and food safety information to plant employees. From left: Jonathan Smith, Penny Hickerson, Bobby Voyles, Teresa Boswell, Stephen Ruxer, Victoria Messamore, Linda Stockton, William Marshall and Anthony Goff. Not pictured: Dr. Daniel Bell and Dr. Chuck Zickus.

Photo contributed by Dr. Chuck Zickus, OFO



Alameda Employees Help Energize CFC

OIEA compliance investigators from Alameda, Calif., along with OFO and OPHS employees, spent a day with American Cancer Society (ACS) representatives and the Fair Housing Program Coordinator for the Bay Area to energize the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) season throughout the federal government. The representatives were presented with letters of appreciation for their involvement with CFC and the work they perform for the public.

CFC provides opportunities for federal employees to make pledges to worthy causes and non-profit organizations that affect Americans on a daily basis. Many of the organizations also offer aid and assistance worldwide. CFC is the world's largest and most successful annual workplace charity campaign. The campaign season concluded on Jan. 15.



From left: Chemist Sushma Srivastava, Western Lab; Oravanh Thammasen, Legal Aid; CI Damion Hart, OIEA; Loren Behr, ACS; Dr. Jessica Forshee, OFO; Microbiologist John Collins, Western Lab; and Quality Manager David Martin, Western Lab. Photo contributed by Damion Hart, OIEA.

HQ Employees Hold Bake Sales for CFC

*By Sara Baucher and Wanda Foster
Contributing Writers, OIEA*

Headquarter employees raised money for CFC by organizing bake sales in December.

OIEA employees at the Patriot Plaza III building in Washington, D.C., raised \$440 with their huge selection of baked goods that included muffins, breads, brownies, cakes, cupcakes and cookies.

At the George Washington Carver Center in Beltsville, Md., OIEA, along with the Office of Administrative Services (OAS), the Raleigh district's Beltsville office staff and a couple staff members from OCFO's Program Evaluation and Improvement Staff, raised \$302.



From left: Wanda Foster (OIEA), Kim Gallahan (OIEA), Dennis Thomas (OIEA), Dawn Calhoun (OIEA) and Thomas Nasvytis (OAS) at the George Washington Carver Center. Photo contributed by Wanda Foster, OIEA.



From left: Deb Baucher (OIEA/retired), Kim Gallahan (OIEA) and Vicky Brewer (OM) at Patriots Plaza III. Photo contributed by Sara Baucher, OIEA.

RECALLS <<<

Dec. 20	Palama Holdings, LLC, a Kapolei, Hawaii, establishment, recalled approximately 3,600 pounds of raw, frozen marinated chicken products because they may have experienced temperature abuse in the distribution chain. The products were produced on Oct. 15, 2013, and Nov. 5, 2013. The recall was expanded on Dec. 24 to include approximately 24,784 more pounds of raw, frozen marinated chicken products, which were produced on various dates between Sept. 24 and Nov. 6, 2013. The products were distributed for retail sale in the Hawaiian islands of Oahu, Maui and Kauai and to a nearby military commissary. No reports of illnesses due to eating these products.
Jan. 10	Tyson's Foods, Inc., a Sedalia, Mo., establishment, recalled approximately 33,840 pounds of mechanically separated chicken products that may have been contaminated with a <i>Salmonella</i> Heidelberg strain. The products were produced on Oct. 11, 2013, and shipped nationwide for institutional use only. Working in conjunction with the Tennessee Department of Health, FSIS determined that there is a link between the mechanically separated chicken products and the illness cluster in a Tennessee correctional facility. Based on epidemiological and traceback investigations, seven case-patients at the facility have been identified with illnesses, with two resulting in hospitalization. Illness onset dates range from Nov. 29 to Dec. 5, 2013.
Jan. 13	Rancho Feeding Corporation, a Petaluma, Calif., establishment, recalled approximately 41,683 pounds of various meat products because they were produced without the benefit of full federal inspection, making them unfit for human food. The recall was expanded on Jan. 16 to include an additional 420 pounds of product. The products were produced on Jan. 8 and shipped to distribution centers and retail establishments in California. No reports of illnesses due to eating these products.
Jan. 15	Cloverdale Foods Co., a Mandan, N.D., establishment, recalled approximately 2,664 pounds of beef franks due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen. The products were formulated with milk, a known allergen which was not declared on the product label. The products were produced on Nov. 23 and Dec. 13, 2013, and sold to retail establishments in Montana, North Dakota and Washington State. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.
Jan. 17	European Meat Products Inc., a Lakewood, Colo., establishment, recalled approximately 130,000 pounds of fresh and ready-to-eat beef and pork products because of misbranding and an undeclared allergen. The products contain wheat, a known allergen which is not declared on the labels. The recalled products were produced prior to Jan. 17 and shipped to distributors, restaurants and retail establishments in California, Colorado and Illinois. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.
Jan. 17	Gusto Packing, a Montgomery, Ill. establishment, recalled approximately 67,113 pounds of sliced, spiral ham products due to concerns about possible <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> contamination. The hams were shipped to wholesalers for further distribution in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio, while some were exported to Canada. No reports of illnesses associated with eating these products.
Jan. 19	Truitt Brothers Inc., an East Bernstadt, Ky., establishment, recalled approximately 1.77 million pounds of shelf-stable pasta and ground beef products because of misbranding and an undeclared allergen. The products are formulated with hydrolyzed soy protein and dried soy sauce, known allergens not declared on some labels. The products were produced between May 6, 2013, and Jan. 16, 2014, and shipped to Kraft Foods distribution centers and retail locations nationwide. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.
Jan. 27	George's Inc., a Springdale, Ark., establishment, recalled approximately 1.25 million pounds of frozen par-fried chicken tender products because of misbranding and an undeclared allergen. The products are formulated with wheat, a known allergen which was not properly declared on the labels. The products were sold to wholesale locations for distribution to institutional users nationwide. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

POLICY UPDATES <<<

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. The following were recently issued and are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/index:

- Directive 7221.1, Rev. 1, Prior Labeling Approval
- Directive 8091.1, Rev. 1, Procedures for the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Health Hazard Evaluation Board (HHEB)
- Directive 10240.4, Rev. 3, Verification Activities for the *Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm) Regulation and the Ready-to-Eat (RTE) Sampling Program
- Notice 01-14, Verification Activities for Non-O157 Shiga Toxin-Producing *Escherichia coli* (Non-O157 STEC) Under MT60, MT52 and MT53 Sampling Programs
- Notice 02-14, Verification of Carcasses That an Establishment Further Processes Without an Official Inspection Legend
- Notice 03-14, Documenting Sampling Source When Collecting Samples for Shiga Toxin-Producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) Verification Testing
- Notice 04-14, Notification of Availability for the First Edition of the Guideline for Controlling *Salmonella* in Market Hogs
- Notice 05-14, Poultry Checklist in Establishments That Produce Raw Chicken and Turkey Products
- Notice 06-14, Not Ready-To-Eat Comminuted Poultry Exploratory Sampling Project and Updating the PHIS Profile for Raw Turkey and Chicken Products
- Notice 08-14, Temporary Suspension of Poultry Checklist

Administrative issuances were also published at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=policy>.

- Directive 2100.6, Rev. 2, Purchase Card
- Directive 2450.1, Rev. 5, Assignment and Use of Motor Vehicles for Official FSIS Business
- Notice 84-13, Federal Holidays in 2014
- Notice 07-14, Postage Rate Increase

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

There are a number of your fellow employees who are in need of annual leave for a variety of reasons. If you have annual leave that you don't need, you can help them by donating it through the Leave Transfer Program.

The Beacon will print the current list of leave recipients at various times. You can also view it on InsideFSIS. In the "I Want To" box, select "Access Public Folders." Then click on the "Personnel" folder and select "Leave Transfer Program." You will find more information about donating leave, forms, rules, eligibility and requirements.

For more information, contact Jamie-Lynne Scribner in OM's Employment, Classification and Compensation Branch at (202) 720-2877.

>>> KUDOS <<<

Would you like to thank, congratulate or give a shout out to someone in FSIS? Here's your chance. Send your kudo to beacon@fsis.usda.gov and we'll publish one or more each month. Please keep your kudos to a few sentences.

If you didn't know, there's a place on *InsideFSIS* where you can submit kudos as well. To find out who's done just that, go to <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/employee/balance/kudos/kudos.jsp>.

If you would like to place a kudo on *InsideFSIS*, click on the "Submit Kudos" link at the top of the box. You may also send your kudo to intranet.manager@fsis.usda.gov.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

You can tell the stories of FSIS better than anyone! Send us your articles, photos and feedback. It's simple. Just prepare an article and include: who, what, when, where, why and how. Clear your article through your program area. Then send your article to Beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Candid photos preferred. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

FACES OF FOOD SAFETY

OIEA Investigator Victoria Usher gives a food safety presentation at her son's school on Progressive Ag Safe Day. To find out how her job, family life and volunteer work cross over, go to page 3.

Photo contributed by Debbie Dietz, OIEA



FSIS Hits the Road to Spread Food Safety Message

*By James Croxon, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113*

Educating the public on proper food handling practices is a core agency mission for FSIS. It's even more important when one considers the impact safe food handling practices has on children. It's one of the top three goals under the agency's strategic plan for this reason.

With a generation of children brought up relating the word "celebrity" to chefs just as readily as they do to athletes, food safety education has a more receptive audience among teens and young adults than ever before.

The four food safety steps of Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill from the *Food Safe Families* campaign are easily taught to children. These steps are so essential to food safety, and with heightened interest amongst kids for cooking and baking, there's no better time to establish a lifetime of safe food handling than at an early age.

FSIS has partnered with multiple organizations to spread this message. One such partnership is with the National Association for Family Child



Care, which provides food safety training through webinars, various publications and its national conference. Other partnerships include the National Parent Teacher Association,

the Boy Scouts of America and the school nutrition program.

FSIS wants to help foster its Ambassador program with its employees as well. Partnerships, with organizations like these, do much to reach children and underserved communities at a grassroots level, but it's only part of the outreach equation. Education and outreach is one mission every employee can support. There are many outreach activities that rely on volunteers from across FSIS.

Representatives have been appointed from each program or district to be part of the FSIS Outreach Task Force (OTF). The OTF team members act as points of contact for field employees to place requests for materials for distribution at outreach events. Volunteers wishing to participate in outreach events

Continued on page 2 ...

The Beacon is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Office for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

April issue – due March 1
May issue – due April 1
June issue – due May 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to e-mail.

ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN

Seven years ago, I arrived in D.C. committed to bridge the gap between the field and headquarters. In headquarters, it is our job to support you all in the field. The field is where the mission intersects with the health and safety of the American public, and I recognize the hard work and dedication you put into your jobs to ensure that safety.

Most of you have probably seen recent news reports on recalls that question the safety of the meat, poultry and eggs that American consumers eat. Don't let this discourage you. My response, and heart-felt belief, is that our priorities have not wavered from our mission of protecting public health thanks to you, our dedicated public servants, who diligently execute those priorities daily.

We should let these events serve as a reminder of the increased urgency of our public health mission. We cannot allow lapses in our duties that might cause American families to question the safety of the food they feed their families. We must redouble our attention to the mission and embrace this attention to show the media and consumers that they can have confidence in the safety of the meat, poultry and eggs they bring home.

In headquarters and the field, we've put a tremendous amount of thought, research and planning into the management controls, regulations, directives and other mechanisms we use every day to ensure the food that we're entrusted to regulate is safe and wholesome. But those processes will not work without knowledgeable and trustworthy people to execute them. The fact that our nation's meat, poultry and egg products are the safest in the world shows that we're getting both the policy and execution parts of the equation right.

I realize that every job in every location has its own unique set of challenges. I ask you all to continue to be mindful of what goes on around you. Be vigilant, and if you see something that is wrong or doesn't make sense, please don't be afraid to tell your supervisor about it. Nobody knows about the challenges of the job better than you. It's only through communication that we can address any issues that arise before they impact our mission.

As we take the bold next steps of making our regulatory mission even more efficient over the coming months and years, the one thing that will remain the same is you, the dedicated FSIS employee. Thank you for your continued commitment to our public health mission. Keep up the great work.



Al Almanza

Food Safety

... Continued from page 1

or just wanting more information, should first contact their supervisors. If you have questions or would like the name of your OTF representative, contact Jason Waggoner at jason.waggoner@fsis.usda.gov.

Another volunteer opportunity involves the agency's food safety education exhibit known as the Food Safety Discovery Zone (FSDZ). This year the FSDZ, also known as the Food Safety Mobile, will be traveling to state and county fairs, community health fairs, festivals and a host of other public events. When it stops, unpacks and opens its doors, volunteers greet visitors and pass out a variety of materials,

including coloring books, story books and food safety education pamphlets. The final schedule of appearances will depend partly on the number of volunteers from that area willing to help out.

Employees willing to volunteer for the FSDZ should first seek approval from their supervisors and then contact the FSDZ coordinator, Luis Delgadillo, via e-mail (luis.delgadillo@fsis.usda.gov) with "FSDZ Volunteer" in the subject line of the e-mail.

Educating the next generation of consumers on proper food handling practices is a mission every FSIS employee can be part of whether it's through a formal program or starting an outreach event in your area.

Victoria Usher: *Life is All About Balance*

By Felicia Thompson, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

For Victoria Usher, an Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit (OIEA) investigator, life is all about balance, though the separation between work and life blurs as she incorporates her job into her avid volunteerism.

A 4-H leader, therapeutic horse-riding organizer and mother of a special needs child, Usher spends large portions of her free time working with children. Yet her support of the food safety mission is always at the forefront of her mind as she incorporates food safety education and outreach into her volunteerism at every chance. In so doing, she helps train a new generation about safe food handling practices.

"I'm very fortunate that my three worlds—my job, my family and my volunteerism—cross over quite a bit," Usher said. "My work involves food from the time it leaves the plant until it reaches the consumer. I'm proud of what I am able to do."

Usher first learned about FSIS while in college at Penn State University. The college's Animal Science Program had FSIS inspectors on duty, and it offered students who were interested in domestic animal species the opportunity to develop basic and applied knowledge in biological and physical sciences, nutrition, genetics, reproduction, physiology, economics, business management, agronomy and animal products.

While a student, Usher also worked as an office assistant to a local veterinarian, and an FSIS veterinarian medical officer (VMO) visited often. The VMO encouraged Usher to take the Civil Service Exam (required at that time when applying for a federal position) and apply for an FSIS position.

In 1981, Usher began her career with FSIS as an intermittent employee in a red meat slaughter facility in what was then the Harrisburg area of the Northeast Region. Usher then became a slaughter inspector for 6 years, followed by a processing inspector position, which she did for 16 years. Afterward, she became an enforcement investigations and analysis officer (EIAO) for 10 years. She has been in her position as an EIAO in the Northeast Region for a year and a half.



Photo contributed by Debbie Dietz, OIEA

"I've enjoyed all of my positions at FSIS, but I think this one is my favorite," Usher said, referring to her current position. "I've worked in every type of facility, except for in a poultry slaughter plant. I feel like I'm in a position in which I can take advantage of everything that I have learned in my career."

In each step of her career she has confronted a new aspect of food safety and has taken on new challenges.

"In my first position as a slaughter inspector, I looked at carcasses for abnormalities; as a process inspector, I learned that each plant uses intricate mathematical equations in making its products; as an EIAO, I saw how a food safety program worked in establishments as a whole, and I also reviewed facilities' HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) processes," she said. "As an investigator, every day is different. My daily activities can include locating products that were involved in a recall, reviewing a firm's food security system and performing surveillance."

As stated above, one thing that Usher does in her off hours is to work as a therapeutic horse-riding program instructor. Her son, Sam, participates in the program. She also encourages students with special needs from her son's school (and their teachers and parents) to participate in the program's activities. During group meetings or camping trips, Usher conducts presentations and answers food safety questions. She especially likes teaching participants about the four food safety steps: Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill from the *Food Safe Families* campaign. Usher distributes FSIS food safety publications, like the *Food Safe Families Activity Book* and *How Dad Got Sick*, to the kids and the *Kitchen Companion* to the parents.

Usher has been volunteering with 4-H for 34 years. "I have as much fun as they do!" Usher exclaimed. "It makes me feel good, and I've always tried to help because it's important to teach all kids about food safety."

Marrying her work duties and her personal passions means Usher draws more enjoyment from both bringing benefit to the agency, which values her dedication, and to the children she volunteers with, who learn healthy habits they can take with them throughout life.



PHOTO OF THE MONTH

OPHS Deputy Assistant Administrator Dr. Vivian Chen, currently on detail to USDA's Office of Cultural Transformation, speaks at the USDA Women's History Observance in South Building's Jefferson Auditorium on March 13. The theme for this year is "Celebrating Women of Character, Courage and Commitment."

Photo contributed by Tom Witham, USDA/IOC

HIT Tracks Emerging Food Safety Issues

*By Greg DiNapoli, OPHS
Phone: (202) 772-6067*

The American people rely on our food safety system to protect them despite the many changes in food production, new food technologies and emerging pathogens. Our employees, especially those of you in the field, are the eyes and ears of the agency. You are a great source of information. And since FSIS is always on the lookout for new and emerging food safety issues, you now have a place to go to with credible information to achieve this great mission of ours. So whether you have information regarding an emerging hazard (chemical or microbial) or changes in practices that you think may be impacting our food supply, OPHS' newly formed Hazard Identification Team

or "HIT" is here to gather that information. HIT triages this information to determine if there is a potential food safety risk and refers issues for further agency action. Established in February, HIT enables the agency to proactively identify emerging food safety issues, evaluate and track them and make recommendations that guide the strategic use of FSIS resources in addressing these issues.

Any new or emerging food safety issue can be submitted to HIT by anyone in the agency using the "Issue Initiation Form" found at <http://collaboration/sites/OPHS/RTE/hit/default.aspx>.

More information can also be obtained from HIT coordinators, Alexander Domesle and Nate Bauer, at HazardIdentificationTeam@fsis.usda.gov.

New White Paper Released: Use of Molecular Subtyping

*By Greg DiNapoli, OPHS
Phone: (202) 772-6067*

FSIS has posted a new resource to its website that explains how it uses molecular subtyping technologies to enhance public health by reducing foodborne illness. Subtyping methodologies improve outbreak response and identification of the source of foodborne infections, help assess sample-specific risk of illness associated with a product process or an establishment and allow the agency

to trace contamination within FSIS-regulated establishments. They can also provide highly specific data for risk assessments and attribution studies to help target strategies to reduce foodborne illness.

This paper outlines how FSIS now performs in-house Pulsed-field Gel Electrophoresis (PFGE) analyses on all FSIS sample isolates and antimicrobial susceptibility testing on all FSIS *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* isolates. In addition, most FSIS *Salmonella* serotyping is performed in house

using a molecular serotyping assay. Application of these technologies will help industry by providing faster results to use in decisions about their food safety systems, while also allowing for more rapid trend identification by FSIS to target foods that may place the public at risk.

The paper also explains how FSIS is working with USDA/ARS, FDA and CDC in using the latest technology to address foodborne pathogens. The paper is available at <http://go.usa.gov/KgB5>.

Slips, Trips and Falls at FSIS Workplaces

By Laurie Segna, OM
Phone: (202) 690-0827

Did you know that slips, trips and falls account for the highest number of injuries to FSIS employees? Each month, between 35–50 percent of all claims submitted are the result of an employee slipping, tripping or falling.

Falls can be a major threat to health, independence and confidence. Typical injuries include sprains, strains, fractures/breaks, bruises, lacerations, concussions, dislocations and, in some cases, fatalities. Many falls involve injuries to multiple parts of the body. Other serious effects can be psychological, such as lowered confidence and a loss of a feeling of safety; impacts to everyday activities (on and off the job); long-term chronic

pain; and the potential for weakness and reinjury. Many people never fully recover from the consequences of a fall.

Studies about why people fall have shown that health, environmental conditions and behavior are all contributing factors. The more you understand about the factors which can increase the risk of a slip, trip or fall injury, the better prepared you can be to identify hazards and take preventive actions.

Health factors include poor eyesight, weak muscles, drowsiness, balance issues, slow reflexes and the side effects of medications.

Environmental factors include poor design, construction, maintenance, housekeeping and lighting of walking and work surfaces. These include floors, stairs, ramps, ladders, docks, sidewalks,

outdoor areas and parking lots.

Behavioral factors include lack of concentration, carrying something while using stairs, unsuitable footwear, lack of familiarity with a walking area, using equipment improperly, risky behavior and anxiety as a result of a previous fall injury.

In future articles we will discuss the actual causes of slip, trip and fall injuries at FSIS workplaces and what can be done to prevent or minimize them. Most of us have either fallen down or know someone who has! We'd like to learn from your experiences and welcome any suggestions you may have to reduce these hazards. Please contact your local Occupational Health and Safety Specialist if you have information you would like to share.

Workers' Compensation Group Adds New Specialists

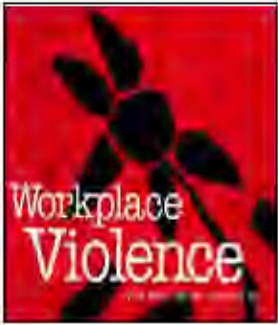
By Samilya Zurawski, OM
Phone: 1-800-370-3747

In an effort to address the needs of our customers, the Workers' Compensation Group (WCG) has added two new specialists. Below are the workers' compensation specialists, compensation claims technicians and their area of coverage.

Area of Coverage	Workers' Compensation Specialist	Compensation Claims Technician
Districts: Atlanta, Philadelphia and Raleigh All others: HQ, Labs, Financial Services Center, etc.	Caroline Howard Washington, D.C. (202) 260-9216	Lynn McGourty Minneapolis, Minn. (612) 659-8571
Districts: Alameda, Dallas, Springdale and Denver	Patricia Turner Washington, D.C. (202) 720-4162	Jill Erickson Minneapolis, Minn. (612) 659-8579
Districts: Chicago, Des Moines and Jackson	Samilya Zurawski Minneapolis, Minn. (612) 659-8571	Wendy Wirth Minneapolis, Minn. (612) 659-8560

Reminder: FSIS employees who are injured on the job or have an occupational disease must initiate the claim through the WCG with the appropriate technician assigned to serve their district or other major organizational unit. The WCG staff assists and guides the employee with filing the required documents. Once the claim is received in the WCG, it is reviewed for missing information and forwarded to the Department of Labor (DOL) for adjudication. The WCG does not make the decisions concerning the work-related injury or illness; those decisions are made by DOL's Workers' Compensation Program.

Guidelines for Securing Your Building and Property



By Joe Anne Kennedy, OM
Phone: (202) 690-1999

The Employee Safety, Health & Wellness Staff's Workplace Violence Prevention & Response Program (WVPRP) is frequently asked about physical security actions that can be taken to protect employees, buildings, property and assets and reduce the likelihood of intruders. The following guidelines may help you examine elements affecting physical security at your worksite. Not all the measures listed may be possible, but they are actions you may want to consider at your work location in an effort to prevent crimes and violence in the work environment.

Outer Perimeter (your actual property lines)

- Are entrances and exits designed to deny unauthorized entry?
- Are there security guards or motion detectors that will sense the presence of intruders?
- Are visitors channeled into a defined area? (i.e., Are they signed in and accompanied by employees while onsite?)
- Is parking onsite and close to the facility? Is it secure?
- Is there adequate lighting?
- Are cameras placed at various locations around the property?
- Is shrubbery pruned around entrances, windows and parking lots?

Inner Perimeter (doors, windows and walls of your building(s))

- Can office doors and windows be locked?
- Are emergency alarms/buttons or other alarm procedures in place and assessed for effectiveness?
- Is the distribution of keys controlled?

Interior of your Building(s)

- Are there security cameras to monitor the business, as well as record evidence of crimes?
- Are there security guards or motion detectors that will sense the presence of intruders?
- Are floor plans posted to show evacuation routes in case of emergency?
- Are there designated safe areas where employees can go to if in imminent danger or in an emergency situation?
- Is the office furniture laid out or designed to prevent employees from being trapped?
- Are building communication systems (paging) available?

While many of the means to provide perimeter and interior security overlap, thinking in terms of these three levels and trying to implement two or three physical security measures at each level will help you to apply appropriate physical security measures, increase your safety and protect your property.

Protocols to Address Emergencies or Imminent Danger in Your Workplace

- ☒ Stay calm
- ☒ Find a safe place (protect yourself)
- ☒ Call 911
- ☒ Call private or local security personnel
- ☒ Call your supervisor
- ☒ Call OIG at 1-800-424-9121 if there is criminal activity

Workplace Violence Prevention & Response Program

Hotline:

1-877-987-3747

Employee Assistance Program (EAP):

1-800-222-0364

(TTY: 888-262-7848)

E-mail:

workplaceviolenceprevention@fsis.usda.gov

www.FOH4you.com

Document all incidents of assault, harassment, interference, intimidation or threat per Directive 4735.4.

Protect Your Mobile Device from Malware

By Leigh Ann Acree, OCIO
Phone: (202) 418-8816

Malware is software that can disable your phone, remotely control your device or steal valuable information. Malware, phishing and virus targets include computers, smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices. Mobile malware uses the same techniques as personal computer malware to infect mobile devices. Remember: a mobile device is a computer and should be protected like one.

The Ponemon Institute's survey, "2014 State of Endpoint Risk," states that 63 percent of an organization's employees are now using mobile devices at work, with IT managers anticipating a sharp increase in the next 3 years.

Know how to protect yourself and your data from potential threats by following the best practices outlined below.

Download From Trustworthy Places

Check your sources before downloading an app (application). Just as you probably read product reviews before buying a computer or car, get feedback from your trusted social networks before downloading an app.

Install Antivirus and Anti-malware Software

To protect yourself from viruses and malware, you should install a mobile security program that scans for malicious code in applications, secure digital cards and internet downloads on your devices. It can help protect your phone from viruses and malware, as well as protect your information in the case of theft or loss.

Keep Tabs On Your Apps

Monitor your apps on your mobile device on a regular basis and immediately delete anything suspicious. A decrease in battery life can be a sign that malware is present and running in the background.

Check Phone Settings and Use a Strong Password

Make sure you auto-lock your phone and have a strong password in case it is lost or stolen. This can help keep your personal data private. Another good practice is disabling the "Wi-Fi auto connect" feature so that your phone will only connect to previously known Wi-Fi networks. Wi-Fi snooping can occur when you access a public network at any hotspot. Attackers can use tools to "listen in" on your web use and/or collect passwords and other data that can lead to identity theft.

Watch Out For Suspicious Links

Just like spam e-mail, be careful about following links sent from contacts within your address book. When navigating the Internet, take into account that a malicious site that you browse can exploit a bug in your phone and install malware in the background. Be especially cautious with sites that want you to install new software.

Do's and Don'ts (for guarding against mobile malware and protecting your data)	
Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Download apps from reputable sites and closely watch app permission requests.✓ Check for feedback from other users before installing program from app stores.✓ Use a strong complex password.✓ Use personal firewalls.✓ Turn off Bluetooth and other connections when not in use.✓ Install a mobile security app.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Download apps from third-party application websites.✗ Leave your "Wi-Fi ad-hoc mode" on.✗ Access banking or shopping sites over public Wi-Fi connection.✗ Leave your mobile device unattended in public places.

Keep up with the latest security threats and make sure that you use up-to-date mobile security software. It is important to be aware of the potential threats of malware and to take a few precautions so that you can use your mobile device safely and securely.

SNAPSHOTS

Jackson District

No one can say the employees in the Jackson district weren't all heart when they all wore red to promote healthy heart lifestyles during American Heart Month in February.



Day shift employees at establishment P308 in Morton, Miss. Seated, from left: FIs Latrenda Franklin, Kaye Williams, Irene Lee and Debbie Clark; and OLOL Betty Bobbitt. Standing: FI Shirley Holifield; IIC Dr. Robert Kennedy; OLOL Deddie McIntee; FIs Willie Wells, Dorothy Hurst and Cassie Futch; CSIs Ronnie Hubbard and Nefaterria Weatherspoon; FIs Mable Wilson, Dorothy Jacobs and Allison Thomas; and SCSi Charlean Youngblood. Photo contributed by Dr. Robert Kennedy, OFO.



FSIS inspectors at P-6616 in Sebastopol, Miss. Front row, from left: CSIs Shirley Amos and Shirley Brantley. Back row: FIs Brenda King and Beverly Bowie; and CSI Lane Sanders. Photo contributed by Dr. Anne Currie, OFO.

FROM THE **FIELD**

Raleigh District

HQ employees from OPPD and OPHS joined local OFO employees at establishment G1349 in Elizabeth, N.J., on Feb. 11 for a tour of the facilities. From left: Jose Salazar, OFO; Val Jefferson, OPPD; Dr. Bahaa Boulos, OFO; Dr. Jorge Ortiz-Muniz, OPHS; Gary Noyes, OPPD; Rachael Kozolup, OPPD; and Dr. Udit Minocha, OPPD. Photo contributed by Todd Furey, OPPD.



Atlanta District

FSIS employees participated in recruitment activities at the North American Veterinary Community Conference in Kissimmee, Fla., Jan. 19-22. Information was provided on the agency's food safety mission, job opportunities, career paths, challenging and rewarding work environment, accomplishments and diverse work force. Attendees were also provided information on program vacancies and posting job resumes on the USAJobs website. Pictured, from left: SPHV Dr. Michelle Espeut, SPHV Dr. James Gossett, SPHV Dr. Camilo Potes and FLS Dr. Vishnu Ramnarine. Photo contributed by Dr. James Gossett, OFO.

Atlanta District

At establishment P17980 in Sumter, Ga., employees from the night shift observed African American History Month by learning about the celebration and sharing inspiring stories of African Americans who made extraordinary achievements in their field, like George Washington Carver, Jessie Owens, Rosa Parks and Duke Ellington. Each participant brought information to the table, which helped to unite them as a team. From left: FIs Linda Weathers, Sidney Sims, Brenda Mendiola and Mattie Jenkins; and CSI Johnnie Manning. Photo contributed Dr. Lorenzo Bandini, OFO.



NACMPI Meeting Provides FSIS with Expert Insight

By Natasha Williams, OOEET
Phone: (202) 690-6531

FSIS hosted the National Advisory Committee for Meat and Poultry Inspection (NACMPI) annual meeting Jan. 7-8 in Washington, D.C. Acting Under Secretary Brian Ronholm and Administrator Al Almanza welcomed the committee, whose deliberations are also open to the public.

NACMPI was established by Congress in 1971 to provide advice to the Secretary of Agriculture concerning issues that fall under state and federal jurisdiction of meat, poultry and egg product inspection. It is comprised of 17 food safety professionals from state government, industry, academia and consumer advocacy groups who serve the USDA Secretary in an advisory capacity. Ex-officio members include representatives from FSIS employee groups and sister agencies, such as FDA and CDC.

The agenda included updates on previous issues that have faced NACMPI and how FSIS has responded to their recommendations. The updates spanned topics previously identified as problematic, such as on veal slaughter, data analysis and pre-harvest *Salmonella* controls, as well as equivalence, audits and re-inspection of imports and the progress FSIS has made. After, the committee split into sub-committees to discuss the two main meeting topics:

- **Safe Food Handling Labels:** If FSIS should change food handling labels for consumers caused a great deal of deliberation, and there was broad consensus that the instructions should be modernized. NACMPI recommended that FSIS eliminate the statement, "Keep refrigerated or frozen. Thaw in refrigerator or microwave," as they felt it was antiquated. It also recommended enhancing the standing direction to "Keep raw meat and poultry separate from other



NACMPI meeting, Jan. 7-8, Washington, D.C. Photo contributed by Natasha Williams, OOEET.

foods. Wash working surfaces (including cutting boards) utensils and hands after touching raw meat or poultry" to include guidance regarding the use of food thermometers.

- **FSIS Establishment-Specific Data Release**

Strategic Plan: The sub-committee recommended that FSIS prioritize the importance of the numerous datasets it generates by prioritizing the information by level of public health hazard. As a result, information regarding pathogens in ready-to-eat (RTE) products would receive priority as they pose the greatest danger. The data question is particularly important in light of the fact that FSIS is accumulating so much electronic information as of the result of PHIS implementation.

Recommendations by the committee, meeting transcripts, presentations, background documents and comments submitted by the public are available online at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/ffsis/topics/regulations/advisory-committees/nacmpi-reports.

NACMPI meetings are organized by OOEET's Outreach and Partnership Division. The next NACMPI meeting is scheduled for the fall of 2014 in Washington, D.C.

National Nutrition Month

By Kellie Upshaw, OM
Phone: (202) 260-8275



eatright.org

Developed each year by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, National Nutrition Month focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. This year's theme is "Enjoy the Taste of Eating Right" and highlights how to combine taste and nutrition to create healthy meals that follow dietary guideline recommendations and the importance of exercise.

To learn more about National Nutrition Month, go to www.eatright.org.



AgLearn Easy Links

By Erasmo Nieves Martinez, OOEET
Phone: (800) 366-3747

What is the AgLearn Easy Links Tool?

AgLearn Easy Links lets you quickly find commonly used features on the home page.

Why should I use it?

The Easy Links tool makes it easier to find what you are looking for, increases accessibility and can save you time. In less than a minute, you can customize the Easy Links section to show the links of some of your most visited pages.

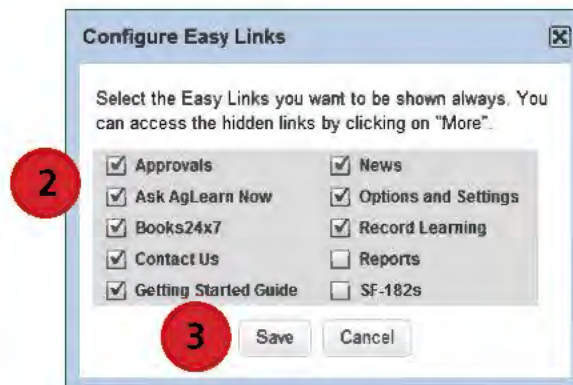
How can I customize my Easy Links section?

Once you sign in, the Easy Links tool can be found on the right side of the main page. Use the tool to customize the links you want to see on the home page when you log in. Here's how:

1. Click on "Easy Links."



2. A selection of 10 links will appear in a new window. Click the Easy Links that you want to see on the home page.



3. Then click "Save."

4. After the links have been chosen, these will be readily available on the Easy Links section every time you log in to AgLearn. Links not selected can always be accessed by clicking on "Show More."



It's Free

Remember all the books and courses on AgLearn are available now at no additional cost to you since FSIS has prepaid for your license.

Smoking Cessation – 50 Years in the Making

By Kellie Upshaw, OM
Phone: (202) 260-8275

Fifty years ago, the U.S. Surgeon General issued the first government report on the risks associated with smoking, admitting that cigarettes can cause lung cancer. As a result, U.S. policies gradually changed, eventually mandating smoke-free areas in the workplace and other places. Since then, additional reports have revealed more negative health effects of tobacco use. Although policy changes have helped to decrease the rate of smoking, it is currently the single most avoidable cause of disease, disability and death in the United States.

According to the CDC, approximately 22.5 percent of adults and 26 percent of high school seniors smoke. Smoking contributes to more than 440,000 deaths each year and harms nearly every organ of the body.

Quitting smoking has immediate, as well as long-term benefits, for you and your loved ones. New findings from the Lung Health Study show that intensive smoking

cessation programs can significantly improve long-term survival among smokers. In accordance with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (also known as health care reform), all Federal Employee Health Benefit plans are required to cover the following:

- Four tobacco cessation counseling sessions of at least 30 minutes for at least two quit attempts per year. This includes proactive telephone counseling, group counseling and individual counseling.
- All seven FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications (with a doctor's prescription).

These benefits must be provided with no copayments or coinsurance and not subject to deductibles, annual or lifetime dollar limits.

Check out www.opm.gov/quitsmoking to access frequently asked questions, a downloadable poster and a video on smoking cessation. For additional information and resources on smoking cessation, visit www.cdc.gov/tips, www.smokefree.gov, or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

Is EAP Really Confidential?

By Jodi Hallstrom, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8597

It can be a difficult decision to contact an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) counselor for the first time because you may be concerned about your privacy. However, the program is guided by laws and regulations that protect employee information. EAP records are also confidential (except in the circumstances described below). Before the release of any confidential information, the employee's signature is required. The signature allows the flow of information between the employee, the EAP program and your organization. Your counselor will discuss the Privacy Act with you and how it covers your records. The EAP is required by law and regulation to disclose information about you for the following reasons:

- You consent to disclosure in writing.
- It is a court order.
- It is required by medical personnel in a medical emergency.
- The Department of Justice is defending the agency and/or its' employees in litigation when it relates to your use of the EAP.
- Your supervisor needs to confirm that you have made or kept EAP appointments during regular duty hours

or sick leave. (No other information will be given without proper consent.)

- You pose a danger to yourself or others, or threaten to commit a serious crime. This disclosure could involve law enforcement and, in the case of harm to others, the potential victim. No other information about your use of the EAP will be disclosed.
- There is suspected child abuse or neglect (or, in some states, elder and spouse abuse). EAP is required to report this information under state law to the appropriate state or local authorities.

All EAP records are considered privileged and under protection of the Privacy Act 5 U.S.C. 7361, 7362, 7901, 7904, and 44 U.S.C. 3101 and Human Health Services Personnel Instruction 792-2. Violation of the federal laws and regulations by the EAP is a crime, and suspected violations may be reported to appropriate authorities in accordance with federal regulations.

We encourage all employees to take advantage of the resources available through EAP. Free and confidential help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call 1-800-222-0364 (TTY: 1-888-262-7848) or go online at www.foh4you.com. Remember, EAP is there for all of us!

Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

Below is the list of leave recipients, as of Feb. 27, 2014, who are in need of annual leave. If you have annual leave that you don't need, you can help by donating to them through the Leave Transfer Program (LTP). For information about donating leave, forms, rules, eligibility and requirements, go to InsideFSIS. In the "I Want To" box, select "Access Public Folders." Click on the "Personnel" folder and select "Leave Transfer Program."

For more information, contact Dwaynya Goodson in OM's Employment, Classification and Compensation Branch at (202) 720-8966.

Recipient	Case Number	Program Area	State	Situation
(b) (6)	OFO-12-0048	OFO	KY	Surgery
	OFO-13-0062	OFO	LA	Maternity
	OFO-13-0060	OFO	IN	Surgery
	OFO-13-0056	OFO	IL	Surgery
	OFO-13-0041	OFO	NC	Surgery
	OFO-13-0014	OFO	MO	Serious Illness/Surgery
	OFO-13-0053	OFO	VA	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0044	OFO	CA	Serious Illness/Surgery
	OFO-12-0061	OFO	CA	Surgery
	OFO-13-0036	OFO	GA	Maternity
	OPEER-13-0001	OPEER	GA	Surgery
	OFO-13-0017	OFO	AL	Surgery
	OFO-13-0054	OFO	WA	Family Illness/Surgery
	OFO-13-0021	OFO	LA	Surgery
	OPPD-13-0003	OPPD	DC	Serious Illness/Maternity (extension of eligibility)
	OFO-13-0067	OFO	TX	Surgery
	OFO-13-0059	OFO	NC	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0042	OFO	AR	Surgery
	OFO-13-0016	OFO	PA	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0032	OFO	CA	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0011	OFO	CA	Surgery
	OFO-13-0006	OFO	AL	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0019	OFO	CA	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0030	OFO	NC	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0046	OFO	OK	Surgery
	OFO-13-0064	OFO	CA	Maternity
	OFO-13-0026	OFO	AR	Serious Illness
	OPHS-12-0002	OPHS	DC	Surgery
	OOEET-13-0001	OOEET	MD	Surgery
	OFO-13-0023	OFO	GA	Surgery
	OFO-13-0045	OFO	TN	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0037	OFO	AR	Maternity
	OFO-13-0003	OFO	CO	Serious Illness

Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

Recipient	Case Number	Program Area	State	Situation
(b) (6)	OFO-14-0004	OFO	CA	Maternity
	OFO-13-0063	OFO	CO	Surgery
	OFO-13-0050	OFO	AR	Serious Illness
	OIEA-13-0001	OIEA	CA	Surgery
	OFO-13-0031	OFO	TX	Maternity
	OFO-13-0033	OFO	CA	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0065	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0027	OFO	GA	Surgery
	OM-13-0004	OM	MD	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0047	OFO	PA	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0034	OFO	GA	Serious Illness
	OFO-12-0064	OFO	KS	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0039	OFO	AL	Maternity
	OFO-13-0040	OFO	CA	Maternity
	OFO-11-0048	OFO	WA	Serious Illness
	OCIO-13-0002	OCIO	DC	Serious Illness
	OPPD-13-0002	OPPD	DC	Family Illness
	OFO-13-0052	OFO	AL	Family Illness
	OFO-13-0025	OFO	MS	Family Illness
	OFO-13-0049	OFO	CA	Maternity
	OFO-13-0024	OFO	NC	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0066	OFO	PA	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0035	OFO	MN	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0001	OFO	OK	Surgery
	OFO-14-0004	OFO	MS	Family Illness
	OFO-13-0051	OFO	NC	Maternity
	OFO-13-0022	OFO	NC	Surgery
	*OFO-12-0049	OFO		
	*OFO-12-0055	OFO		
	*OFO-13-0010	OFO		
	*OFO-13-0020	OFO		
	*OFO-13-0026	OFO		
	*OFO-13-0057	OFO		Serious Illness
	*OFO-13-0058	OFO		Serious Illness
	*OM-13-0002	OM	MD	Serious Illness
	*OFO-14-0002	OFO	ND	Serious Illness

*These LTP recipients, while not consenting to publish their names, have been assigned a case number so donated leave may be transferred to their accounts.

RECALLS <<<

March 7

George's Inc., a Springdale, Ark., establishment, recalled approximately 29,200 pounds of seasoned raw, chicken breast strips due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen. The products were formulated with soy protein, a known allergen, and monosodium glutamate (MSG); however, the product was released with a label for George's boneless skinless breast pieces with rib meat, which did not declare soy or MSG on the label. The products were produced and packaged from Dec. 21 through Dec. 23, 2013, and sold to distributors in Tennessee and Iowa for further distribution. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

>>> RECENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

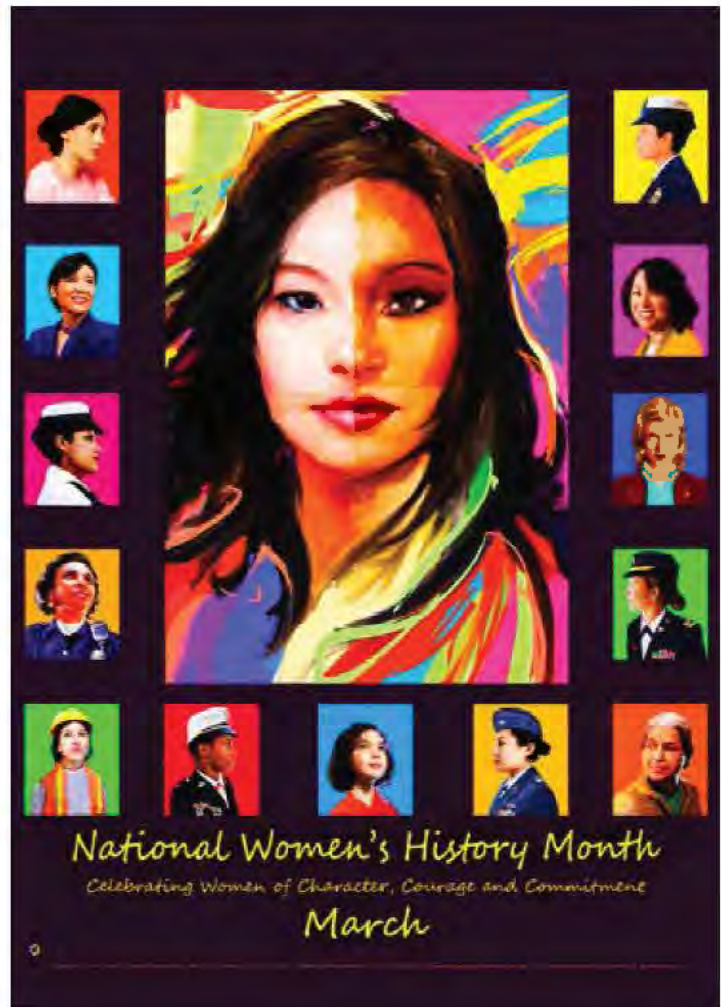
Susan Scarcia Selected as Philadelphia District Manager – Susan Scarcia has been selected as the district manager for the Philadelphia district effective March 9. Formerly Philadelphia's deputy district manager, Scarcia started her career with FSIS as a food inspector in 1998 and has over 32 years of experience as a public health professional.

>>> KUDOS <<<

Would you like to thank, congratulate or give a shout out to someone in FSIS? Here's your chance. Send your kudo to beacon@fsis.usda.gov and we'll publish one or more each month. Please keep your kudos to a few sentences.

If you didn't know, there's a place on *InsideFSIS* where you can submit kudos as well. To find out who's done just that, go to <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/employee/balance/kudos/kudos.jsp>.

If you would like to place a kudo on *InsideFSIS*, click on the "Submit Kudos" link at the top of the box. You may also send your kudo to intranet.manager@fsis.usda.gov.



Read and Join in a Discussion with Al Almanza



To check out the Administrator's Blog,
go to *InsideFSIS* at
<https://connections.usda.gov/blogs/FSIS/>.

FSIS Retirees: Feb. 15 - March 15, 2014

*Thank you for your service and
dedication to public health.*

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Bartlett, Ronald B., CSI	Beardstown, IL	13
Borror, Mary M., Lead CSI	Edinburg, VA	37
Denney, Steven L., CSI	Indianapolis, IN	30
Fields, Shirley J., FI	Dallas, TX	25
Finley, Michael S., VMO	Fort Morgan, CO	23
Hansbury, Denise M., SVMO	Baker Hill, AL	4
Henderson, Anne M., CSI	Fredericksburg, PA	12
LeCroy, Mary R., FI	Albertville, AL	23
Ramsburg, John J., SVMO	Hinton, VA	30
Scott, Grace M., CSI	Sedalia, MO	31
Totis, Robert M., FI	Gainesville, GA	10
Wilson, Robert J., CI	New York, NY	22

In Memoriam

We are sad to announce the recent passing of two members of our FSIS family.

Harold Denny Chandler passed away on Feb. 24, 2014. Chandler, age 48, was the OIEA compliance investigator stationed in New Orleans, La., and worked for FSIS for 17 years. He is survived by one son.

Dollene Phillips passed away on Feb. 25, 2014. Phillips, age 61, worked at establishment 1272 in Douglas, Ga., and was a food inspector with FSIS for 9 years. She is survived by two daughters. One daughter, Ketisha Moore, is an FSIS food inspector at the same establishment.

Harvey McCoy passed away on March 15, 2014. McCoy, age 65, worked as a consumer safety inspector at establishment 7487 in Chattanooga, Tenn., and had almost 8 years with FSIS. He is survived by his wife Elizabeth, four children and six grandchildren.

POLICY UPDATES <<<

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. The following were recently issued and are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/index:

- Directive 5000.1, Rev. 4, Verifying An Establishment's Food Safety System
- Directive 5000.6, Rev. 1, Performance of the Hazard Analysis Verification (HAV) Task
- Directive 5500.2, Rev. 6, Significant Incident Response
- Directive 10,800.1, Residue Sampling, Testing and Other Verification Procedures under the National Residue Program for Meat and Poultry Products
- Notice 12-14, Export of Product with a Country Label Designation Different from the Export Certificate Designation

- Notice 13-14, Collecting Supplier Information at the Time of Sample Collection for *Escherichia coli* (E. coli) O157:H7 in Raw Ground Beef Products and Bench Trim
- Notice 14-14, Instructions for Conducting Verification Tasks on Missed Inspection Visits of Meat or Poultry Processing Establishments

Administrative issuances were also published. They are at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=policy>.

- Notice 15-14, Length of Service: January, February and March 2014

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Volume
18

Number
4

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

April 2014

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

You can tell the stories of FSIS better than anyone! Send us your articles, photos and feedback. It's simple. Just prepare an article and include: who, what, when, where, why and how. Clear your article through your program area. Then send your article to Beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Candid photos preferred. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

EMPLOYEE AWARDS

Supervisory Investigator Lauren Behar (right), OIEA, is presented with a non-monetary award by FLS Salah Ibrahim (left) and Philadelphia DM Susan Scarcia (middle) in Brooklyn, N.Y. To read more, go to page 3.

Photo contributed by Joseph Ndungu, OFO



The Enterprise Governance Process in a Nutshell

By James Croxon, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

What is Enterprise Governance (EG)?

The EG Process is a tailored process with specific steps. It sets rules and procedures for making decisions while including senior-level representation from different program areas. Simply put, the EG Process provides a better definition of the issues warranting corporate focus; standardizes the process for issues presented to the Management Council (MC), comprised of assistant administrators and other senior leaders, by vetting them through multi-board reviews; and makes the entire decision-making process more effective and sustainable.

In FSIS, the EG Process is comprised of three boards that report to the MC. The boards are the Enterprise Architecture Board (EAB), the Enterprise Steering Board (ESB) and the Enterprise Investment Board (EIB). At the end of the process, the MC is presented the proposal with details and analyses and recommendations from one or more of the relevant boards. The boards are recommendation bodies only, as the MC is the only decision-making body in the EG process.

Walk Me Through It

A good example of the EG Process at work is the *Salmonella* Action Plan (SAP). The draft SAP was developed with input from across the agency, including field staff, and an interactive blog was created and monitored for further discussion and input. All of the input was summarized and developed into an action plan. The draft SAP went through triage and then through to each of the governance boards. The plan was approved by the MC, which provided a briefing to OA. After OA and department approval, the plan was rolled out on the FSIS website, and a press release was issued by OPACE.

The first step is triage, where the board chairs hear the proposal and decide which board or boards should consider it. The EAB is chaired by the Chief Information Officer and vice-chaired by the Deputy Chief Financial Officer. It considers the information technology (IT)-related components or IT

Continued on page 14...

The Beacon is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Office for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

April issue – due March 1
May issue – due April 1
June issue – due May 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to e-mail.

ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN



Al Almanza

Earlier this week, the agency released Directive 1040.1, *The FSIS Enterprise Governance Decisionmaking Process*. Governance is a dry subject, but it's important to understand the role it plays on how we at FSIS conduct our mission. I'd like to take a moment to briefly explain what it is and share why it's important to me.

In the normal course of agency business, the FSIS Management Council (comprised of FSIS executives and other senior agency leaders) makes decisions that impact multiple program areas. To streamline the decision-making process and make it more effective, the agency uses the Enterprise Governance Process (EG Process) to facilitate this decision making by determining its strategic alignment and obtaining an accurate picture of a proposal's impact.

The EG Process allows us to take a holistic look at all the proposed investments for a year or quarter and weigh them against each other. Proposals are presented to one or more of three boards, made up of executives and agency leaders. These boards analyze the merit of each proposal, identify whether it could impact another function within the agency and rank them all according to cost/benefit, risk and other factors. For details on how exactly the EG Process works and who makes up the committees, please see *The Enterprise Governance in a Nutshell* story in this issue of *The Beacon*.

The EG Process isn't just a tool for senior agency leadership. The real strength of the process is the inclusion of employees. The EG Process allows us to tap into the entire workforce and provide the opportunity for employees to have a voice. You know the mission—you're doing it every day and you're often the ones in the best position to identify needed improvements and solutions to some of our challenges. It's this type of collaboration that will help us meet our annual performance plan and, ultimately, achieve the goals laid out in our strategic plan.

If you have a suggestion that could impact the agency in a positive way, I encourage you to tell your supervisor or bring the idea up in a town hall meeting so it can be brought to the attention of your assistant administrator. It could be used to contribute to discussion around a proposal or could be something that would generate its own proposal.

A web page was created on the FSIS public website with the relevant directives, the EG Process charter and a form for the submission of proposed ideas. They can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/eg. The form is fairly extensive and requires research and justification for proposals, but don't let it discourage you. The EG Process is intended to rank suggestions with agency-wide impact, and to do that effectively, the committees must have all the details and impact analysis.

Governance is the backbone of how this agency makes decisions. However, those decisions are not made without taking into account our employees and their input. I'll be traveling extensively this summer to hear the ideas you have to make this agency better. Thank you for all the hard work you do day after day.

Read and Join in a Discussion with Al Almanza



To check out the Administrator's Blog, go to *InsideFSIS* at <https://connections.usda.gov/blogs/FSIS/>.

Introducing Rachel Johnson-DeRycke

By Steve Van Der Werff, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

In modernizing food safety for the 21st century, FSIS employs a scientific approach to inform policy and reduce foodborne illness. Rachel Johnson-DeRycke, a risk analyst in OPHS, is a key player in that success.



According to Johnson-DeRycke, risk assessments, risk profiles and similar tools can provide an understanding of how proposed policies can impact public health. "My job allows to me to apply technical work to real-life problems," she begins. The Risk Assessment and Analytics Staff (RAAS) works hard to communicate the science needed to inform agency decision making. They also publicly share the reports they develop with stakeholders through scientific journals and on the FSIS website.

"Risk assessments require significant amounts of data, and when those data are not readily available, my teammates and I work with USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and explore other avenues to ensure the necessary research is performed to fill data gaps," Johnson-DeRycke said.

Johnson-DeRycke joined OPHS 4 years ago and enjoys her work, her colleagues and her contribution to food safety. "I work with some of the most intelligent and talented people that I know, and I am very fortunate to learn from them every day," she declared.

Her co-workers find her to be perceptive and accomplished, bringing a fresh and intelligent perspective to her numerous duties. As the project lead, Johnson-DeRycke works with modelers on *E. coli* O157, non-O157 Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) and *Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm) risk assessments and analyses. She provides project briefings to OPHS and OPPD management, the Data Coordination Committee and the STEC workgroup. FSIS' *One Team, One Purpose* attitude is critical for the successful functioning of not only OPHS, but FSIS.

In addition, she works closely with the FDA and ARS on interagency projects, while conducting critical risk assessments that are the key to FSIS policy and public health. She is also involved in initiatives to improve risk

communications within FSIS and with the Interagency Risk Assessment Consortium.

Johnson-DeRycke has never shied away from a challenge or an opportunity. "My past experiences often dropped me into situations that I knew little to nothing about. It forced me to learn faster and to make the most of the resources available to me in order to excel," she said. Her willingness and flexibility to tackle new assignments has been an incredible asset to FSIS as the agency deals with tough policy decisions to address public health.

"Rachel is resourceful, full of initiative, collaborative and always positive in the face of obstacles," said her former supervisor Dr. Denise Eblen, acting deputy assistant administrator for OPHS. "Her ability to communicate complex risk assessments to non-technical audiences is unmatched, and she is a key part of the success of RAAS and OPHS. I hope she has a long career with us."

Johnson-DeRycke has long had an interest in public health and safety. She earned her Master of Public Health degree from Drexel University. As part of her studies, she completed a fellowship in quantitative microbial risk assessment and developed worker health and safety plans for the Department of Homeland Security counterterrorism laboratory for the Center for Advancing Microbial Risk Assessment at Drexel University.

A native of Connecticut, Johnson-DeRycke loves to bake; watch old movies; go to the beach, especially the Connecticut shore; and is a huge fan of UConn's basketball teams, the newly crowned NCAA men's and women's national champions.

Despite the complexity of her projects, Johnson-DeRycke never loses sight of the big picture. "It can be easy to lose sight of the impact your work has on individuals and communities, especially working at the macro level of risk assessments or policy development, but it does make a difference," Johnson-DeRycke said. Her advice to anyone who is considering a career in food safety is to find a way to connect what you do every day to the people you help.

"Food safety is such a diverse area, and I think there is room for all kinds of people, whether a technical person, a people person or a big-picture person. As long as you care about protecting the public's health, I think you can find an area of food safety that is a good fit for you," she said. "I'm a public health professional first. Protecting public health should be our focus in all we do at FSIS."

April is **Heat** Stress Awareness Month

By Laurie Segna, OM
Phone: (202) 690-0827

It's April, and the winter snow and ice will soon be a distant memory for most of us. However, with the return of the sunshine, we are faced with another serious seasonal hazard – the **HEAT**! April at FSIS is Heat Stress Awareness Month, so before the temperatures begin to climb, it is time to start planning the actions and safety measures that can be used to reduce or avoid the risk of heat-related illnesses. All FSIS employees should be aware of the symptoms, precautions and treatments for heat rash, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke and the emergency response procedures followed at their work places. Supervisors should ensure that engineering controls, such as ventilation, personal protective equipment (e.g., cooling scarves) and liquids (e.g., water and Sqwinchers) are available.

To help you in this effort, the FSIS Environmental Safety and Health Group (ESHG), in cooperation with the FSIS Distance Learning Branch, has developed a heat stress poster that can be downloaded from the ESHG web page at www.tinyurl.com/fsis-eshg (click on "Occupational Health"). The poster summarizes heat stress illnesses and provides recommendations for working safely in hot environments. ESHG has also developed a heat stress PowerPoint presentation that can be used for employee education and as an information resource.

If you have any questions, please contact the FSIS occupational safety and health specialist (OSHS) assigned to your district. Contact information can be found on the ESHG web page at www.tinyurl.com/fsis-eshg under "Employee Safety." Safety questions can also be e-mailed to askemployeesafety@fsis.usda.gov.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Photo contributed by Joseph Ndungu, OFO

CSI Karina Hazim (right), OFO, received a non-monetary award from FLS Salah Ibrahim (left) during a recent work unit meeting in Brooklyn, N.Y. Hazim received the award for reaching out to small businesses with information and technical support. Supervisory Investigator Lauren Behar was also presented with a non-monetary award for her cooperation with OFO (photo on page 1). Newly appointed Philadelphia District Manager Susan Scarcia (middle) was on hand for the presentations.

FEDERAL INTER-AGENCY HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE PROGRAM

"EYEWITNESS TO EVIL"



Giovanni Frumoli
Italy



Irene Engel-Winkler
Czechoslovakia



David OMI
Bosnia



Steven Pinter
American



Rep. G. K. Butterfield
Congressman for North Carolina

Lincoln Theatre
May 7, 2014
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
1215 U Street NW, Washington, DC
U Street/Cardozo Metro Station

<http://holocaustremembrance.org>

OPM 2014 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey – Coming Soon

By Cecilia Matthews, OM
Phone: (202) 720-9863

The Office of Personnel Management will be administering the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) to a random sample of FSIS employees during the week of May 5, 2014. The FEVS will be sent to full-time permanent and part-time permanent, non-seasonal employees who were on board as of October 31, 2013. The FEVS will remain open for 5½ weeks after the launch.

The survey is a tool that measures employees' perceptions of their current work conditions, performance management, job satisfaction and how well agencies are motivating, as well as managing, their workforces. These factors ultimately decide how to retain the best possible workforce to accomplish the agency's mission.

If you are randomly selected to receive the survey via e-mail, the source e-mail address will be "Federal Employee

Viewpoint Survey-AG <EVAG@opm.gov> or EVAG" and the subject line will read "2014 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey." The e-mail will be specific to the employee who receives it and cannot be forwarded and used more than once. If you are selected and do not have access to an agency computer, you will receive a hard copy of the survey via mail.

Last year, FSIS' participation rate was 56 percent. The agency is strongly encouraging all selected employees to participate, as this survey provides an opportunity to share opinions about how to make FSIS an even better place to work and to shape its future. The survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The goal is to have FSIS be one of the top 10 best places to work in the federal government. With your participation, we can make that happen!

Thank You for Your No- and Low-Cost Employee Recognition Ideas

By Alexandra Sifuentes-Carnes, OM
Phone: (202) 205-4284

In the August 2013 issue of *The Beacon*, FSIS solicited ideas from employees for low- and no-cost ways to recognize a job well done. Because of limited awards funding, employees and supervisors need creative, informal and readily useable ways to recognize employees at no or a very low cost, in addition to the more formal awards and recognition programs. These gestures of thanks were to be as small scale as peer-to-peer kudos or as large as branches, divisions or program areas.

Of the several submissions received, more than 90 percent of the suggestions came from field employees. The most frequently suggested items included:

- Dedicate time on meeting agendas for a "Kudos" or "Pat on the Back" moment to thank each other for special effort, assistance and other good deeds;
- Present a certificate of appreciation for going above and beyond the call of duty; and
- Provide an inexpensive USDA/FSIS-branded gift as a token of thanks.

FSIS would like to thank the following employees for taking the time to participate:

David Abrams, OFO (Brainerd, Minn.); Dr. Safwat Ahmad, OFO (Richmond, Va.); Ramon Cana Alvarez, OFO (Lombard, Ill.); Dr. Mary Kate Anderson, OFO (North Haverhill, N.H.); Alice Christensen, OFO (Richmond, Utah); Wes Devine, OFO (Colorado Springs, Colo., circuit); Wendy Ferguson, OFO (Lombard, Ill.); Kelley Frost, OFO (Milan, Mo.); Lenora Gamble-Pearson, OFO (West Columbia, S.C.); Ron Grangier,

OIEA (Salisbury, Md.); Dr. Karen Groff, OFO (Canaseraga, N.Y.); Thomas Hathaway, OFO (Wimauma, Fla.); Alicia "Denise" Hickman, OFO (St. Louis, Mo.); Dr. Ahmad Jilani, OFO (Hurlock, Md.); Cecilia Matthews, OM (Washington, D.C.); Kathleen McAnally, OFO (Chattanooga, Tenn.); Tommie Olson, OFO (Beloit, Wis.); Florencio Palaruan, OFO (Phoenix, Ariz.); Jean-Marc Patten, OFO (Lombard, Ill.); Deborah Pohl, OFO (Buffalo, N.Y.); Vitina Porrett, OFO (Oshkosh, Wis.); Scott Safian, OIEA (Washington, D.C.); Eileen Satkoff, OFO (Philadelphia, Pa.); Neal Westgerdes, OPPD (Omaha, Neb.); Daniel Woerner, OFO (Fredericksburg, Texas); and night shift inspectors at establishment 00072P in Dardenville, Ark., including Dr. James Guiltner, Pamela Palmer, Adoncie Tanner, Mike Kozak, Joni Kozak, Murrial Smith, Matt Henson, Curtis Hinesley, Jody Watson, Beth Anderson, Damari Duran, Vickie Ellison and Chris Turic, OFO.

The FSIS Employee Suggestion Program is available to recommend additional ideas for employees and supervisors to recognize each other. If you have additional ideas you would like to share with the agency, please call (202) 720-7983 and ask for the Employee Suggestion Coordinator or send an e-mail to FSISSuggestions@fsis.usda.gov.

Also, be sure to use the "Kudos" section of *The Beacon* to recognize your colleagues. Simply send your congratulations, thanks or other recognition to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Similarly, there is a section on *InsideFSIS* where you can submit kudos as well. Visit <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/employee/balance/kudos/kudos.jsp> and see for yourself how simple it is to recognize a job well done! If you would like to place a kudo on *InsideFSIS*, click on the "Submit Kudos" link at the top of the box. You may also send your kudo to intranet.manager@fsis.usda.gov.

Workers' Compensation Program Revised to Include ADP

By Patricia Turner, OM
Phone: 1-800-370-3747

FSIS Directive 4810.1, Rev. 2, *On-the-Job Injury and Illness Compensation Program*, issued July 19, 2005, outlines the current Workers' Compensation Program, explaining entitlements, claims processing and case management. It was expanded last year to include the agency's new initiative, the Alternative Duty Program (ADP).

The ADP is designed to return employees with work-related injuries or illnesses to the workplace as soon as possible after an injury, during the recovery phase or as an interim measure until their next appointment or surgery date. Those individuals placed in the ADP are assigned alternative duties within the commuting area of their duty station, within their documented medical restrictions and in support of the agency's mission. These assignments are not intended to be long term, but rather as a transitional step in the waiting and/or recovery process. Time in the ADP is limited to 90 days, with extensions granted based on medical documentation and/or other administrative factors.

The ADP supports the President's Safety, Health and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) Initiative by reducing the number of lost production days due to workplace injuries and illnesses. Supervisors and employees are encouraged to become familiar with the ADP by reviewing part five, section I of the directive.

If you have any questions about the agency's new ADP, please call the Workers' Compensation Branch at 1-800-370-3747.

The Workers' Compensation Branch (WCB) is introducing a new mailbox for communicating questions and answers between employees and the WCB. Employees can now send general questions about the program or compensations entitlements to AskWorkersComp@fsis.usda.gov.

FSIS Retirees: March 15 - April 15, 2014

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Aaron, Aurora K., VMO	Washington, DC	32
Baldwin, Loren J., CSI	Green Bay, WI	41
Basu, Kasturi, VMO	Washington, DC	25
Bhandari, Jagdish C., SVMO	Hatfield, PA	13
Denke, Dennis W., CSI	Wenatchee, WA	33
Dykes, Eileen J., Public Affairs Spec.	Beltsville, MD	18
Enright, Joseph M., CSI	Edinburg, VA	31
Fisher, Michael E., VMO	Omaha, NE	32
Forest, William D., VMO	Los Banos, CA	11
Getting, Charles K., CSI	Greeley, CO	42
Hannie, Leilani B., Supvy. Freedom of Info. Spec.	Washington, DC	34
Harris, Mary E., Lead Public Affairs Spec.	Beltsville, MD	28
Hayes, Elaine R., CSI	Cold Spring, MN	31
Jones, David P., CSI	Beardstown, IL	26
Karinen, Margaret R., Sr. CI	Alameda, CA	25
Langanki, Doti, FI	Melrose, MN	14
Ledbetter, Travis R., CSI	Collinsville, AL	40
Noel, Darryl W., SCSi	Sioux Falls, SD	10
Oxendine, Elzetter M., SCSi	Dillon, SC	15
Phipps, David, CSI	Sioux Falls, SD	29
Remibsz, Richard J., CSI	Rockingham, NC	21
Ricketson, Walter R., CSI	Alma, GA	41
Ridlen, Sherry D., CSI	Beardstown, IL	29
Riley, Joe A., CSI	Farmerville, LA	32
Smyre, Darlene, FI	Wilkesboro, NC	12
Sparks, Kenneth J., HR Spec.	Dallas, TX	22
Svacina, Ronald M., FI	Gibbon, NE	32

DONATE TO THE LEAVE TRANSFER PROGRAM

There are a number of your fellow employees who are in need of annual leave for a variety of reasons. If you have annual leave that you don't need, you can help them by donating it through the Leave Transfer Program.

The Beacon will print the current list of leave recipients at various times. You can also view it on *InsideFSIS*. In the "I Want To" box, select "Access Public Folders." Then

click on the "Personnel" folder and select "Leave Transfer Program." You will find more information about donating leave, forms, rules, eligibility and requirements.

For more information, contact Dwaynya Goodson in OM's Employment, Classification and Compensation Branch at (202) 720-8966.

Preventing Identity Theft

By Leigh Ann Acree, OCIO
Phone: (202) 418-8816

Identity theft, or identity fraud, is a crime that can have substantial financial and emotional consequences.

You can be a victim of identity theft even if you never use a computer. Malicious people may be able to obtain personal information (such as credit card numbers, phone numbers, account numbers and addresses) by stealing your wallet, overhearing a phone conversation, rummaging through your trash (a practice known as dumpster diving) or picking up a receipt at a restaurant that has your account number on it. If a thief has enough information, he or she may be able to impersonate you to purchase items, open new accounts or apply for loans.

The Internet has made it easier for thieves to obtain personal and financial data. Most companies and other institutions store information about their clients in

databases. If a thief can access that database, he or she can obtain information about many people at one time rather than focus on one person at a time. The Internet has also made it easier for thieves to sell or trade the information, making it more difficult for law enforcement to identify and apprehend criminals.

Identity theft is usually a crime of opportunity, so you may be victimized simply because your information is available. Thieves may target customers of certain companies for a variety of reasons, e.g., a company database is easily accessible, the customers' demographics are appealing or there is a market for specific information. If your information is stored in a database that is compromised, you can become a victim of identity theft.

There is no way to guarantee that you will not be a victim; but here are ways you can minimize your risk:

☑ **Do business only with reputable companies**

Before providing any personal or financial information, make sure that you are interacting with a reputable, established company. Some attackers may try to trick you by creating malicious websites that appear to be legitimate, so you should verify the legitimacy before supplying any information.

☑ **Take advantage of security features**

Passwords and other security features add layers of protection if used appropriately.

☑ **Check privacy policies**

Take precautions when providing information, and make sure to check published privacy policies to see how a company will use or distribute your information. Many companies allow customers to request that their information not be shared with other companies. You should be able to locate the details in your account literature or by contacting the company directly.

☑ **Be careful what information you publicize**

Attackers may be able to piece together information from a variety of sources. Avoid posting personal data in public forums such as blogs, Facebook, etc.

☑ **Use and maintain anti-virus software and a firewall**

Protect yourself against viruses and Trojan horses that may steal or modify the data on your personal computer. Keep your virus definitions up to date.

☑ **Be aware of your account activity**

Pay attention to your statements by checking each item charged on your account for legitimacy. Check your credit report yearly. You are entitled to a free copy of your credit report from each of the main credit reporting companies once every 12 months.

☑ **Use secure sites** (https:// vs. http://) when transmitting information online whenever possible.

SNAPSHOTS



Alameda District

During Black History Month, OIEA investigator Michael Dunn from Phoenix, Ariz., participated in "Jubilee! A Celebration and Remembrance of Black History" hosted by USDA/NRCS. The celebration was held to honor the contributions made by African-Americans to our nation's history, celebrate their intellect and artistic expression and appreciate their leadership and labor. Participants enjoyed a potluck featuring African-American and other cultural foods. From left: Michael Dunn, Jack Lee (NRCS), Keisha Tatem (NRCS) and Roy Tatem, guest speaker. Photo contributed by Michael Dunn, OIEA.

Springdale District

Inspection personnel attended a career fair in February at the College of the Ozarks in Hollister, Mo. They were able to speak with interested students about the career opportunities in the agency, and several professors stopped by to pick up information to give to students who could not attend. The college looks forward to FSIS participating in another career fair in October. From left: FI Amanda Garcia, SCSI Glenda Matney and Dr. Ricky Couch. Photo contributed by Dr. Ricky Couch, OFO.



Atlanta District

On Feb. 28, the inspection team at establishment P-01257 in Murrayville, Ga., in the Cumming circuit united together to celebrate African-American History Month. Inspection personnel researched and gave presentations on famous icons in black history, and each person contributed food to share, along with a little history on the dish. Seated, from left: SCSI Lucy Baliles-Carrier, CSI Lida Rubio and FI Geraldine Collins. Standing: FI Wanda Edmondson, FI Roberto Mota, FI Nick Darwood, CSI Robert Byrom, FI George Brady, FI Teddy Walker and CSI Sharon Douglas. Photo contributed by Lucy Baliles-Carrier, OFO.

FROM THE **FIELD**

Philadelphia District

OIEA Investigator Nicholas Papapietro, from Rochester, N.Y., recently participated in a career day at Willink Middle School Webster in Webster, N.Y. His presentation focused on a day in the life of an OIEA investigator. Photo contributed by Nicholas Papapietro, OIEA.



Washington, D.C.

OIEA, OCIO, OPHS, ODIFP, OOEET, OFO and OPPD employees at Patriots Plaza III celebrated Black History Month on Feb. 25. Elaine Nichols, Senior Curator of Culture from the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, which opens in 2015, gave a presentation that focused on how the museum will incorporate the historical narrative of the civil rights movement. Pictured are committee members, from left: Glenda Kelley, Davina Minnix, Diane Jones, Elsie Johnson, Cassandra Mack, Jennifer Dallis, Pam White, Veronica Miles, Michelle Goodman, Maxine Lebron, Dierdre Shelton, Felicia White, Dawn Calhoun and Eleanor Lewis. Not pictured: Judy Akinola, Shannon Ashby, Olga Morales and Bonnie Cobb. Photo contributed by Maxine Lebron, OIEA.



Atlanta District

The inspection team at establishment 332-M in Augusta, Ga., held a Black History Month observance during lunchtime on Feb. 21. Inspector Cleveland Hunt gave an excellent presentation on Daniel Hale Williams, the first physician to successfully perform open heart surgery, and created a poster of pictures and quotes from prominent African-Americans. The inspection team also prepared many dishes to eat during the celebration. From left: CSI Thomas Kuykendall, FI Chad Johnson, CSI Carissa King, FI Cleveland Hunt, Dr. Kysha Hendricks and SCSi Tony Merritt. Photo contributed by Dr. Kysha Hendricks, OFO.



FSIS Releases Apple Version of MPI Directory Mobile App

By Jennifer Dallis, OCFO
Phone: (202) 418-8816

Last year in May, FSIS released the Android version of the Meat, Poultry and Egg Product Inspection (MPI) Directory mobile app for use by the general public. This February, an Apple version was released that supports iPhone and iPad devices. The release of the Apple version further expands FSIS' ability to reach a broader

audience interested in important food safety data.

The MPI Directory is an existing FSIS public web page at www.fsis.usda.gov/impidirectory that provides a listing of meat, poultry and/or egg products establishments regulated by FSIS. It is FSIS' most accessed online information and is downloaded approximately 25,000 times per month. Previously, the information was only available as a PDF or data files.

The USDA MPI Directory app allows customers to look up or search establishments by location or zip code, type of inspection, establishment name or number and the type of establishment – from any place, anywhere and at any time.

Both Android and Apple versions of the mobile app can be downloaded at www.fsis.usda.gov/impidirectory.

Five Elements for Filing a Workers' Compensation Claim

By Caroline Howard, OM
Phone: (202) 260-9216

If you've ever filed a claim with the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP), you know it can sometimes be a challenging process. This is especially true when OWCP notifies you that the documentation you sent in was insufficient to support your claim.

When filing a claim, you should be aware that there are five elements a claim must have before it can be accepted by OWCP. The elements, established with medical documentation and evidence (facts), is information that you, the employee, must provide:

1. Time Limits

- Make sure that the claim is filed within the time limits set by the Federal Employee's Compensation Act (FECA). A notice of injury must be filed within 3 years of the date of injury. However, if a claim is not filed within 3 years, compensation may still be paid if a written notice of injury was given within 30 days, or the employer had actual knowledge of the injury within 30 days after it occurred.

2. Covered Employees

- The injured or deceased person was an employee within the meaning of the FECA. This means that all civilian employees of the United States, except those paid from non-appropriated funds, are covered.
- Under some circumstances, contract employees, volunteers and loaned employees are covered. OWCP can help you find the answer if you're not sure.

3. Injury: Two factors are involved in establishing that the employee developed a medical condition in a particular way, also called establishing "fact of injury."

- The first is determined on the basis of the factual evidence.

- The second, based on the attending physician's statement, must relate the present medical condition to the incident.

4. Performance of Duty: The employee was in the performance of duty when the event leading to the claim occurred.

- Usually, the injury or illness must occur on the employer's premises during working hours, while the employee is performing assigned duties or engaging in an activity which is reasonably associated with the employment.
- Workers who perform assigned duties away from the employer's premises are also covered.

5. Medical Condition:

- A medical connection between the injury and the condition that resulted must be shown. This determination is based entirely on medical evidence provided by physicians who have examined and treated the employee.

Reminders

- Supervisors should fax claims immediately to the FSIS Workers' Compensation Branch (WCB) in Minneapolis at (202) 370-2070.
- Although the claim must be submitted to the employee's supervisor, the supervisor does not make the determination as to whether the claim is adequate – only the OWCP can make that determination.
- The supervisor may be asked by OWCP at a later date to submit additional documentation before the claim is accepted or denied.
- If OWCP finds an employee's claim is insufficient, they will give the employee additional time to submit documentation before a decision is made to accept or decline the claim.

New Supervisor Training Pilot

By Dr. Gregory Brookhouser, OOEET
Phone: (301) 504-3370

FSIS' New Supervisor Training Pilot (NSTP) was held in Alexandria, Va., March 17-28, with 29 participants in attendance. This consecutive 2-week pilot was designed in alignment with OPM's training mandates and the USDA New Supervisor Training Standards.

The goal of the NSTP is to prepare all new FSIS supervisors for an ever-changing work environment and serve as an opportunity for supervisors from across the country to learn together and share experiences with each other in support of the *One Team, One Purpose* concept. Through an experiential training process, NSTP participants increased their self-awareness and developed new knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills to deal with performance issues, improve performance and productivity, conduct performance appraisals and mentor and coach employees within a new context of supervision.

For questions about the program or future sessions, contact the NSTP manager at gregory.brookhouser@fsis.usda.gov.



Pictured are NSTP participants and distinguished guests. Seated, from left: OOEET AA Michael Watts, Deputy Administrator Philip Derfler, Administrator Alfred Almanza, OPHS AA Dr. David Goldman and Dr. Greg Brookhouser, NSTP manager. Standing: Dr. Dawn Sprouls, Valerie Dinkel, Debra Halteman, Dr. Staci Myers, Jessica Pulz, April Regonlinski, Michelle Catlin, Pradeep Saini, Shaun Smith, Dr. Michelle Wood, Dr. Katrina Fox, Dr. Kevin Necaise, David Oliveira, Dr. Sara Mae Dobry, Dr. Gwynnever Milner, Dr. Briana Flanagan, Dr. Maggie Baldwin (Boerner), Dr. Heather Swan, Audrius Zukas, Robin Way, Dr. Ben Nigg, Rashida Jackson-McIlwain, Dr. Hala Bessyoung, Dr. Karen Becker, Danny Coulter, Dr. Gregory McDermott, Gregory Harstick, Dr. Jessica Boll, Deena Ismail, Dr. Willie Bingham and Dr. Ran Smith. Photo contributed by Duane Robinson, OOEET.

El Ranchito Corporation Pleads Guilty to Transporting Adulterated Pork

By Will Gillingwater, OIEA
Phone: (202) 418-8879

OIEA recently completed an investigation of El Ranchito Corporation and Joel Cervantes, who engaged in the inhumane slaughter of swine and the transportation of uninspected and adulterated pork in violation of the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act and the Federal Meat Inspection Act. Cervantes is the President of El Ranchito Corporation. El Ranchito is a Mexican restaurant in Tickfaw, La.

Cervantes routinely slaughtered swine in an inhumane manner and butchered the pork in unsanitary conditions on land he owned in

Magnolia, Miss. He then transported the adulterated meat to the restaurant in Tickfaw, where he sold the meat to customers. Over a period of 6 months, approximately 6,771 pounds of adulterated pork were sold to El Ranchito customers.

The case was forwarded through the USDA Office of General Counsel to the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Southern District of Mississippi, where it was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick Lemon. On Feb. 6, 2014, in U.S. District Court, Cervantes entered a guilty plea and was sentenced on one misdemeanor count for inhumane slaughter of swine. Cervantes received 1 year of probation, a \$1,000 fine and 30 hours of community service. He

must also complete an educational course in humane handling of animals.

In U.S. District Court, El Ranchito Corporation entered a guilty plea on Feb. 25, 2014, and was sentenced on one felony count for transporting adulterated meat and meat food products. El Ranchito received a \$6,000 fine and 1 year of probation.

This case was investigated by Harold (Denny) Chandler, an OIEA Compliance and Investigations Division investigator. Sadly, Chandler passed away prior to the final adjudicatory action against El Ranchito. Without Chandler's diligent commitment in protecting food safety and the American public, this case would not have had a successful outcome.

FSIS Celebrates Women's History Month

By Chris Alvares, ODIFP, (202) 690-6418
Yolande Mitchell, OPACE, (202) 205-3058

Employees in Washington, D.C., observed Women's History Month with programs that honored the many accomplishments of women.

At Patriots Plaza III, staffs attended an event on April 2 that was organized by Annette Vanderhall (ODIFP), Olga Morales (OIEA) and Valeria Jefferson (OPPD).

During the program, USDA Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics Dr. Cathie Woteki spoke about the challenges she faced as a woman during a time when women weren't considered for the same advancement opportunities as men. This challenge did not dampen her courage or commitment, and her resilience led to many noteworthy accomplishments, including being the first Under Secretary for Food Safety at USDA.

OOEET's Dr. Ashley Etue spoke about her experiences as a supervisory public health veterinarian where she worked in a male-dominated work environment and sometimes faced challenges that many of our female workforce still face today. Thankfully, she had supportive and engaged managers and colleagues who helped her develop the courage and skills needed to work out in the field.

Dr. Deborah Parham Hopson, Senior Advisor for HIV/AIDS Policy at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), has several connections to USDA. Her father was a veterinarian in APHIS; her brother, Dr. Gregory Parham, is USDA's Assistant Secretary for Administration; and her sister-in-law, Dr. Delilah Parham, recently retired from FSIS. Dr. Parham Hopson spoke about the courage and commitment she needed to take on new and challenging responsibilities at HHS. HIV/AIDS Policy was an area that Dr. Parham Hopson was asked to lead, and although she wasn't sure she would stay in that role, it became a passion and a career for her.

Valeria Jefferson closed out the program by talking about the courage and commitment she needed to take on a



Photo contributed by Leigh Ann Acree, OCIO

From left: Dr. Ashley Etue, OOEET; Annette Vanderhall, ODIFP; Dr. Max Finberg, USDA Office of the Secretary; Valeria Jefferson, OPPD; Dr. Vivian Chen, OPHS; RADM Deborah Parham Hopson; and Olga Morales, OIEA.

personal goal of long distance cycling. She found a great support group of fellow cyclists who supported her, taught her and helped her gain the skills and confidence to excel. She's well on her way to her goal of being able to cycle 100 miles.

Over in South Building, OPACE employees recognized Women's History Month with an observance on March 31 where Victoria Boston, Vice President of Northeast Customer Service for Verizon Wireless, was the guest speaker. "Celebrating women and women's history is not taking away from the men, but is telling the stories about the many women trailblazers and trendsetters of our past and present," said Boston "It is a reminder to all of us that anything can be accomplished with a little hard work."

Boston highlighted the many accomplishments of women throughout history and created an interactive atmosphere that included a panel discussion. OPACE panelists Leo O'Drudy, Peggy Riek, and Arianne Perkins, spoke on the differences in their careers, ages, years of service and what made them the people they are today.

"We compliment each other by our diversity," Boston concluded.

In his Presidential proclamation, President Obama stated, "As we honor the many women who have shaped our history, let us also celebrate those who make progress in our time. Let us remember that when women succeed, America succeeds."

Guest Speaker Victoria Boston (standing) leads a panel discussion with OPACE employees Leo O'Drudy, Arianne Perkins and Peggy Riek.

Photo contributed by Steve Van Der Werff, OPACE



Student Employment Program Revamped

By Kamir Carrillo, OM
Phone: (787) 749-4370

FSIS is making changes to reinvigorate its Student Employment Program (SEP). These changes will result in a more focused approach to program management. The new program consists of a focused recruitment and outreach strategy, a standardized onboarding process and a Student Ambassador Program (SAP).

This year, SEP anticipates attracting and recruiting a more diverse student workforce as it partners with internal and external organizations to expand outreach and recruitment efforts. Students will be provided with a consistent onboarding experience, which ensures that all students have a program point of contact for their arrival at their duty location,

receive assistance in getting “settled in,” receive the same on-site orientation and that their initial assignments and trainings are confirmed before they arrive.

The SAP is a volunteer program being developed to provide an agency representative to new students. The ambassador will serve as a mentor and navigate their assigned intern through their journey with FSIS. Ambassadors will include current and former students from all over the nation. In the upcoming months, an announcement for volunteers will be posted in *Wednesday Newsline*.

To fill agency workforce needs, these implementations will position FSIS to attract and hire a more diverse, high-quality candidate pool and retain successful students after graduation.



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

National Stress Awareness Month

By Kerrie Tao & Jodi Hallstrom, OM
Phone: (202) 403-0422

April is National Stress Awareness Month and a great opportunity to become more aware of the different types of stress; how stress may be affecting your health, relationships, finances and work life; and what steps can be taken to manage it.

Most of us have felt “stressed out” at one time or another. Your shoulders are tense and your back hurts. You’re irritable, angry, on edge or are unable to concentrate. These are all indications of stress. Stress is a physical reaction to any change in our status quo. Reactions to stress include aches, pains, increased heart rate and increased blood pressure. When left unchecked, stress can lead to serious health problems. Luckily, there is a low-cost, fast-acting and highly effective treatment available. It’s called “relaxation” and the directions are simple – for maximum effectiveness, use as often as needed!

For tips on deep relaxation and meditation and to view a 5-minute relaxation video, go to the Employee Assistance Program’s (EAP) Stress Awareness web page at www.foh.hhs.gov/calendar/april.html. Whether you reinvigorate

yourself through reading, jogging, taking a bath or laughing with a friend, for your mental and physical health’s sake, make sure you tackle your stress head on ... and take time to unwind!

If you want to learn even more, check out the links below for simple, practical steps that you can take to lower your stress levels and achieve balance in your life:

- **Stress Management – Ways to Relieve Stress**
www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-management-relieving-stress
- **Managing Stress**
www.cdc.gov/features/handlingstress
- **Tips to Manage Stress**
www.webmd.com/balance/guide/tips-to-control-stress

If you find that stress is becoming overwhelming for you, you can get help from the EAP. Free and confidential help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call 1-800-222-0364 (TTY: 1-888-262-7848) or go online at www.foh4you.com.

[Information adapted in part from the Federal Occupational Health Employee Assistance website at www.foh4you.com.]

investment impacts of proposals. The EIB is chaired by the Chief Financial Officer and vice-chaired by the Deputy Chief Information Officer. It considers 1-year and out-year resource requirements necessary for implementing proposals. The ESB, chaired by the Chief Operations Officer or designee, considers policy and business process impacts of proposals, among other issues. Our example, like most submissions, could potentially go through all three boards to determine if it has merit to proceed.

Once reviewed by the applicable boards, the proposal typically proceeds to the MC for a final decision, or to be considered by the Joint Board. The Joint Board would consider the proposal and provide a recommendation before presenting it to the MC for a final decision, if approved.

What's the Benefit?

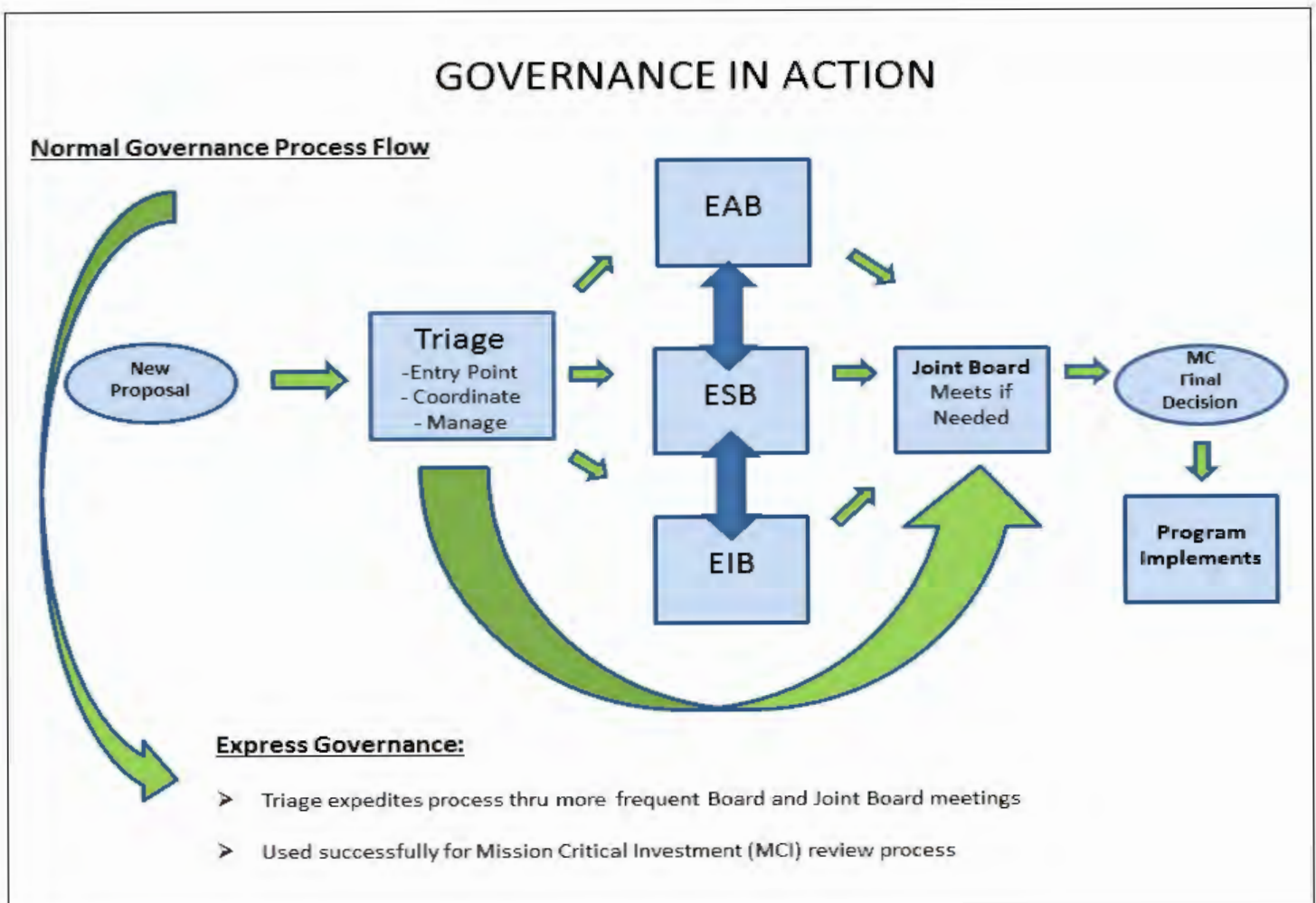
The EG Process provides FSIS with a number of benefits. First, it ensures proposals are well researched and complete.

Secondly, it gives other program areas a chance to look at major changes that might impact them and provides an opportunity to voice or address concerns. Third, it ensures a better implementation of the proposal for our employees. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the EG Process improves communication, transparency and oversight of agency projects and initiatives among the boards, the MC and FSIS employees and stakeholders.

Final Thoughts

By giving the MC a recommendation and/or a prioritized list of issues—complete with details and analysis on supposed impacts—they are able to make an informed decision.

The EG Process is an important part of the way FSIS conducts its mission. This article only touches on the overall process. More information can be found in the directive and charters available online at www.fsis.usda.gov/eg.



April 1	AdvancePierre Foods, an Enid, Okla., establishment, recalled approximately 8,730 pounds of frozen chicken breast products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens. The products were formulated with milk and soy, which were not declared on the label. The products, produced on March 14 and 21, were distributed to food service establishments in Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah and Virginia. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.
April 2	American Outdoor Products, a Boulder, Colo., establishment, recalled approximately 633 pounds of dehydrated Fettuccini Alfredo with Chicken due to misbranding and undeclared allergens. The products, produced on July 2, 2013, were formulated with milk and wheat, known allergens which are not declared on the product label. The products were sold wholesale, online and to retail establishments nationwide. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.
April 4	Tyson Foods Inc., a Sedalia, Mo., establishment, recalled approximately 75,320 pounds of frozen, fully cooked chicken nugget products that may be contaminated with extraneous materials (small pieces of plastic). The products were produced on Jan. 26 and Feb. 16. One product was shipped nationwide to one retail warehouse club chain, while the other product was shipped to Indiana and Arkansas for institutional use. The company received reports of minor oral injury associated with eating these products. FSIS received no additional reports of injuries or illnesses.
April 14	Nutriom LLC, a Lacey, Wash., establishment, recalled an additional 82,884 pounds of processed egg products that may be contaminated with <i>Salmonella</i> . The products were produced from Jan. 2013 to Jan. 2014 and shipped nationwide and to U.S. military installations in the United States and abroad, as well as to Canada. On Feb. 15, the company recalled approximately 226,710 pounds of processed egg products produced between Feb. 28, 2013 and Feb. 8, 2014. On March 26, FSIS issued a public health alert because the company declined to expand its Feb. 15 recall to include an additional 118,541 pounds of processed egg products for which there was reason to conclude that they were unfit for human consumption. The products were produced from May 2013 through Jan. 2014. No reports of illness due to eating these products.
April 17	Bolzano Artisan Meats LLC, a Milwaukee, Wis., establishment, recalled approximately 5,723 pounds of salami products for misbranding and because they were produced without the benefit of federal inspection. The products were produced under the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection inspection program and are only eligible for sale within the state of Wisconsin when they bear the Wisconsin state inspection shield on the immediate package. The products incorrectly bear the Cooperative Interstate Shipment program version of the USDA Mark of Inspection, which requires federal acceptance into the program. The establishment is not part of the CIS program and cannot be sold through interstate commerce. The products were produced between Sept. 20, 2013 and March 15, 2014 and distributed for institutional and retail sales nationwide, as well as sold over the internet. No reports of illness due to eating these products.
April 19	Prime Pak Foods, a Gainesville, Ga., establishment, recalled approximately 24,000 pounds of fully cooked breaded chicken breast products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens. The products were formulated with egg and wheat, known allergens which were not declared on the product label. The products were produced from Dec. 12, 2012 to March 21, 2014 and distributed to hotels, restaurants and institutions nationwide. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.
April 20	Kraft Foods Group, Inc., a Columbia, Mo., establishment, recalled approximately 96,000 pounds of Oscar Mayer Classic Wieners because the products may contain Classic Cheese Dogs in the Classic Wieners' packages. The products were formulated with milk, a known allergen which was not declared on the product label. The products were produced March 2-3 and distributed to Kraft distribution centers and in retail stores nationwide. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

April 24

Skilcor Food Products, an importer of record in Brampton, Ontario, Canada, recalled approximately 36 pounds of fully cooked pork baby back ribs in honey garlic barbeque sauce because they were not presented at the border for USDA FSIS inspection. Without the benefit of full inspection, a possibility of adverse health consequences exists. The product was distributed to a retailer in New York. No reports of illness due to eating these products.

April 25

Knockum Hill Bar-B-Que, a Herndon, Ky., establishment, recalled approximately 350 pounds of hickory smoked, pit cooked barbecue pork product due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen. The products were formulated with a basting sauce containing margarine formulated with soy, a known allergen which was not declared on the product label. The soy in the margarine is in the form of soy lecithin, a liquid soybean oil, and partially hydrogenated soybean oil. The products were produced on April 11 and 18 and distributed to retail establishments in Kentucky. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

POLICY UPDATES <<<

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. The following were recently issued and are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/index:

- Directive 1040.1, The FSIS Enterprise Governance Decisionmaking Process
- Directive 2410.1, Rev. 1, Personal Property
- Directive 3730.2, Rev. 3, Waiver of Claims Against Employees Arising From Erroneous Payments of Pay and Allowances
- Directive 5010.1 Rev. 2, Food Safety Related Topics for Discussion During Weekly Meetings with Establishment Management
- Directive 5030.1, Inspection Methodology Utilizing the Public Health Information System (PHIS) for the Verification of Regulatory Compliance in Egg Products Plants
- Directive 5030.2, Managing the Establishment Profile in the Public Health Information System (PHIS) for Egg Products Inspection
- Directive 7120-1, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry and Egg Products
- Directive 8000.1, Rev. 2, Ensuring Integrity of Data in the Assurancenet/In-Commerce System
- Directive 8010.1, Rev. 4, Methodology for Conducting In-Commerce Surveillance Activities
- Directive 8010.2, Rev. 4, Investigative Methodology
- Directive 8010.3, Rev. 4, Procedures for Evidence Collection, Safeguarding and Disposal
- Directive 8010.4, Rev. 5, Report of Investigation
- Directive 8010.5, Rev. 4, Case Referral and Disposition
- Directive 8410.1, Rev. 6, Detention and Seizure
- Notice 16-14, Actions to Facilitate Industry Access to the Public Health Information System (PHIS)
- Notice 17-14, Return of Imported Shipments to Canada Subject to Test and Hold Pending Receipt of Laboratory Results
- Notice 20-14, Partner Government Agency (PGA) Message Set Pilot

Administrative issuances were also published. They are at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=policy>.

- Notice 18-14, Annual Notice to High-Mileage Drivers
- Notice 19-14, Accretion of Duties

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

May 2014

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

You can tell the stories of FSIS better than anyone! Send us your articles, photos and feedback. It's simple. Just prepare an article and include: who, what, when, where, why and how. Clear your article through your program area. Then send your article to Beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Candid photos preferred. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

FACES OF FOOD SAFETY

Kristin Beaty, a processed egg products food inspector in Wakefield, Neb., conducts a pre-operation inspection on a double breaker. To read about this month's Faces of Food Safety and how she works to ensure the safety and wholesomeness of egg products, go to page 3.

Photo contributed by Kristin Beaty, OFO



OFO Details: Leaders in Training

By Felicia Thompson, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

A recently released report conducted by the Partnership for Public Service and Booz Allen Hamilton, *Building the Enterprise: A New Civil Service Framework*, addresses the future of the more than 2 million federal civil servants that represent the United States around the globe.

According to the study, 91 percent of the federal workforce is made up of people older than age 30. It goes on to note, "Nearly two-thirds of the Senior Executive Service, our nation's career leadership corps, will be eligible for retirement by 2017, and about 31 percent of the government's permanent career employees will be able to head out the door." That's 620,000 people!

That number includes FSIS employees, and agency leadership is taking steps to address the loss of its well-seasoned knowledge base as staff becomes eligible to retire in a few years. It's critical that the agency meet the challenge of retaining as much of that expertise as possible through ambitious and creative programs.

The Office of Field Operations (OFO) is embracing the challenge with its OFO Detail Program. In this program, employees obtain on-the-job training by performing months-long career development details in a variety of headquarters and district office positions that

are currently vacant. Current opportunities include training as a program analyst on the Recall Management and Technical Analysis Staff in the Alameda district or as a resource management assistant in the Springdale district.

Connie Johnson, a 21-year FSIS employee and consumer safety inspector in the Springdale district, was the first OFO employee to start the program back in June 2013. She used the detail opportunity to cross-train as a resource management assistant for 3 months. Johnson's look back on this professional development opportunity was positive and gave her new insight into the agency's mission and goals.

"I was excited when I was selected because a lot was going on at the time: the plant I had worked at was shutting down and the agency's realignment was coming," Johnson recalled. "I wanted to learn other aspects of the agency and how I could apply it to my current job. What I didn't expect was that the district office staff would open my eyes to all the stuff that they do. They were professional, worked as a team and gave me insight on the personnel issues that they deal with on a daily basis, such as plant employees' schedules, recruitment, promotions and dealing with the furlough. I have such great respect for the people in the district office."

Continued on page 4...

The Beacon is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Office for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

June issue – due May 1
July issue – due June 1
August issue – due July 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to e-mail.

ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN



Al Almanza

I recently returned from a visit to the Philadelphia district with the Assistant Administrator for the Office of Field Operations, Dan Engeljohn. We toured a few establishments and met with employees who had a number of great questions for us. Some of the questions I expected; some surprised me. But I always look forward to getting into the field and talking with you, seeing the dedication you put into your work and addressing your concerns.

I'll start with the surprising question. Apparently there is a rumor going around that we are eliminating the Enforcement Investigative and Analysis Officers (EIAO). I heard this come up a number of times during my visit. I'll be clear – that rumor is false. EIAOs aren't going anywhere. They are, and will continue to be, a key part of our food safety efforts. We may look for ways to streamline food safety assessments, but EIAOs will remain an important part of our organization.

The second question I got was about providing new tools for employee growth. Employees I spoke with want the ability to grow professionally and learn new skills. They suggested a number of solutions, such as the ability to shadow employees who perform a different job or take a detail in a different position or program area. The OFO Detail Program highlighted in this issue of *The Beacon* is a good example of putting this into action. These types of programs allow employees to gain new skills and open up new opportunities for job growth within the agency. I encourage supervisors to make this happen as much as possible without sacrificing the mission. These details and other opportunities will continue to be announced in the coming weeks.

The most frequent feedback from employees had to do with staffing. The circuit I visited had multiple vacancies, yet they continued to perform their duties to support the mission of the agency. It's an example of the dedication and ingenuity of employees, but it's not without a cost to morale and the work/life balance of our employees.

We are aware of the staffing challenges, and we're constantly trying to anticipate future agency needs in a way that causes as little negative impact as possible to current employees. I'm committed to addressing these current challenges, especially now that the busy summer season is here. I don't want staffing challenges to affect any employee's ability to take annual leave, and I've recently approved a significant number of positions to mitigate this.

I want to thank the hard-working employees in the Philadelphia district and elsewhere. I look forward to meeting with more of you as I travel around the country this summer conducting town hall meetings. Thank you for your dedication and loyalty to FSIS!



FSIS to Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

"Honoring the Past, Treasuring the Present and Shaping the Future"

June 18, 2014 10 a.m.

Join FSIS in South Building's Jefferson Auditorium as it celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The agency sponsored an essay contest asking employees to describe the Act's impact on their lives. The winners will be recognized during the program.

Kristin Beaty: Food Safety is a Core Value

By Felicia Thompson, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

"For any person interested in protecting the public's health and preventing foodborne illnesses—whether a scientist, a teacher or a college student—and seeking a way to help make food products safe, wholesome and accurately labeled, I believe that there are awesome opportunities in food safety through FSIS."

This quote by Kristin Beaty, an OFO processed egg products food inspector and 9-year FSIS employee, expresses the appreciation she has for her career and her understanding of our mission at FSIS. Beaty rates serving others, including nurturing her two young children, as one of her core values. She defines public service as the actions she contributes in making her community, her state and the world in general a better, safer place. Beaty feels that her job at FSIS plays an important role in reaching that personal goal.

Originally from the small town of Fullerton, Neb., Beaty moved to northeast Nebraska in 2002 to attend Wayne State College. She majored in chemistry and minored in biology and has called the area home ever since.

While in the second semester of her junior year at Wayne State, Beaty began working at two processing plants in Wakefield, Neb., on weekends as a rotating student intern. Two months before her graduation, Beaty sought guidance about her future from two FSIS inspectors whom she considers her mentors.

"My mentor for egg products was, and, honestly, still is, Debra Mackling, a processed products food inspector. She was the first person to show me the four egg products facilities in Wakefield and give me, a confused college student, a chance at seeing a new world—a career that I wasn't expecting," Beaty recalled. "Mackling trained me at the breaking-only facilities (my current position), and then 19 months later, she pushed me into thinking about furthering my career through training at the two further processing facilities, which really helped me gain more insight into the world of egg products. Mackling taught me how to look at things differently; how not to get caught up in doing things exactly the same, such as the times rounds are done; how to effectively communicate to management personnel; and how to strive for more for myself at work and in my personal life."

"From Randy Dames, a consumer safety inspector, I was able to experience a part of the food industry I had no



knowledge of, including my first glances at HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points)," she continued. "Because of that, I gained an interest in learning even more and began a graduate program called *Food Safety and Defense*. I took courses in HACCP and Food Toxicology."

Beaty used the knowledge she obtained from her mentors and has applied it to her current job. Her primary responsibilities consist of inspecting the breaking and shipping of unpasteurized egg products, which are largely for U.S. consumption. However, the plant also exports products to Canada.

"Each morning, I conduct a pre-operations inspection, which is a visual inspection of the plant's equipment that will be used during the egg breaking process," she explained. "I make sure the machinery is clean and in conformance with FSIS guidelines and regulations. Afterward, I walk through the plant to ensure it is still meeting FSIS' standards and there are no employee hazards present. I always have to make sure people are safe around me."

Dr. Randall Broberg, Beaty's supervisor, describes her as a team player who can be counted on. "Kristin is friendly, honest, cooperative, caring, a quick learner, and is ready and willing to help wherever and whenever it is needed," Broberg said. "Other inspectors in the area would say that she is a hard worker, determined, professional, committed, flexible, driven and helpful."

Beaty doesn't work with other inspectors on a daily basis, but explained that there are multiple inspectors within a 4-mile radius of each other, which gives her the opportunity to talk to and occasionally work with others. "I consider us a team!" she said.

"I am grateful to know those inspectors; they are kind and considerate," Beaty added. "I love having chances to talk to them and hear their stories. They listen to my thoughts and opinions on topics, and I listen to them and their requests. They are just great people who are all working toward the same goal that I am – ensuring the safety and wholesomeness of egg products and the other products that FSIS regulates."

At times, her work and home life have intertwined, as Beaty has had personal experience with a pathogen-related

Continued on page 12 ...

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

SPHV Dr. Kari Johnstone arrives at work to begin her shift at establishment P325 in Center, Texas, on National Bike to Work Day on May 16. It was dark by the time she left work, so some of the OFO inspectors she works with followed her home to ensure she arrived safely. The League of American Bicyclists began Bike to Work Day in 1956 and it has grown into a widespread event with countless bicyclists taking to the streets nationwide.

Photo contributed by Kim Green, OFO



OFO Details Program

... Continued from page 1

Detail opportunities were originally limited for OFO field employees – within 35 miles of their local commuting area. However, the program was well received by the district offices, field employees and agency leadership, so the program was broadened to allow detailees to participate in assignments outside their local commuting area. This change has provided OFO employees with a broader range of opportunities. It also responds to feedback in the 2013 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey from employees who want more opportunities to diversify and grow within the agency.

EIAO Katherine Kjome in the Des Moines district will begin her program analyst detail in June at headquarters in the Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD). Kjome says, "I'm looking forward to it! I believe I'll be working on a myriad of projects, such as comminuted poultry food safety assessments; how EIAOs' workflow can be more effective in PHIS (Public Health Information System); and answering industry and FSIS personnel questions in *askFSIS*," she said.

Dr. Keith Gilmore, executive associate for OFO's Regulatory Operations and the executive sponsor for OFO's Detail Program, sees career advancement as a key program incentive. FSIS invests heavily in maintaining a highly trained workforce and in providing it with the resources and tools employees need to understand and combat threats to food safety. This program is part of the agency's commitment to its employees. "Field employees didn't always have the opportunity to grow beyond the GS 5-9 pay grades, and this program provides them with exposure and training in the district offices and at headquarters," Gilmore said. "It also allows them to be more competitive when applying for district office and headquarter vacancies."

To date, OFO has had seven field employees participate in the program and plans to continue offering more opportunities. Announcements for details have been and will continue to be posted in *Wednesday Newslines* through the end of the summer. Interested employees only need to email a letter of interest to the program's coordinator, Dr. Gilmore. District or headquarters managers will contact the potential candidates to discuss the program and then make a selection.

OFO's Senior Program Manager Kim Green says she is very happy about the program's implementation so far. She is quick to tell field employees about Administrator Al Almanza's rise from a GS-5 food inspector to leading the entire organization, and that he sought out and served details during his early career.

"This program demonstrates the need for the agency to have its employees cross-trained in a variety of positions where they can obtain experience and mentoring, so they can fill jobs as they become available," Green said.

The opportunity to cross-train and learn new skills is important to employees and a priority for agency leadership. On Feb. 3, Administrator Almanza conducted a town hall with agency employees to address the results of the 2013 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and the Best Places to Work Overview. In that meeting, Almanza talked about the need for field employees to be given the opportunity to participate in employee rotations and shadowing.

Almanza and other key leaders within the agency know that OFO's field employees are the literal boots on the ground in the battle for ensuring the safety of the nation's meat, poultry and processed egg products. They understand that continued support of the OFO detail program and similar efforts aimed at enriching the workforce will ease the draining of agency staff expertise noted in the partnership's federal workforce report.

USDA LGBT PRIDE Month Observance

"Build Our Bright Future"

The USDA Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender observance (LGBT) was held on June 5 in Washington, D.C. Guest speakers included Chef Art Smith, founder of Common Threads, a non-profit organization teaching low-income children to cook wholesome and affordable meals, who talked about nutritious cooking and reclaiming our health. Also featured was Kyle Broadus, Senior Counsel of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and founder of the Trans People of Color Coalition (TPOCC), the only national social justice organization that promotes the interest of trans people of color.

The observance was recorded and will be posted at www.dm.usda.gov/employ/observances.htm.

Pride Montage – Send in Your Photo!

To celebrate Pride month, FSIS is asking for photos showing support for our LGBT co-workers. Submit a photo showing you, your co-workers or your staff with a legible sign that shows your name or the name of your staff. Email your photo (in **jpg** format) to LGBTSEPM@fsis.usda.gov by **COB June 15**. The photos will be used in an FSIS montage that will be posted to *InsideFSIS* in June. To view an example from a previous montage, go to <http://prdb6.wcm.ess.usda.gov/stelprdb6/groups/intranet/@fsisintranet/@rights/documents/image/stelprdb6036471.jpg>.

FSIS Retirees: April 15 - May 15, 2014

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Barrett, Edwin F., CSI	Woodburn, OR	23
Bass, Denise M., Budget Anal.	Washington, DC	37
Bauer, Eileen M., CSI	Manchester, NH	21
Brown, Dennis H., FI	Pine Bluff, AR	20
Chenevert, Peter C., VMO	Bowling Green, OH	23
Crotty, Edwin L., CSI	Warren, NJ	8
DeWitt, James E., FI	Dakota City, NE	25
Maye, Sheyrl J., CSI	Moselle, MS	17
Mayfield, Deodor M., SVMO	Guntersville, AL	30
Orvis, Rick B., CSI	Lincoln, NE	23
Robinson, Darell G., CSI	Springdale, AR	40
Sands, Richard K., FI	Canby, OR	46
Schmalzried, Edwin M., CSI	Friona, TX	12
Schulz, Michael J., CSI	Osakis, MN	29
Sere, Ioan V., SVMO	Vernon, CA	15
Siegel, Claudia J., Fin. Prog. Spec.	Urbandale, IA	32
Smith, Gary, Fin. Spec.	Beltsville, MD	25
Staggs, James W., CSI	Grand Island, NE	27
Stone, Lois E., Prog. Anal.	Beltsville, MD	27
Wratchford, Karen R., CSI	Edinburg, VA	35

FSIS Employee Training Update

By LaRia Thompson, OOEET
Phone: (214) 767-2793

OOEET is responsible for ensuring that the regulatory policy taught in the Inspection Methods course is accurate and up to date. Some regulatory policies taught in the Food Safety Regulatory Essentials (FSRE) course have changed and new regulatory policies have been implemented; therefore, FSRE training will no longer be available on FSIS' website after June 15.

OOEET has combined FSRE and Public Health Information System (PHIS) training courses into the Inspection Methods training course, which covers the essential knowledge and FSIS inspection verification tasks needed for newly promoted or hired CSIs and PHVs. It provides training on PHIS and hands-on practice using PHIS. Some major topics covered include: the PHIS establishment profile and the task calendar; sanitation; Hazard Analysis Verification; HACCP verification; sampling, sanitary dressing procedures; humane handling; raw, ready-to-eat and shelf stable product hazards and preventive measures; Listeria regulations; export certification; and food defense. To access the Inspection Methods course, visit www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/inspection/workforce-training/regional-on-site-training/inspection-methods/inspection-methods.

Jackson District

Jackson district employees showed their support for “Read Across America Day” by reading to over 500 students at Reuben B. Myers Canton School of Arts and Sciences in Canton, Miss. FLS Dr. Damon Ranftle (pictured), a veterinarian, read about a cat’s adventures, which the students found fascinating. Not pictured: DDM Perry Davis; SRMA Christina Walker; SPHV Dr. Linda Riggs; EIAO Betty Thomas and EIAO Francheska Banks. Photo contributed by Christina Walker, OFO.



Springdale District

Employees from FSIS and the Kansas Department for Children and Families (KDCF) conducted a recruiting event in Dodge City and Garden City in March to recruit and hire individuals interested in temporary food inspector positions. The event resulted from a recent partnership that was formed to assist FSIS with hiring and filling available positions and as a way for KDCF to provide employment options for clients who receive financial support, mainly in the form of food assistance. KDCF helps to oversee and manage the USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Thirty-six applicants were entered into USAJOBS and qualified for



temporary food inspector positions with FSIS. Seated, from left: Pamela Hann, Heather Hooper and Andee Garst (KDCF). Standing: Norma Arroyo-Aguiera and Dr. Evan Sumner (OFO); Wendy Sonnabend (OM); Ruth Arensdorf and Dan Decker (KDCF); Sue Nelsen (OFO); Ann Parrett Anderson (KDCF); and Paul Kiecker and Liz Simmons (OFO). Photo contributed by Liz Simmons, OFO.

FROM THE **FIELD**



Jackson District

EIAO Betty Thomas (left), DDM Perry Davis (center), SRMA Christina Walker (right) and Student Intern Keianna Torrey (not pictured) attended Alcorn State University's Agricultural Day on March 20. Over 300 high school and college students were given information about how to start a career with FSIS and the resources that could be used to build resumes and apply for internships online. Photo contributed by Christina Walker, OFO.

Dallas District

CSI Guillermo Orquiz recently volunteered at his daughter's school in Albuquerque, N.M., where he talked to her teachers and classmates about food safety and healthy after-school snacks. Also discussed was how long food in "doggie bags" can stay out safely. Photo contributed by Jeannine Krein, OFO.



Atlanta District

FSIS employees at establishment P1272 in Douglas, Ga., recently received a visit from Atlanta District Manager Dr. Phyllis Adams, Deputy District Manager Dr. Jan Brown and Circuit Supervisor Donna Savage. Front row, from left: IIC Dr. Larrina Williams, CSI Josephine McRae, FI Merita Mack and Circuit Supervisor Donna Savage. Back row: FI inspector Sharon Tyson, Dr. Phyllis Adams, Dr. Jan Brown, CSI Leisha Riley, FI Mark Alexander and FI Belinda Wright. Photo contributed by Dr. Larrine Williams, OFO.



Filing a Workplace Violence Report

By Joe Anne Kennedy, OM
Phone: (202) 690-1999

All workplace violence incidents, whether instigated by internal or outside sources, must be reported to FSIS' Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Program (WVPRP). To report a workplace violence incident:

- ☑ Refer to FSIS Directive 4735.4, Reporting Assault, Harassment, Interference, Intimidation or Threat (<https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/DocumentViewerServlet?filename=FSISIntranet/Offices/Documents/fsisprdb20130402020456.pdf>).
- ☑ Use FSIS Form 4735-4 (Oct. 2004), Reporting Form for Assault, Harassment, Interference, Intimidation and Threat (<https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/global/forms/forms.jsp>).
 1. Complete Section A of the form.
 2. Send the original to your immediate supervisor (unless your supervisor is the instigator).
 3. Send a copy to your district manager, program manager or director.
 4. Keep a copy for yourself.
 5. Send a copy to WVPRP by one of these methods:
 - E-mail: workplaceviolenceprevention@fsis.usda.gov
 - Fax: (202) 690-1814
 - Mail (least preferred method):
USDA, FSIS, OM, Employee Safety, Health & Wellness Staff
Room 2158-South Building
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-3700

"A harassment-free work environment is not a privilege; it is a right. No employee is expected to endure any form of harassment in the FSIS workplace."

Al Almanza
(*The Beacon*, Sept. 2013)



>>> RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT

FSIS Signs MOU with CDC to Leverage Expertise During Foodborne Outbreak Investigations – The agency recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will provide a more comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to address foodborne health hazards associated with meat, poultry and processed egg products. The MOU is part of the One Health initiative, a concept that inextricably links the health of humans, animals and the environment. The MOU outlines mutual roles and responsibilities for the training of personnel and the planning of interagency assessment of FSIS-regulated establishments as part of foodborne illness investigations and health hazard evaluations. To read the MOU, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/f09a7013-bb5b-4a2f-bb67-2a61928f77c9/MOU-FSIS-CDC-ATSDR.pdf?MOD=AJPERES.



Vampire Electronics

By Lara D'Amore, OOEET
Phone: (301) 504-3054

When you plug in your cell phone, is the charger already warm to the touch? Even though nothing is connected to it, your cell phone charger has been sucking energy from the outlet. This is true for many of your electronics and appliances. Computers, home entertainment centers and smaller gadgets, like your phone or tablet charger, all consume standby power. Any appliance that displays a clock or uses a remote control also draws power when not in use or turned off. This villain goes by many names, such as phantom load, standby loss, idle current and ghost load.

What can consumers do to protect their wallets and the planet from this energy drain?

Power strips are available that boast an energy-saving feature. These "smart strips" have a switch that allows you to actually turn off the electricity at the outlet. That means you don't need to spend 10 minutes at night unplugging everything—only to spend another 10 minutes plugging everything back in the morning. With a flick of a switch, the energy is on or off. Smart strips can be costly, but, in the long run, can save you an average of \$50 each year for each computer or home entertainment system you plug into it. Given the number of electronics we all have at home, the savings can add up.

Consider replacing your outdated surge protector with a smart strip. Your wallet will thank you!

AgLearn+ Reports Tool

By Erasmo Nieves Martinez, OOEET
Phone: (800) 366-3747

Did you know you can print your complete training history and certificates of completion directly from *AgLearn*? You can by using the *AgLearn+* Reports tool. The *AgLearn+* Reports tool allows you to generate records of your training history and plans that can be saved and printed at your convenience.

Keeping records of your training history and plans can be helpful when preparing your yearly performance reports, tracking your learning and scheduling your next training. Some of the reports available include: certificate of completion, list of completed courses and a To-Do List.

Accessing and Using the *AgLearn+* Reports Tool

1 Once you sign into *AgLearn+*, the "Reports" tool can be found on the right side of the main page under the Easy Links panel. If "Reports" is not visible, click on "Show More." (Remember that you can customize the Easy Links panel to facilitate access to your most visited pages.)

2 Once you have clicked on the "Reports" link, select the report type you would like. For example, a certificate of completion can be selected and generated in seconds to be printed or saved.

It's Free

Remember that all the books and courses on *AgLearn* are available now at no additional cost to you since FSIS has prepaid for your license.



Safety Guidance for You and Your Family

By Jodi Hallstrom, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8597

These days, life needs a warning sign! Luckily, WorkLife4You at www.worklife4you.com can help your family proceed with caution by providing practical tips and expert guidance on a wide range of safety issues, including: baby and child safety; emergency preparedness; planning for and coping with specific disasters (hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, winter weather, power outages, etc.); home safety for older adults; outdoor safety; violence and trauma; Internet safety; and more!

Plus, if you have a child under age 3 or are caring for an older loved one, you can call to request a free Child

Safety or Adult Care Kit filled with products and helpful information to help keep your loved ones safe.

Also, don't forget to check out "LifeMart Discounts," the new online discount center for saving everything under the sun, including emergency items for your home and auto and other safety and preparedness needs.

WorkLife4You is available to all employees and their household members at no cost and is 100 percent confidential. Call **1-800-222-0364** (TTY: 1-888-262-7848) at any time of the day or night to discuss your needs with a specialist, or log on to www.worklife4you.com. (To register, use registration code: FSIS).

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Happiness is Good for You!

By Kerrie Tao, OM
Phone: (202) 403-0422

May is Mental Health Awareness Month and a reminder to everyone that caring for their mental health is important. It affects how we think, feel and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others and make choices. According to the U.S. National Comorbidity Survey,

18 percent of Americans, ages 15 to 54, reported that they experienced symptoms of a mental health disorder in the previous month.

If you find that you have persistent feelings of distress or hopelessness, help is available from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAP offers tips on increasing happiness and becoming more engaged.

Individuals who are happy are more successful across different areas in their lives—marriage, friendships, income, work and health!

Free and confidential help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call 1-800-222-0364 (TTY: 1-888-262-7848) or go online at www.foh4you.com.

"Thank You" Can Go a Long Way

By Arlene Ashton, CRS
Phone: (301) 504-7755

As parents, we teach our kids to always say "please" and "thank you." As supervisors, managers and even members of a workplace team, these small niceties can go a long way in helping to create a harmonious environment. When budgets constraints limit monetary and even some non-monetary awards, a "Thank You" for a job well done can go a long way in making employees feel valued and appreciated.

Case in Point: During a recent discussion with a front line supervisor (FLS), he relayed to me a situation that occurred in his work unit. He stated that he invited a district manager to a work unit meeting to give a special "Thank You" to food inspectors who reported to work during the snow and ice so that a plant could remain open. Although the traffic and weather were bad, the inspectors came into work and,

as a result, he did not have to call in intermittent employees. That allowed the employees to go to other locations where they were needed. For this effort, management printed out "Thank You" certificates for each employee and brought in coffee and donuts. He went on to say that several employees left the meeting teary-eyed and remarked about how much they appreciated the recognition.

This is just one example of how a small gesture can have a large impact on employees. Verbal recognition during staff meetings, an e-mail saying "Thank You" or an honorable mention for a job well done printed in *The Beacon* are other ways that supervisors, managers and co-workers/colleagues can say "Thank You" for doing a great job. Employing these and other creative ways to acknowledge employees will go a long way in boosting morale and productivity and remind employees that they are a valued part of the FSIS workforce.

"Thank You" for taking the time to read this article!

May 3

Schnucks Kitchen, an O'Fallon, Mo., establishment, recalled approximately 130 pounds of Curry White Meat Chicken Salad product due to possible contamination with *Listeria monocytogenes*. The product was produced on April 24 and shipped to Schnucks retail grocery locations for deli distribution in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri and Wisconsin. No reports of illnesses associated with eating these products.

May 16

Transatlantic Foods, Inc., a New York company that operates two establishments, recalled approximately 222,000 pounds of pork and poultry products that did not receive the full benefit of inspection. The recall was issued because its Andover, N.J., establishment did not have an FSIS Grant of Inspection; therefore, FSIS inspection program personnel were not assigned to the establishment. The establishment was producing product and using labels approved for use by and bearing the establishment number of its Scranton, Pa., establishment. In addition, products were produced in undisclosed locations without the benefit of inspection. The duck fat that was recalled was produced from Jan. 2012 through May 2014. The remaining products were produced prior to Oct. 18, 2013. The products were shipped to retail, internet and wholesale locations nationwide. No reports of illnesses due to eating these products.

May 16

Transatlantic Foods, Inc., a New York company, recalled 449,000 pounds of pork products due to misbranding. The company operates two establishments—one in Scranton, Pa., and one in Andover, N.J. Both used labels with false no antibiotic claims. The products were produced from Jan. 2012 through Feb. 2014 and shipped to retail, internet and wholesale locations nationwide. No reports of illnesses due to eating these products.

May 19

Wolverine Packing Company, a Detroit, Mich., establishment, recalled approximately 1.8 million pounds of ground beef products that may be contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7. The products were produced between March 31 and April 18 and shipped to distributors for restaurant use in Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri and Ohio. FSIS was notified of *E. coli* O157:H7 illnesses on May 12, 2014. Working in conjunction with CDC, FSIS determined that there is a link between the ground beef products from Wolverine Packing Company and this illness cluster. Based on epidemiological and traceback investigations, 11 case-patients have been identified in four states with illness onset dates ranging from April 22 to May 2.

May 21

Prime Pak Foods, a Gainesville, Ga., establishment, recalled approximately 23,250 pounds of fully cooked breaded chicken breast and tender products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens. The products were formulated with eggs, milk and wheat, known allergens which are not declared on the product label. The products were produced from June 5, 2013, to March 21, 2014, and distributed to hotels, restaurants and institutions nationwide. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

May 23

Chaparros Mexican Foods Inc., a Vista, Calif., establishment recalled approximately 568,503 pounds of beef products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen. The products were formulated with hydrolyzed milk protein, a known allergen which is not declared on the product label. The products were produced between Nov. 1, 2013, and May 15, 2014, and sold to restaurants in Southern California and a federally inspected processing facility. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

May 29

Boulder Natural Meats, a Denver, Colo., establishment, recalled approximately 363 pounds of Boneless Skinless Chicken Breasts due to misbranding. The product was formulated with wheat, which was declared on the product label. However, the label also states the product was gluten free. Products with a gluten free claim may not contain wheat. The product was produced May 13–14 and sold to retail establishments in Colorado. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating this product.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

>>> KUDOS <<<

CSI Cynthia Brewitz in Ellijay, Ga., went the "extra mile" when she explored the random sampling program at her assigned establishment. After researching and utilizing askFSIS, Brewitz discussed the issue with plant management, who updated their procedures. Her efforts demonstrate her commitment to public health, not only at her establishment, but with others who made some of the same updates. (Submitted by Dr. Catherine Rowan-Collier, OFO.)

If you would like to thank, congratulate or give a shout out to someone in FSIS, send your kudo to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. You can also place a kudo on *InsideFSIS*. Just email it to intranet.manager@fsis.usda.gov. Keep your kudo to a few sentences.

Beaty

... Continued from page 3

illness. Her daughter has had two bouts of *Campylobacter*. "I know how serious foodborne illness is, and that's why I make sure that the facility I am responsible for inspecting is producing product that is safe," she said. "I look at it as if I myself or my family would be the ones consuming that food."

Beaty is very happy with the career decision she made 9 years ago. "I know that what I do is important to me, my family, consumers and all FSIS employees who inspect meat and poultry," she concluded. "We all play a part in protecting public health and preventing foodborne illness. How could someone not be satisfied playing a part in that?"

POLICY UPDATES <<<

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. The following were recently issued and are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/index:

- **Notice 21-14, Prescribed Treatment to Destroy Trichinae in Pork, and Products Containing Pork, as Required by 9 CFR 318.10**
- **Notice 22-14, Notification of Availability of Compliance Guidelines for Allergens and Ingredients of Public Health Concern**
- **Notice 23-14, Notifying Retailers of the FSIS Best Practices Guidance for Controlling *Listeria Monocytogenes (Lm)* in Retail Delicatessens**
- **Notice 24-14, Livestock Slaughter Establishment Residue**

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

DONATE TO THE LEAVE TRANSFER PROGRAM

There are a number of your fellow employees who are in need of annual leave for a variety of reasons. If you have annual leave that you don't need, you can help them by donating it through the Leave Transfer Program.

The Beacon will print the current list of leave recipients at various times. You can also view it on *InsideFSIS*. In the "I Want To" box, select "Access Public Folders." Then click on the "Personnel" folder and select "Leave Transfer Program." You will find more information about donating leave, forms, rules, eligibility and requirements.

For more information, contact Dwaynya Goodson in OM's Employment, Classification and Compensation Branch at (202) 720-8966.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

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Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Volume
18

Number
6

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

June 2014

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

You can tell the stories of FSIS better than anyone! Send us your articles, photos and feedback. It's simple. Just prepare an article and include: who, what, when, where, why and how. Clear your article through your program area. Then send your article to Beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Candid photos preferred. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



NEW LAB OPENS

Administrator Al Almanza prepares to cut the ribbon at a ceremony on May 22 for the Eastern Laboratory's new lab named in honor of Dr. Lynda Kelley. From left: Dr. William Cray, Eastern Laboratory Director; OPHS AA Dr. David Goldman; Al Almanza; and ODIFP AA Terri Nintemann. To read more, go to page 3.

Photo contributed by Catherine Cochran, OPACE

FSIS Turns Up the Heat on *Salmonella*

Series of new standards, directives and programmatic expansions aims to curtail menacing pathogen

By Richard McIntire, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

FSIS' push to modernize agency food safety inspection methods continues on with several new strategies focusing on decreasing salmonellosis. With multiple illnesses attributed to *Salmonella* every year, FSIS is taking aim at this pathogen on numerous fronts. While chicken is commonly associated with the risk of *Salmonella* contamination, the agency recognizes that ground beef and pork products must also be monitored for the pathogen.

Although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2013 Food Safety Progress Report notes a 9 percent decrease in *Salmonella* infections compared to the previous 3 years, it has barely budged over the last decade. "We haven't sustained a decrease in salmonellosis," said OPHS Assistant Administrator Dr. David Goldman.

That is among the reasons why FSIS issued its *Salmonella* Action Plan (SAP) last December. The SAP is the agency's strategy to best address the threat of *Salmonella* in meat and poultry products. It calls for enhancing *Salmonella* sampling and testing programs as part of the comprehensive effort, ensuring that these programs factor in the latest scientific information available and account for emerging trends in foodborne illness.

Changes are immediately planned for *Salmonella* verification for ground beef. On June 29, FSIS will begin testing ground beef and source material for *E. coli* O157 and/or other Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STECs) and *Salmonella* in the same sample. Additionally, the portion size for *Salmonella* testing in ground beef will increase from 25 grams to 325 grams. "We do expect that we'll find more *Salmonella* than in the past using the larger portion size," Dr. Goldman said.

FSIS also plans to issue a sanitary dressing directive for hog slaughter establishments by the end of September. "We are going to develop a directive for personnel on how to verify compliance," Dr. Goldman added. "We hope that by paying more attention to how hog slaughter is done, we will be able to reduce contamination of pork products with *Salmonella*."

Further training of agency in-plant personnel and new efforts directed at assisting establishments in understanding and complying with *Salmonella* standards are also a part of the plan. In addition, the agency has done testing of poultry parts and comminuted poultry to generate data for new performance standards for these products aimed at the Healthy People 2020 target of a 25 percent reduction in salmonellosis.

Continued on page 3 ...

The Beacon is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Office for FSIS employees.

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Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to e-mail.

ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN

As many of you know, I'm visiting district offices and plants this summer with the purpose of meeting as many employees as I can. I look forward to these visits because I am always impressed by the hard work and dedication that I see. I also appreciate your willingness to ask questions as it gives me great insight into the particular issues that are giving you the most concern.

My recent trip to Cincinnati for the OIEA national conference was no exception. I fielded questions about the budget, catfish inspection, PHHRS conversion and a variety of other issues. However, at the conference, many employees wanted to know my story; how I worked my way up through the ranks and how they, too, can move up. I'll briefly reiterate here what I told them.

For those who don't know, before joining the agency, I was working on my bachelor's degree and planned on applying to dental school. After briefly considering working for the U.S. border patrol, I was hired as an inspector in FSIS working in Dalhart, Texas.

Dalhart was a great place to start and I caught the FSIS bug. For me personally, I wanted to see what other opportunities there were in the agency and learn different skills. I worked my way up to deputy district manager with the goal of making positive changes. However, the most critical job I accepted was as a program assistant in the Austin office. I say it was the most critical because I got to learn what management was like and the differences between working in the plants and in management. It also gave me exposure to upper management. Eventually, I became a district manager and then the administrator.

People ask me all the time how to move up and how I did it. What worked for me won't work for everyone. However, along my journey, I have learned a few lessons that I believe can apply to everyone looking to move up to the next level.

- **Be part of the solution.** I remember being on the slaughter line and criticizing management for what I saw as bad decision making. I remember thinking that I could either complain about it or get promoted and try to change it. That choice is given to all of you. Don't be the person who complains and offers no solutions. There's no reason why it can't be you changing the agency for the better.
- **Don't ever let an opportunity pass you by.** I see a career as a long hallway with doors on both sides. Some of them are closed, but others are open. Don't pass an open door of opportunity without at least looking inside. Every once in a while, there is an opportunity, like the program assistant job I took, that will pave the way for other opportunities in the future.
- **Don't just wait on the easy opportunities.** Sometimes an opportunity comes with some hardship, whether it's moving to a new location or having to learn a completely new and intimidating skill set. The most common question I hear at these town halls is about promotion. The simple fact is, for the vast majority, there often isn't the potential to be promoted up to GS-15 doing your job in your choice location. The next promotion may be 1,000 miles away doing something completely new, but it might be the one that is the springboard for your career.

Of course, don't just take my word for it. I always had a group of mentors and supervisors I looked to for advice. They had a huge impact on my career. I encourage every employee to seek out mentors.

FSIS is a great place to work. Every employee should look at him or herself in the mirror each morning and know that he or she is keeping the nation's food supply safe and wholesome. It's also a place where an entry-level food inspector can work his or her way up and eventually lead that agency. Like I said, I'm not going to be in this position forever. There is more than one future administrator in this agency. They just need to be open minded enough to find those open doors and walk through them.



Al Almanza

"Kelley Wing" Opens at Eastern Laboratory

By Cathy Cochran, OPACE
Phone: (202) 690-0428

The staff at FSIS' Eastern Laboratory in Athens, Ga., unveiled a new microbiology laboratory that is designed to allow for better workflow and position the lab to better absorb new sampling initiatives in the future. As part of his May 22 trip to the Eastern Lab, Administrator Al Almanza led the ribbon cutting ceremony and dedicated the new space to former FSIS employee, Dr. Lynda Kelley, who passed away unexpectedly on Nov. 14, 2012.

Dr. Kelley began her career at FSIS as a pathologist in 1987 and was widely recognized at USDA and in the veterinary field for her contributions to public health. She received the USDA Secretary's Honor Award for Heroism and Emergency Response in 2002 and the Dr. Daniel E. Salmon Award for Exemplary Achievement in Federal Veterinary Medicine shortly before her death in 2012.

At the dedication, Almanza noted her exemplary combination of expertise and passion, remarking that FSIS is fortunate to have colleagues like Dr. Kelley on its team. Terri Nintemann, ODIFP Assistant Administrator and one of Dr. Kelley's supervisors, also spoke at the dedication about her admiration for Dr. Kelley's extensive professional network and skill as a mentor to the Eastern Lab staff.

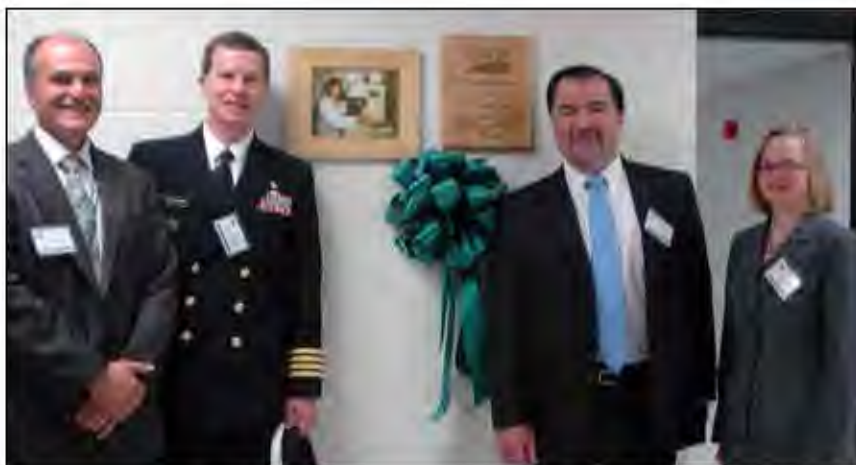


Photo contributed by Catherine Cochran, OPACE

A plaque and a photo of Dr. Lynda Kelley at work were placed at the entrance to the new lab. From left: Dr. Emilio Esteban, OPHS Assistant Administrator Dr. David Goldman, Al Almanza and Terri Nintemann.

Following the dedication, the staff led a tour of the new lab, which Dr. Emilio Esteban, executive associate for laboratory services, said eventually will increase operational capacity by at least 50 percent. The new open lab design consolidates the work that was being done in several separate lab suites, integrating the entire microbiology team into a single functional unit.

Salmonella

... Continued from page 1

Per the SAP, inspectors will also be empowered with the tools necessary to quickly pinpoint problems. With more information about a plant's performance history and improved methods for assessing in-plant conditions, inspectors will be better positioned to detect *Salmonella* before it can cause an outbreak.

In addition, the plan outlines other actions FSIS will take to drive innovations that will lower *Salmonella* contamination rates, including developing new strategies for inspection and throughout the farm-to-table continuum; addressing all potential sources of *Salmonella*; and focusing the agency's education and outreach tools on *Salmonella*.

"Development and implementation of the SAP is a product of the work done by the agency's Strategic Performance Working Group as directed by the management council," said Dr. Philip Bronstein, an OPHS senior microbiologist. He explained the SAP was developed based on a series of meetings involving all agency program areas and input received from a dedicated USDA Connect blog and was designed specifically to have a "ground up approach."

"It was really interesting to solicit information from all offices engaged and from our different points of view," Bronstein said. "The real power came as people who were used to working projects independently now saw that they should be working collaboratively. It builds on itself and you can bolster each other. We asked, what are the tough issues? What can we do better? And we helped close that gap between field and headquarters."

The SAP dovetails well with the Healthy People 2020 illness reduction goals set by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and builds upon work USDA has done over the past several years.

In 2011, USDA strengthened the performance standards for *Salmonella* in poultry with a goal of significantly reducing illnesses by 20,000 per year. And through the *Salmonella* Initiative Program, plants are now using processing techniques designed to directly reduce *Salmonella* in raw meat and poultry. Thanks to these innovative technologies and tough policies, *Salmonella* percent positive rates in young chickens have dropped over 75 percent since 2006. That's a trend FSIS employees are working hard to see continue throughout the entire meat and poultry industry.



NATIONAL CARIBBEAN AMERICAN MONTH

USDA celebrated 2014 National Caribbean American Heritage Month with an observance on June 19 in Washington, D.C. The guest speaker was Doreen E. Thompson, Esq., culinary historian and founder of "Caribbean Cuisine and Restaurant Week," which is held each June in Washington, D.C.

Cultural performances included Wentworth "Jojo" Richardson, internationally acclaimed steel drum (Pan) virtuoso, and La Musical Dance Works, the longest and continuous Caribbean Folklore group in Washington D.C., which promotes the culture of the Caribbean through dance, song and drama.

For employees who could not attend the observance, the event was recorded and, when available, will be posted to the USDA website at www.dm.usda.gov/employ/observances.htm.



PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Photo contributed by Bridgette Keefe, OPACE

FSIS brought food safety information to the Capital Pride Parade in Washington, D.C., on June 7. OPACE student interns Kristina Beaugh (left) and Janell Goodwin enjoyed playing the Food Safety Game with Capital Pride participants, quizzing them about Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill.

Protocols to Address Emergencies or Imminent Danger in Your Workplace

- ☒ Stay calm
- ☒ Find a safe place (protect yourself)
- ☒ Call 911
- ☒ Call private or local security personnel
- ☒ Call your supervisor
- ☒ Call OIG at 1-800-424-9121 if there is criminal activity

Workplace Violence Prevention & Response Program

Hotline:

1-877-987-3747

Employee Assistance Program (EAP):

1-800-222-0364

(TTY: 888-262-7848)

E-mail:

workplaceviolenceprevention@fsis.usda.gov

www.FOH4you.com

Document all incidents of assault, harassment, interference, intimidation or threat per Directive 4735.4.

50th Anniversary of Civil Rights Act of 1964

"Honoring the Past, Treasuring the Present and Shaping the Future"



By Amanda Krot, OM
Phone: (301) 504-7747

In a televised speech on June 11, 1963, President John F. Kennedy announced his civil rights bill proposal. His announcement followed a series of protests from the African-American community, the most concurrent being the Birmingham campaign that concluded that May. In his speech, Kennedy asked for legislation "giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public – hotels, restaurants, theaters, retail stores and similar establishments," as well as legislation that would provide "greater protection for the right to vote." To view his televised speech, go to www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/LH8F_0Mzv0e6Ro1yEm74Ng.aspx. (Provided by the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum at www.jfklibrary.org.)

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law on July 2, 1964, outlawing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The law also ended unequal application of voter registration requirements and racial segregation in schools, at the workplace and in facilities that served the general public. (Information provided by www.eeoc.gov.)



Photo provided by the LBJ Presidential Library at www.lbjlibrary.org

Essay Contest Winners

By Angela Kelly, OA
Phone: (301) 504-7755

FSIS recently sponsored an essay contest in which FSIS employees were asked to submit an essay detailing the impact the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had on them or someone they knew. In total, 31 submissions were received.

A selection committee, comprised of a diverse group of agency employees, reviewed the nominations and selected 10 winners: Dr. Anton Asare, OFO, Atlanta district; Ramon Cana Alvarez, OFO, Chicago district; Don Harding, OFO, Alameda district; Elaine Hite, OFO, Chicago district; Dr. Prather McNeal-Hutchinson, OFO, Jackson district; Joyia Smith, OCFO, Washington, D.C., Kim Smith, OFO, Springdale district; Theresa Spicer, OFO, Des Moines district; Manuel Tort, OFO, Des Moines district; and Vicki Usher, OIEA, Perryopolis, Pa.



Photo contributed by Edward Stoker, OPACE

From left: Vicki Usher, OFO Assistant Administrator Dr. Dan Engeljohn, Dr. Anton Asare, Don Harding, Ramon Cana Alvarez, Theresa Spicer, Manual Tort, OM Assistant Administrator Jacqueline Myers, Elaine Hite, Dr. Prather McNeal-Hutchinson, and Kimberley Smith. Not pictured: Joyia Smith.

The winners were recognized during FSIS' 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act observance on June 18 in Washington, D.C.

A big "thank you" to everyone who participated in the contest!

June is LGBT PRIDE Month

By Beth Leopold, OIEA
Phone: (979) 764-7395

June is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month. This year's theme is "Build Our Bright Future," and if you have been keeping up with the news, that future is getting brighter. This past year has seen the overturning of the Defense of Marriage Act, allowing same-sex marriages to have equal footing with heterosexual marriages at the federal level. Several states now recognize same-sex marriages, whether they are performed in their states or in other states or countries. At USDA and all other federal agencies, same-sex marriage spouses can now enjoy the same health, retirement and similar benefits afforded to married couples. In entertainment, TV commercials now are showing "modern" families that just do not consist of a traditional mom, dad and kids.

The USDA Pride observance was held on June 2 in Washington, D.C. If you could not attend, it was recorded and posted at http://origin-qps.onstreammedia.com/origin/usda/%5BInbox%5D/DM/060514/060514a_OCAPFINAL.mp4.

To celebrate these monumental changes and Pride month, FSIS asked employees to send in photos that show support for their LGBT co-workers. The photos will be used in a montage that will be posted to *InsideFSIS* soon. Here are a few from employees around the country.



Philadelphia district – OFO employees, from left, Janice Strumpf, Elwin Weaver, Curtis Stasheski, David Custozzo, Beth Lehman and Parvez Raja. Photo contributed by Elwin Weave, OFO.



Raleigh district – OFO employees, from left: FLS Dr. Jaspreet Gill, CSI Harley Hughes-Malloy and Inspector Elbert Flowers. Photo contributed by Harley Hughes-Malloy, OFO.



Dallas district – OFO employees, seated: Jennifer Beasley-McKean. Middle row: Marie Bennett, Barbara Martinez, Doretta Dunn and Teresa Miller. Back row: Gary Davis, Ron Nida, Vicki Rubac, Debra Carmichael and Dale Jackson. Photo contributed by Pam Ogasawara, OFO.



Washington, D.C. – OIEA employees, from left: Valerie Neris-Blankenship, Joe Schein, Shannon Ashby, Carolyn Grant, Gary Shapiro, José Calvo, Davina Minnix, Eleanor Lewis and Troy Hambricht. Photo contributed by Shannon Ashby, OIEA.

Reminder: Update Your Beneficiaries

If you've gotten married, it's important to update your designation of beneficiary forms. Below are important links to help you designate your beneficiaries.

Federal Employee Life Insurance (FELI)

- SF 2823, Designation of Beneficiary:
www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf2823.pdf
- To claim insurance proceeds:
www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/fe6.pdf

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)

- TSP-3, Designation of Beneficiary:
www.tsp.gov/PDF/formspubs/tsp-3.pdf
- To receive proceeds:
www.tsp.gov/PDF/formspubs/tsp-17.pdf

Unpaid Compensation

(annual leave and last paycheck)

- SF 1152, Designation of Beneficiary:
www.opm.gov/Forms/pdf_fill/SF1152.pdf
- SF 1153, Claim for Compensation of Deceased Civilian Employee:
www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf1153.pdf

Employee Death Benefit

(current/former/retired employees, but different than retirement survivor annuity)

◆ CSRS Employees

- SF 2808, Designation of Beneficiary:
www.opm.gov/Forms/pdf_fill/SF2808.pdf
- SF2800, Application for Death Benefits:
www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf-2800.pdf

◆ FERS Employees

- SF 3102, Designation of Beneficiary:
www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf3102.pdf
- SF 3104, Application for Death Benefits:
www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf3104.pdf

Information provided by USDA GLOBE, a recognized employee resource group of the USDA.

FSIS Retirees: May 15 - June 15, 2014

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Acosta, Laura, CSI	Laredo, TX	26
Alexander, Douglas M., FI	Greenville, SC	8
Aponte Santiago, Jose A., CSI	Yauco, PR	25
Atkinson, Martin C., CSI	Elwood, NE	30
Baptiste, Leonard R., CSI	Tar Heel, NC	30
Benabdi, Mohammed L., IT Spec.	Washington, DC	24
Bogner Jr., Vernon G., CSI	Hutchinson, KS	41
Brown, Robert M., SVMO	Wallula, WA	13
Carston, James E., FI	Pine Mt. Valley, GA	30
Collier, Nayland, SVMO	Lewiston, NC	29
Dixon, Cynthia E., Equal Emplmt. Spec.	Beltsville, MD	35
Dunn, Betty C., CSI	Albertville, AL	34
Edmunds, Jerry L., CSI	Sioux Falls, SD	24
Emery, Mary B., FI	Dudley, NC	20
Faulds, Charlie M., FI	Dodge City, KS	8
Garnica, Marc R., SCSO	Santa Ana, CA	37
Gioglio, Charles L., Prog. Anal.	Washington, DC	33
Glass, Gary B., CSI	Blackfoot, ID	27
Groneck, Joseph M., Phys. Sci. Tech.	St. Louis, MO	32
Hemme, Gary A., CSI	Friona, TX	20
Johnson, John E., VMO	Franklin, WI	8
Johnson, Nina S., FI	Springdale, AR	25
Kelly, Ronald R., CSI	Heavener, OK	15
Kinney, Ruth J., FI	Hurlock, MD	29
Kirby, Charlotte A., CSI	Union City, TN	34
Kohnen, James W., FI	Lake Mills, WI	10
Larson, Kim M., CSI	Turlock, CA	29
Lee, Deborah J., CSI	South West City, MO	34
Lopez, Enrique S., Import SurvInce. Liasn. Offcr.	Laredo, TX	26
Lundberg, Danny O., CSI	Kansas City, KS	27
Mann Jr., Eddie G., CSI	Fort Worth, TX	38
Marks, Frederic I., Fin. Prog. Mgr.	Washington, DC	24
McCrutcheon, Catalina, FI	Seguin, TX	9
McDonald, Martin G., SVMO	Milwaukee, WI	37
Miller, Michael D., CSI	St. Joseph, MO	41
Nersessian, Bedros N., SVMO	Hobart, IN	10
Purnell, Janet E., CSI	Selbyville, DE	23
Quintero, Richard E., CSI	Delphi, IN	24
Randall, Linda M., CSI	Clarksville, AR	13
Ransom, Geraldine M., Biologist	Washington, DC	32
Richeson, Keith R., SVMO	Canton, OH	37
Rodriguez, Ernesto, CSI	Oklahoma City, OK	32
Stangl, Doris D., Fin. Prog. Spec.	Urbandale, IA	28
Trinh, Kent K., SVMO	Cactus, TX	27
Volter, Izola, CSI	Fort Worth, TX	38

SNAPSHOTS



Des Moines District

Green Bay circuit employees volunteered at the N.E.W. Community Shelter in Green Bay, Wis., by preparing a meal for 140 individuals. All food was donated by inspection personnel. Bev and Duane Gilbertson, Jodi Boucher and Osvaldo Galo also provided financial support to purchase toiletries for shelter residents. Many thanks to Tony Hotchkiss and Mike Havlik for organizing this event for the last 4 years. From left: Jamie Devroy-Rosik, Mark Rispler, Tony Hotchkiss, Mike Havlik, Bruce Delvaux, Adam Alvarez, George Williams, Shirley DuChateau, Vern Van Beek, Mike VerBruggen, Joe Gaines and Amber DuChateau. Photo contributed by Vern Van Beek, OFO.

Omaha District

At the Zorinsky Federal Building in Omaha, Neb., they had a good turnout for National Walk at Lunch Day with approximately 85 walkers. Despite the rainy and gusty weather, many went outside for their 1 mile walk. Others opted for walking inside, where 16 laps equaled a mile. Participants received a free blood pressure check and were entered into a raffle for water bottles, hand towels and tape measures. From left: Neal Westgerdes, OPPD; Patsy White, OPHS; Catherine Moffitt, OPPD; Deb Arthur, OIEA; and Laura Hulsey, OPPD. Photo contributed by Pete Duryea, OPPD.



Springdale District

Inspectors in Noel, Mo., recently held Autism Awareness Day to share information about this often misunderstood disorder. Several of the employees have children with autism and talked about their struggles and accomplishments. CSI Angela Velasquez, whose son David was diagnosed with autism, provided T-shirts for everyone to wear. From left: Dr. Shaun Houk, William Traylor, Carolyn Ash, Clinton Zinn, Jorita Calhoun, John Clifford, Ammanda Pope, David Murphy and Bret Thornhill. Not pictured: Angela Velasquez and B. J. Doolin. Photo contributed by Dr. Shaun Houk, OFO.

FROM THE **FIELD**



Chicago District

Inspector Cassandra Purcell had an “egg-citing” time with her grandson, Owen, and other local 3rd graders as they toured establishment G1579, an egg processing plant in Dubois, Ind. The children learned about cleaning, cracking and pasteurizing eggs. Each child was sent back to school with a plastic egg to decorate. Purcell also handed out FSIS activity books to each student. Photo contributed by Cassandra Purcell, OFO.

Philadelphia District

FSIS Investigators Paul Calafiore (left) and Lauren Behar (right) recruited for part-time and full-time career positions and paid internships at a non profit and government career fair at St. John’s University in Queens, N.Y. The recruiters met with hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students and alumni who were interested in program investigation, food inspection and policy development. Many students were interested in the Pathways’ Student Internship Program, which provides interns valuable work experience in our public health agency. Photo contributed by Paul Calafiore, OIEA.



Atlanta District

FLS Michael Phillips arranged a poultry correlation last month for the PHVs in the Cumming circuit. Attending were (from left) Dr. Susan Reynolds, Dr. Angela McIntyre, Dr. Toria Davis, Dr. Tanesha Wilkins, Dr. Marina Tutt, Dr. Dava Rossom and Dr. Michael Barry. Photo contributed by Michael Phillips, OFO.

FSIS Pilots Mentoring Program

By Judy Waples-Johnson, OOEET
Phone: (202) 997-9674

FSIS is committed to empowering its employees with the training, information, technology and other tools needed to excel in their positions of protecting public health. To support that commitment, OOEET is developing a formal mentoring program that will promote networking opportunities for mentors and protégés to share information and experiences.

Mentoring is a one-on-one professional relationship in which an experienced and highly competent employee (mentor) assists a less experienced employee (protégé) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the protégé's professional and personal growth. The relationship is based upon encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect and a willingness to learn.

Mentors and protégés will be matched based on skills and developmental needs identified in the protégé's application. The mentor and protégé will develop a written agreement that will identify a set of measurable goals to be completed during the program year. To reach the goals, a series of developmental experiences will focus on strengthening competencies and developing leadership skills.

Each mentoring relationship is a voluntary commitment and will vary according to needs and interests. The meeting frequency will be dependent upon goals and objectives, time constraints, physical proximity and a variety of other factors. During the first meeting, mentors and protégés will determine when and how often they will meet. Meetings may be conducted face to face or by email, telephone and social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) that are agreed upon.

Mentors and protégés will receive training prior to being matched. The training will be conducted via webinar and will be offered on several different days and during various times to include employees in different time zones and those working on different shifts.

During April, FSIS user notices were distributed to all employees soliciting applications from employees interested in participating in the mentoring pilot program as a mentor or protégé. Within the first 2 weeks, over 100 applications for mentors were approved and others are being processed. Within the first 2 days of soliciting applications, over 45 applications were received for protégés. Applications for both mentors and protégés continue to be accepted via the USDA Mentoring Portal at www.eservices.usda.gov/usdamentoring.

Questions regarding the FSIS Mentoring Program Pilot may be submitted to FSISMentoring@fsis.usda.gov.

Records Management Space Survey

By Mike Dutt, OM
Phone: (301) 504-4218

In FY13, FSIS took part in the USDA records management space survey to determine the overall space that is devoted to records storage throughout the department. FSIS had the third highest amount of space devoted to overall records storage and the highest amount of space devoted to HR-related records. This does not necessarily mean that we have the third highest amount of records; only that we have the third highest amount of space devoted to records.

To reduce this space, FSIS Records Management is initiating a program to eliminate unused record storage space. All programs are encouraged to excess empty filing cabinets, consolidate files into large filing cabinets that take less floor space, evaluate records for possible destruction according to retention requirements and transition to electronic storage. As paper records become increasingly digital, staffs are encouraged to be proactive in reducing the space devoted to records and maintain a concise and efficient records program. While the space survey measured

records space usage at headquarters and Minneapolis, it is important that every employee evaluate their records storage and make reductions that are appropriate based on current records storage levels, as well as future storage needs. Offices that are moving or relocating should also take advantage of excessing unused record storage space in order to reduce moving costs.

The overall amount of paper records is expected to decline due to the continued use of electronic information systems and paperless initiatives mandated by Presidential Memorandum on Managing Government Records. Space-saving efforts are to be completed by the end of FY14, and a second space survey is expected to be conducted in order to determine the overall reduction in records storage. Therefore, offices need to evaluate their records storage needs on an ongoing basis and ensure that unused storage is removed. Our goal is to reduce overall space usage by 25 percent.

If you would like to excess unused filing cabinets, contact the FSIS property officer at ina.mendozawilson@fsis.usda.gov. Records management questions can be emailed to recordsmanagementsection@fsis.usda.gov.

Use Caution with Email Attachments

By Jennifer Dallis, OCIO
Phone: (202) 418-8800

Some of the characteristics that make email attachments convenient and popular are also the ones that make them a common tool for attackers. They include:

- **Email is easily circulated.**

Forwarding email is so simple that viruses can quickly infect many machines. Most viruses don't even require users to forward the email. They scan a user's computer for email addresses and automatically send the infected message to all of the addresses they find. Attackers take advantage of unsuspecting users in that most users will automatically trust and open any message that comes from someone they know.

- **Email programs try to address all users' needs.**

Almost any type of file can be attached to an email message, so attackers have more freedom with the types of viruses they can send.

- **Email programs offer "user-friendly" features.**

Some email programs have the option to automatically download email attachments, which immediately exposes your computer to any viruses within the attachments.

Steps to Protect Yourself

- **Be wary of unsolicited attachments, even from people you know.**

Just because an email message looks like it came from your mom, grandma or friend, doesn't mean that it did. Many viruses can "spoof" the return address, making it look like the message came from someone else. Check with the person who supposedly sent the message to make sure it's legitimate before opening any attachments. This includes email messages that appear to be from your internet service provider (ISP) or software vendor and claim to include patches or anti-virus software. ISPs and software vendors do not send patches or software in emails.

- **Keep software up to date.**

Install software patches so that attackers can't take advantage of known problems or vulnerabilities. Many operating systems offer automatic updates.

- **Trust your instincts.**

If an email or email attachment seems suspicious, don't open it, even if your anti-virus software indicates that the message is clean. Attackers are constantly releasing new viruses, and the anti-virus software might not have the signature. At the very least, contact the person who supposedly sent the message to make sure it's legitimate before you open the attachment. However, even messages sent by a legitimate sender might contain a virus. If something about the email or the attachment makes you uncomfortable, there may be a good reason. Don't let your curiosity put your computer at risk.

It's Just a Small Cut...

By Samilya Zurawski, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8571

Many of us have experienced a minor injury at work – a cut finger, slipping on a wet floor or a tripping over an electrical cord. While you might have just put a bandage or placed ice on it, how do you determine whether or not you should file a Workers' Compensation Claim? The answer is that you should report **all** injuries, no matter how minor. Here are the reasons:

- A minor injury may develop into a more serious condition.

- Benefits cannot be paid unless an injury is reported.
- By filing a claim at the time of your injury, you are preserving a future benefit that may or may not be needed.
- An unreported injury could result in an unreported hazard, which may cause another worker to become injured—possibly, more seriously injured than you were. By reporting your accident/injury to your supervisor, you are making him/her aware of a workplace hazard and that action needs to be taken to fix it.

So, remember, after you receive that quick first aid for your minor injury, take a few minutes to preserve your claim and complete the CA-1, Federal Notice of Traumatic Injury and Claim for Continuation of Pay/Compensation. You can get a CA-1 from your supervisor or from the Department of Labor website at www.dol.gov/owcp/regs/compliance/ca-1.pdf.

If a potential hazard exists, please report the safety on FSIS Form 4791, located on *InsideFSIS* at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/global/forms/forms.jsp>. For more information, call the Workers' Compensation Staff at 1-800-370-3747.

Introducing LifeMart, an Employee Discount Program

By Jodi Hallstrom, OM
Phone: 1-800-370-3747, Ext. 8597

The newest addition to the Federal Occupational Health's (FOH) WorkLife4You services is the LifeMart discount program. LifeMart offers pre-negotiated discounts on a wide variety of products and services, including: child and elder care; fitness centers; computers and electronics; travel, car rentals and hotels; movie tickets and video rentals; books and DVDs, theme parks; flowers, shoes and apparel, restaurants and more. The discount center includes many popular vendors and continues to add new vendors each day.

Take a tour of the site and start saving now. To check it out, just go to www.worklife4you.com and log in (new user registration code: FSIS). Click on "LifeMart Discounts."

Vendor Standards

WorkLife4You's systems and processes are built to ensure the utmost integrity of the discount vendors. Participating vendors are regularly tested to monitor the quality of services they provide and are required to:



- Offer a product or service that reflects the integrity and values supported by WorkLife4You. For instance, offers only pertain to life event issues and must not contain any illegal, scandalous, defamatory or improper service, materials or information.
- Carry liability insurance reasonably expected in their industry.
- Follow all local, state and federal laws, including laws regarding licensure, if any.
- Make every effort to enable both online and offline redemption options.
- Ensure that their sites are governed by appropriate privacy policies and clearly defined terms of use.

Employee Feedback

The Discount Center also features a mailbox on every page that invites users to e-mail their comments, questions and feedback. There is also a link to a quality survey so users can provide ongoing feedback. Users can also call WorkLife4You's Help Desk if they need assistance.

NOTE: When making purchases on LifeMart, employees **must** use a personal or other non-Government computer. Shopping on government computers is strictly prohibited.

In Memoriam

We are sad to announce the recent passing of a member of our FSIS family.

Sally Fernandez, a management analyst in OOEET's Outreach and Partnership Division in Washington, DC, passed away this month. Fernandez, age 68, had been with FSIS for 23 years and was instrumental in OOEET's work with the National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection. She is survived by one daughter, two sons and two grandchildren.

>>> KUDOS <<<

Would you like to thank, congratulate or give a shout out to someone in FSIS? Here's your chance. Send your kudo to beacon@fsis.usda.gov and we'll publish one or more each month. Please keep your kudos to a few sentences, and get it approved by your program area.

If you didn't know, there's a place on *InsideFSIS* where you can submit kudos as well. To find out who's done just that, go to <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/employee/balance/kudos/kudos.jsp>.

If you would like to place a kudo on *InsideFSIS*, click on the "Submit Kudos" link at the top of the box. You may also send your kudo to intranet.manager@fsis.usda.gov.

Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

Below is the list of leave recipients, as of June 12, 2014, who are in need of annual leave. If you have annual leave that you don't need, you can help by donating to them through the Leave Transfer Program (LTP). For information about donating leave, forms, rules, eligibility and requirements, go to *InsideFSIS*. In the "I Want To" box, select "Access Public Folders." Click on the "Personnel" folder and select "Leave Transfer Program."

For more information, contact Dwaynya Goodson in OM's Employment, Classification and Compensation Branch at (202) 720-8966.

Recipient	Case Number	Program Area	State	Situation
(b) (6)	OFO-12-0048	OFO	KY	Surgery
	OFO-13-0060	OFO	IN	Surgery
	OFO-13-0056	OFO	IL	Surgery
	OFO-13-0041	OFO	NC	Surgery
	OFO-14-0015	OFO	CA	Family Illness
	OFO-13-0014	OFO	MO	Serious Illness/Surgery
	OFO-13-0053	OFO	VA	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0044	OFO	CA	Serious Illness/Surgery
	OFO-12-0061	OFO	CA	Surgery
	OFO-13-0036	OFO	GA	Maternity
	OFO-14-0008	OFO	IL	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0017	OFO	AL	Surgery
	OPHS-14-0001	OPHS	DC	Maternity
	OA-14-0001	OA	MD	Maternity
	OFO-13-0054	OFO	WA	Family Illness/Surgery
	OFO-13-0021	OFO	LA	Surgery
	OFO-13-0067	OFO	TX	Surgery
	OFO-13-0059	OFO	NC	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0017	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0016	OFO	PA	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0032	OFO	CA	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0011	OFO	CA	Surgery
	OFO-13-0006	OFO	AL	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0019	OFO	CA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0020	OFO	NY	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0030	OFO	NC	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0046	OFO	OK	Surgery
	OFO-13-0064	OFO	CA	Maternity
	OFO-13-0026	OFO	AR	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0021	OFO	CA	Surgery
	OPHS-12-0002	OPHS	DC	Surgery
	OM-14-0001	OM	DC	Family Illness
	OOEET-13-0001	OOEET	MD	Surgery

Recipient	Case Number	Program Area	State	Situation
(b) (6)	OFO-13-0023	OFO	GA	Surgery
	OFO-13-0045	OFO	TN	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0013	OFO	PA	Maternity
	OFO-13-0037	OFO	AR	Maternity
	OFO-13-0003	OFO	CO	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0004	OFO	CA	Maternity
	OFO-13-0063	OFO	CO	Surgery
	OFO-13-0050	OFO	AR	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0065	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OM-13-0004	OM	MD	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0007	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0016	OFO	NY	Surgery
	OFO-13-0034	OFO	GA	Serious Illness
	OFO-12-0064	OFO	KS	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0014	OFO	NH	Maternity
	OFO-14-0006	OFO	OK	Surgery
	OCIO-13-0002	OCIO	DC	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0022	OFO	IN	Surgery
	OPPD-13-0002	OPPD	DC	Family Illness
	OFO-14-0018	OFO	AZ	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0049	OFO	CA	Maternity
	OFO-13-0005	OFO	MO	Family Illness
	OFO-14-0010	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0024	OFO	NC	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0066	OFO	PA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0001	OFO	OK	Surgery
	OFO-14-0004	OFO	MS	Family Illness
*OFO-12-0049		OFO		
*OFO-12-0055		OFO		
*OFO-13-0010		OFO		
*OFO-13-0026		OFO		
*OFO-13-0057		OFO		Serious Illness
*OFO-13-0058		OFO		Serious Illness
*OM-13-0002		OM	MD	Serious Illness
*OFO-14-0012		OFO	GA	
*OPACE-14-0001		OPACE	DC	Serious Illness

* These LTP recipients, while not consenting to publish their names, have been assigned a number to give co-workers so donated leave may be transferred to their accounts.

June 11

Fruitland American Meat, a Jackson, Mo., establishment, recalled approximately 4,012 pounds of fresh beef products because the dorsal root ganglia may not have been completely removed, which is not compliant with agency regulations that require its removal in cattle 30 months of age and older. The products were produced and packaged on various dates between Sept. 2013 and April 2014. Bone-in ribeye roasts were distributed to a restaurant in New York, N.Y., and a Whole Foods distribution center in Connecticut that services its stores in New England. Quartered carcasses were distributed to an FSIS-inspected establishment in Missouri for further processing and distribution and to a restaurant in Kansas City, Mo. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

June 13

Vanee Foods, a Broadview, Ill., establishment, recalled approximately 3,156 pounds of turkey base because of misbranding and an undeclared allergen, milk. The turkey base was misbranded as chicken base, which does not include milk. Therefore, milk was not declared on the label. The product was produced on March 19 and shipped to food service distribution centers in Florida, Illinois, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating the product.

June 19

Bellisio Foods, Inc., a Jackson, Ohio, establishment, recalled approximately 12,180 pounds of Thai Kitchen Chicken Pad Thai frozen entrée product due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen, soy protein isolate, a known allergen which is not declared on the product label. The product was produced on April 8 and April 25 and distributed to retail stores nationwide. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating the product.

June 19

Dearborn Sausage Co., a Dearborn, Mich., establishment, recalled approximately 3,660 pounds of slab bacon due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen, hydrolyzed soy protein, a known allergen which was not declared on the product label. The product was produced on March 11, April 4 and May 2 and distributed to a single retail store. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating the product.

June 21

Wei-Chuan USA, Inc., a Bell Gardens, Calif., establishment, recalled approximately 332 pounds of "Pork Mini Buns Crab Meat Added" due to misbranding and undeclared allergens. The product was formulated with fish, shellfish and egg, known allergens; however, it was released with a label for "Pork Mini Buns," which does not declare fish, shellfish or egg. The product was produced on June 3 and sold to retail establishments in California. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating the product.

June 25

K & W Sausage, an Evansdale, Iowa, establishment, recalled approximately 1,761 pounds of sausage products because of misbranding and undeclared allergens. The products contain soy and wheat, known allergens which were not declared on the product labels. The Hot Franks were produced on various dates from Jan. 16 through June 20. The other products were produced on various dates from June 3-18. All products were distributed to retailers in Iowa. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

June 25

Rudolph Foods, a Lawrenceville, Ga. establishment, recalled approximately 34 pounds of pork products due to misbranding. The product contained monosodium glutamate (MSG), which was not declared on the label. The product was packaged June 3 and shipped to retail locations in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland and Mississippi. No reports of illnesses due to eating the products.

June 26

Mr. Wok Foods, a Las Vegas, Nev. establishment, recalled approximately 14,760 pounds of a raw pork nugget product because of misbranding and an undeclared allergen. The product contains wheat, a known allergen which was not declared on the label. The product was produced on various dates from Jan. 25 through June 25 and distributed for use in hotels, restaurants and institutions in Las Vegas, Nev. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating this product.

Continued on page 16

>>> RECALLS

June 27

E. G. Emils & Sons, Inc., a Philadelphia, Pa. establishment, recalled approximately 5,896 pounds of deli ham that may be contaminated with extraneous materials, plastic. The product was produced May 29 and shipped to Wegman's locations in Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia to be sliced at deli counters. It was sold between June 12 and June 25. No reports of injury associated with eating this product.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

>>> POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. The following were recently issued and are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/index:

- Directive 10,100.1, FSIS Sampling for the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS)
- Notice 25-14, Verification of Non-Food Safety Consumer Protection Regulatory Requirements - Poultry Class Standards
- Notice 26-14, EIAO Responsibilities Related to Food Safety Assessments in Establishments Producing Comminuted Chicken or Turkey Products
- Notice 27-14, Letter of Caution Issuance Following Food Safety Assessments in Comminuted Poultry Establishments
- Notice 28-14, Analysis for *Salmonella* of All Beef Products Sampled for Shiga Toxin-Producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC)
- Notice 29-14, Ninth Food Defense Plan Survey

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

"Our Mission in Action" Photos Needed

Do you have a good photo of our mission in action? The agency is looking to build its FSIS image library and needs photos that show what we do as a public health agency to ensure that the nation's commercial support meat, poultry and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged. Send your images to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

- Photos must be high quality resolution – 300 ppi or higher. Size: 5x7 or 8x10.
- Provide a caption explaining what is being done in the photo.
- If there are people in the photo, provide a signed USDA Consent/Release Form, available on *InsideFSIS* at <http://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/DocumentViewerServlet?filename=FSISIntranet/News/Documents/fsisprdb20130730023735.doc>, from each person.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Volume
18

Number
7

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

July 2014

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

You can tell the stories of FSIS better than anyone! Send us your articles, photos and feedback. It's simple. Just prepare an article and include: who, what, when, where, why and how. Clear your article through your program area. Then send your article to Beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Candid photos preferred. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



FACES OF FOOD SAFETY

CSI Michael Cawvey has been an inspector at beef, swine, goat, sheep, elk, buffalo, ostrich and poultry slaughter plants. Currently, he is assigned to a squab (young pigeon) slaughter facility in Mesa, Wash., and to a processing facility in a prison in Connell, Wash. To read more about Cawvey, go to page 4.

Photo contributed by Michael Cawvey, OFO

Gaining Practical Professional Experience Through FSIS Internship Programs

*By Katherine Scheidt, OPACE intern
Phone: (202) 205-8555*

As part of the department's internship program, FSIS has welcomed a diverse group of interns from across the country. With different backgrounds and areas of study, more than 50 interns joined FSIS this summer with individualized goals and a united passion for learning and contributing to FSIS' mission.

These students are given the opportunity to learn more about FSIS' program areas in various offices and laboratories while gaining hands-on experience working to keep the nation's food supply safe and wholesome. It's a tremendous opportunity for these young professionals as several of the interns agree.

When asked about his goals, Sterling Brown, a microbiology intern working in OPHS, explained, "I hope to gain valuable experience working with a government agency as well as gaining experience working in an ISO (International Organization for Standardization) standards laboratory." This summer, Brown has been able to gain desired experience running antibiotic resistance tests at the Eastern Laboratory Outbreak Section in Athens, Ga.

OPACE Intern Janell Goodwin noted that she was "excited to learn how the USDA incorporates

today's social media trends with educating the consumer in a user-friendly way." Goodwin is currently developing food safety resources to help educate at-risk populations.

Through the internship program, interns gain a greater understanding of FSIS and a greater respect for regulatory work. OPACE Intern and Texas A&M student Kristina Beaugh said that her internship experience has revised her preconceived notions of federal employees. "Everyone I have met at USDA and FSIS have been so welcoming, and I can see that the safety of the consumer is the number one priority," she acknowledged.

Angelica Marrero, an OPPD intern and economics major at the University of Puerto Rico agreed. "After a few weeks, I understood and appreciated USDA's importance (to) every citizen and its enormous contribution to the U.S. quality of life," Marrero said.

With unique skill sets and recent classroom experience, interns bring creativity and renewed energy to the agency. OPHS Intern Jacqueline Vargas summarized the impact of interns, "As years go by and trends change, it is important to have interns who bring creativity and new ways of doing things for the agency."

Continued on page 12...

The Beacon is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Office for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

Aug. issue – due July 1
Sept. issue – due August 1
Oct. issue – due September 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to e-mail.

ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN



Al Almanza

Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of talking with the more than 50 interns who are learning about the agency – both at headquarters and in the field. Nearly 2,000 applicants applied to the program, and these few were the best of what was a very impressive pool. I enjoyed hearing their perspective and was happy to see that they are so hungry to learn about what FSIS does to protect public health.

I am a very big supporter of the internship program for a number of reasons. The intern program is one of the best ways available to the agency to attract the bright minds on which the future of the agency will be built. In addition, those interns who stay and become full-time employees come to the job with the resultant familiarity with the agency and what it does. Thus, the agency winds up getting new employees who are ready to go on day one. Working with interns and seeing their excitement for our mission reminds us that we are protecting millions of Americans every day from foodborne illness.

Those interns who do not continue on as full-time employees are still a positive for the agency. Though I would love for every intern to stay, those that go on and pursue other opportunities in life take with them the knowledge, understanding and appreciation for the hard work done by FSIS employees. They are our ambassadors wherever they end up. I have kept in touch with many former interns. Some went to work in the private sector as physicians, lawyers, scientists and journalists, but all retain the experiences they have had working with the professionals who make up this agency.

During our conversation, I was able to brag about the professionalism of agency employees and the respect the agency enjoys from the department and consumers. One of my favorite things to tell interns and new hires is the comparison of our budget (just shy of \$1 billion) to the country's population. It works out to about \$3 per person per year to keep the food they eat safe and wholesome. Put into perspective, what we do is easily one of the best bargains of taxpayer money.

The interns asked a number of great questions. Many wanted to know my perspective on how to be successful. Regular readers of *The Beacon* will probably notice a trend as this question seems to come up during each of my visits to the field. The simple answer applies equally to interns and to career employees. To be successful, hard work is a given and recognizing opportunities is essential, but the key that applies to all career-minded individuals, and perhaps especially so to an intern, is finding good mentors.

Everyone makes mistakes. Successful people learn from them. Very successful people do not only learn, but do not make that mistake a second time. Many of you will work and interact with our interns and have some influence on them as they learn about this great organization. If the opportunity arises, I hope that you will impart some wisdom on them and inspire them to seek careers in public service.

To all interns at FSIS, I thank you for applying to the program and look forward to the great contributions you will make not only during your internship, but long after it ends, as you continue on as a full-time FSIS employee or wherever life leads you. Have fun, ask questions and use what you learn.

A Q&A SERIES:

BILL SMITH ON OIEA

For the last 8 years, I have had the distinct pleasure to lead and manage FSIS' Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit (OIEA). Interacting with the exceptional people who make up the OIEA staff to serve and protect consumers has been a truly rewarding experience. I look forward to continuing to work with OIEA in my new role as the assistant administrator for the Office of Field Operations.



How does the OIEA program area support the agency's mission?

Each OIEA division and staff plays an integral role in supporting the agency's Strategic Plan and, thus, the mission.

The Compliance and Investigation Division and the Administrative and Criminal Enforcement Branches of the Enforcement and Litigation Division (ELD) have played a critical role in accomplishing strategic goal 1, which is to ensure that food safety inspection aligns with existing and emerging risks with an outcome of minimizing existing and emerging food safety hazards.

The Federal State Audit Branch and the International Audit Staff of the Management Control and Audit Division (MCAD) ensure strategic goal 2 is met, which is to maximize domestic and international compliance with food safety policies through audits of state and foreign government meat and poultry systems.

The Management Control Branch, Hearings and Appeals Branch, Resource Management Staff, MCAD and ELD play a critical role in meeting strategic goal 7, which is to empower employees with training, resources and tools to enable success in protecting public health.

What is the most exciting (or significant) initiative or effort that the OIEA program area is working on right now?

I consider everything they do to be significant. OIEA's greatest asset is its people and how they work together cooperatively to get the mission critical work of OIEA accomplished.

With feedback from the 2013 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and other employee engagement activities, a team of FSIS employees from across the agency developed the 2014 FSIS Employee Engagement Action Plan. Approved by Administrator Almanza, the Management Council and the Enterprise Governance Joint Boards, the plan suggests that FSIS has room for improvement in five key areas – onboarding/mission comprehension, employee recognition, career development, leadership training and leadership accountability. More importantly, the plan recommends specific actions be taken to deliver on identified ways to improve. One deliverable to improve mission comprehension in FY 14–15 is that each assistant administrator should write a piece for *The Beacon* about their program area. The Q&A below is the first in a series intended to meet that deliverable and help increase understanding of FSIS' mission and program areas.

What is the greatest challenge the OIEA program area faces right now?

Because of OIEA's extraordinary staff, I don't see any challenges or barriers within the program area itself. The job of each and every OIEA employee is significant in accomplishing our greatest challenge as an agency, which is to keep consumers safe from foodborne illness.

What is your future vision for this program area?

The vision I have for OIEA is that they continue to make ever-increasing contributions in support of food safety and public health.

What are some ways the program area staff can provide suggestions or raise questions or concerns with OIEA management?

OIEA has several mechanisms in place for employees to raise issues. For those who simply want to reach out to a colleague to say "thank you," there is the *Kudos* section in *The Beacon* and the *Kudos* page on *InsideFSIS*. These are wonderful ways to quickly show your appreciation for a colleague's contribution. Then there is the *OIEA Spotlight*, the principle, formal quarterly publication, as well as *OIEA News*, a streamlined, more informal communications mechanism that allows for more timely information sharing by everyone, not just the management team. For OIEA staff who would like to raise concerns through a less public vehicle, they have the EEOAC Drop Box. This drop box is monitored only by the EEOAC chair and co-chair and all issues and concerns are brought to the attention of the acting assistant administrator of OIEA.

MICHAEL CAWVEY

It's Not Just Cows, Hogs and Chickens

By Felicia Thompson, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

For more than a quarter of a century, CSI Michael Cawvey, in OFO's Denver district, has seen a lot and done even more.

Cawvey has been an inspector at beef, swine, goat, sheep, elk, buffalo, ostrich and poultry slaughter plants in Oregon, Idaho and California. Currently, he is assigned to a squab (young pigeon) slaughter facility in Mesa, Wash., and to a processing facility in a prison in Connell, Wash.

Not a Typical Day in the Life of a CSI

A typical day for Cawvey is a busy one. He spends about 5 hours of his day inspecting a custom slaughter facility that processes approximately 2,200 non-eviscerated squabs.

"Slaughtering these birds is different because these birds will be served at high-end Asian-style restaurants and final plating presentation is important to these owners," Cawvey explained as he detailed the precise process.

Cawvey inspects the birds once they have been bled, defeathered and placed in a tub by plant employees. "I check the exterior of the bird for diseases, discoloration or swelling in the joints. If the bird contains any of these issues, it will be discarded," he said.

When Cawvey isn't at the squab plant, he's at a medium-level security state prison where he inspects food in the facility's "Food Factory."

"The inmates produce a large variety of fully cooked shelf stable products, such as roasts, meatloaf patties, sliced deli meats, stews, chilis and meat sauces," he continued. "They process raw beef to make taco meat and burritos for the school lunch program and meals for the Meals on Wheels program for the elderly who live in the community. They also have a Halal program and produce products for the Muslim population in the prison."

Cawvey's duties at the prison include reviewing the prison's food-related programs, monitoring sanitation practices, verifying cook and chill temperatures and conducting product sampling for *Listeria*. "It has been a unique experience to be on the other side of the razor wire," he added. "I've seen a few fights and a couple of lockdowns, but it's amazing that a lot of the inmates have become quite knowledgeable with the *Code of Federal Regulations* and have become very good HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) and SSOP (Sanitation Standard Operations Procedures) clerks."

Seeing this education and commitment gives Cawvey a great sense of gratification.



Photo contributed by Michael Cawvey

Proud to be an Inspector

"I get tremendous satisfaction knowing that I help make sure our nation's food supply is safe for your family and mine, but I'm only one of the many layers of inspection that regulates the wholesomeness of the food supply," he said.

The Hermiston, Ore., native and his wife, Billie, have raised 5 daughters, and said he has always encouraged, and still encourages, his daughters and 14 grandchildren to follow safe handling instructions listed on raw products. He also says he gets a slew of questions from them about food safety and is happy to answer them all.

"My family usually asks me for information about the most recent food recall, cooking temperatures, 'sell-by' dates, how a certain product is produced or what really goes into hotdogs," Cawvey said. "My 26 years at FSIS has afforded me the knowledge in keeping my family safe, and it has empowered me to do the best job that I can for our nation."

KUDOS

ODIFP's Food Defense Assessment Staff (FDAS) would like to send kudos to the Denver district office, and specifically Anna Gallegos, for its ongoing support of FSIS' food defense mission. District personnel helped coordinate and facilitate five site visits by an FDAS member on June 23-24. The visits helped to promote the adoption of functional food defense plans, and feedback provided by inspection program personnel will help to inform future directions for food defense programs at FSIS. A special thank you goes out to Randal Daniels, David James, Carmen Herbrandson, Diana Croft, Duane Edberg and Arnold Avalos for taking time out of their busy schedules to give plant tours and provide valuable feedback.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Photo contributed by Luis Zamora, OIEA

OIEA's Compliance and Investigations Division, Southwest Region, and the USDA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) presented awards to Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA) Russell Mayer, District of Nebraska, for his outstanding efforts in the prosecution of Nebraska's Finest Meats for violations of the Federal Meat Inspection Act, specifically selling uninspected meat to Omaha Public Schools. From left: OIEA Investigators Jeffery Griess and Joseph Wolfgram, OIEA Regional Director Luis Zamora, U.S. Attorney Deborah Gilg, AUSA Russell Mayer, OIG Special Agent Brett Dickerson, OIG Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge Anthony Mohatt, AUSA Jan Sharp and OIEA Supervisory Investigator Gregory Harstick.



Photo provided by the Library of Congress

USDA Women's Equality Day Observance

August 26 • 10 a.m.
Whitten Building Patio
Washington, D.C.

FSIS Retirees: June 15 - July 15, 2014

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Alamano, Robert M., CSI	Fresno, CA	28
Campbell, Larry N., CSI	Arkansas City, KS	17
Carroll, Kristine E., FI	Broken Bow, OK	21
Ellerman-Atkins, Marcie K., FI	Blountsville, AL	7
Elm, Janet G., Contr. Spec.	Beltsville, MD	37
Ebel, Daryl P., FI	Boyden, IA	7
Gelderman, Clifford F., CSI	Storm Lake, IA	36
Getzelman, A. R., SVMO	Belgrade, MT	14
Gribble, Robert D., CSI	Moorefield, WV	27
Grosman, Donald J., CSI	Dearborn, MI	35
Hernandez, Lorenza, FI	Georgetown, DE	11
Holk, Fred W., SVMO	Danville, AR	21
Jarmon, Ina M., FI	Georgetown, DE	24
Jones, Terence O., CSI	Garden City, KS	12
Keeker, Rickie L., CSI	Washington, IN	25
Lemmons Smith, Melvie L., CSI	Springdale, AR	11
Martin Sr., Onofre C., SVMO	Fresno, CA	11
Medina, Sherry D., FI	Albertville, AL	14
Mendez, Salvador R., Invstgr.	Jackson, MS	51
Nekola, Ronald L., CSI	Waterloo, IA	41
Nichols, John M., FI	Seattle, WA	19
Nipper Jr., James E., CSI	Conyers, GA	20
Raja, Parvez A., SVMO	Saxonburg, PA	30
Rimmer, Ivan J., FI	Sioux Center, IA	31
Saad, James J., CSI	Taylor, MI	41
Schnitker, John F., CSI	Omaha, NE	42
Struthers, Stephanie J., FI	Storm Lake, IA	15
Summit, Nora K., CSI	City of Industry, CA	21
Swerczek, David A., SVMO	Gibbon, NE	14
Vinson, Faith, CSI	Lewiston, NC	30
Wachholtz, Rodney K., CSI	Wichita, KS	27
Warren, Stephen, SVMO	Dodge City, KS	10

Alameda District

Investigators in OIEA's Compliance and Investigation Division participated in a joint inspection operation with Santa Barbara County Environmental Health officials in California by assisting with surveillance activities at an illegal retail location that was processing/preparing, offering for sale and distributing non-federally inspected meat and poultry products. From left: Pedro Rodriguez, Santa Barbara County Health Inspector Hiromi Dugan, Shaun Smith, Jannette Pagan and Bobbie Jones. Photo contributed by Pedro Rodriguez, OIEA.



Employees from OIEA's Compliance and Investigation Division and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) met to discuss and formalize an agreement for FSIS to utilize a workstation in CBP's office in San Diego, Calif. From left: CBP Program Manager Leslie Gomez-Montez, OIEA Investigators Jannette Pagan and Linda Ramos, OIEA Supervisory Investigator Shaun Smith and Assistant Director Paul Henning, CBP Field Operations and Trade. Photo contributed by Jannette Pagan, OIEA.



Springdale District

The Springdale district conducted recruiting events in Sedalia, Cassville and Dexter, Mo. The employees assisted applicants with applying for food inspector job openings. They answered questions, assisted with resumes and walked applicants through the online application process on USAJobs.gov. From left: HR Specialist Wendy Son nabend, SPHV Dr. Jeffery Anderson, MA Liz Simmons, FLS Cindy Buck-Griffin, FI Juan Corona, SRMA Sue Nelsen and DM Paul Kiecker. Not pictured: FLS Dr. John Stephenson, FLS Dr. Don Dowdle and CSI Luis Trujillo. Photo contributed by Liz Simmons, OFO.



FROM THE **FIELD**



Des Moines District

Supervisory HR Specialist Gina Williams (right) received an "Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) Patriot Award" on June 24 in Minneapolis. The ESGR Patriot Award is given by the Department of Defense to recognize employers who support a strong National Guard and Reserve force. Williams was nominated by Nastasha Reinke (left), a Captain in the Army Reserves. Photo contributed Shannon Montgomery, OM.

Atlanta District

Night shift employees at establishments P-00855 and P-00855D in Athens, Ga., recently helped PLR Athens, a non-profit organization that addresses the needs and long-term recovery of people in the Athens-Clarke

County area. PLR Athens was placing people into apartments and requested help in readying them with used furniture, food and other items. The USDA family delivered four truckloads of items. From left: Juanita Mack, Lorraine Rhoden, Patrick Knights, Idella Redd, Sandra Mitchell, Lillie Oglesby, Vicki Trammell, Paulette Buice, Susan Kelley, Sabrina Thomas and Tammy Jackson.

Not pictured: Dr. David Barnett, Lee Warren, Patricia Wilson, Atasha Atkins and Dorothy Fowler.



For National Stroke Awareness Month, the inspection team at establishment P1272 in Douglas, Ga., learned about high blood pressure and how to eat healthy. The team then enjoyed a healthy, low-sodium lunch they made with herb seasonings. Members also purchased a blood pressure monitor and helped each other take readings. The monitor will remain in the USDA office.

Seated: Merita Mack and Mark Alexander. Standing: Belinda Wright, Josephine McRae, Dr. Larrina Williams, Sally Passmore, Betty Herrington and Leisha Riley.

Photo contributed by Leisha Riley, OFO.



FSIS and UW-Madison Hold Food Safety Summit

By Clarke Jones, OFO
Phone: (608) 509-2089

The Des Moines district office, in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison), held a Food Safety Summit on May 20. The goal of the summit was to educate, exchange information and open the lines of communication between the different segments of industry, public health officials and regulatory agencies.

Topics included pre-harvest food safety and pathogen implications (pre- and post-harvesting); successes, challenges and shortcomings of HACCP in the meat and poultry industry; sampling and testing techniques (*E. coli* O157:H7, generic *E. coli* and *Listeria*); Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program; and new and upcoming directives, notices and regulations.



Photo contributed by Clarke Jones, OFO

From left: AA Dr. Dan Engeljohn, OFO (now AA for OPPD); Dr. William Shaw Jr., OPPD; DDM Todd Gerwig, OFO; DM Dr. Dawn Sprouls, OFO; DDM Dr. Rosemary Turner, OFO; DDM Dr. Khalid Masood, OFO; EIAO Dana Ewald, OFO; Jeff Sindelar, UW-Madison; EIAO Jeffery Jacobsen, OFO; EIAO Clarke Jones, OFO; Select Establishment Coordinator Thomas Beck, OFO; Relief SPHV/EIAO Dr. Joseph Gaines, OFO.

OIEA-CID Holds National Training

By Sara Baucher, OIEA
Phone: (202) 418-8880

OIEA's Compliance and Investigation Division (CID) held a national training on June 2-5 in Covington, Ky., for CID employees, and the days were jam-packed with FSIS and OIEA updates and training.

OIEA AA Bill Smith commented that this was the first opportunity for all of the investigators, supervisors, regional directors and the Resource Management Staff to meet in 4 years. One-third of all the investigators have

been with OIEA for less than 2 years, and two-thirds of the OIEA supervisors have been in their leadership roles for less than 2 years. This training was an excellent opportunity for the newer employees to interact and learn from investigators with more experience. It was also beneficial for investigators who have been on the job for many years to learn how new technology and software can help them develop and manage their cases more efficiently.

Administrator Al Almanza and OIEA management also took the opportunity

to personally thank the investigators for their dedication and the hard work they do every day to protect food safety.

Almanza and Smith also held a townhall meeting/Q&A session, and the employees appreciated being able to ask questions and hear how Almanza started as an inspector on the line and worked his way up in FSIS.

CID Director Dr. Jerry Elliott commented that the training was informative and a great opportunity to meet co-workers and put faces to names.



Photo contributed by Sara Baucher, OIEA

This was the largest CID national training with 172 attendees.

Field Supply Center Reminder

By Pam Veal, OM
Phone: (301) 504-3995

There are two ways for field employees to place a supply order from the Beltsville Service Center (BSC).

1. You can order online at www.bsc.usda.gov. If you have a problem finding an item, recheck the item number. You can also call BSC at 1-877-576-6329.

If you're ordering an item that has a limit and you've reached that limit, you can call BSC to override the limit. This is for emergencies only. Please do not overuse this process or stockpile items and forms.

2. Fill out form CFPDC-1, Request for Supplies, and fax it to (301) 394-0300.

Do not mail your order to the BSC. BSC no longer accepts mail orders.

General office supply orders are filled and shipped for BSC by an Office Max store in your area within 5 to 7 days after they are received. If you do not receive your supplies within this timeframe, call the BSC at 1-877-576-6329 and provide your customer identification number and the date you placed your order. (Note: The FSIS Supply Hotline is no longer in service.)

Additional information is also available on *InsideFSIS* under "Facilities and Services." Click on "Field Supply Catalog."

Some FSIS forms are available on *InsideFSIS*. If you are unable to locate a form on the BSC website, go to <http://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/public/static/index.jsp>. Click on the "Forms" tab to view the complete library.

Workers' Compensation

Medical Leave and Overtime Pay

By Pat Turner, OM
Phone: 1-800-370-3747

Under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA), if you are an injured employee with an accepted workers' compensation claim and have returned to work, you are allowed to take up to 4 hours off per visit to attend periodic medical appointments for your work-related condition(s).

What type of leave can I use?

The type of leave depends on the type of claim you originally filed and how long the claim has been active.

If you filed a CA-1, Notice of Traumatic Injury, and are still eligible for 45 days of continuation of pay, you should use code 67 on your T&A for the time taken off from work to attend medical appointments. The T&A is submitted by your supervisor to the Financial Processing Center, which will contact the FSIS Workers' Compensation Branch (WCB) for final validation.

If your eligibility for 45 days of continuation of pay has expired or you filed a CA-2, Notice of Occupational Injury,

you should use code 71 on your T&A for "leave without pay." You must also send a completed CA-7, Request for Compensation, to WCB for review. WCB will submit this to the Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation.

On days that I attend medical exams, can I work overtime?

If you take time off to attend a medical appointment for the allowed conditions of your claim, you should not work overtime. If you have over 40 hours in a work week or over 8 hours per work shift, you lose your entitlement to compensation for the period claimed. According to FECA (Part 2: 2-0900-10, Computing Weekly Pay Rate), the number of hours in a full work year is based on a 40-hour work week.

If you have any questions about medical leave and overtime pay, please call WCB at 1-800-370-3747.

IT Security Reminders While Traveling

By Leigh Ann Acree, OCIO
Phone: (202) 418-8816

FSIS' Security Operations Center (SOC) handles approximately 100 incidents involving lost or stolen government equipment every year. To help reduce this number, please remember you should always protect government equipment (i.e., laptop, Blackberry, smartphone) like you would your own personal property.

Don't assume your laptop or other electronic mobile devices are safe in your car and hotel room or at airports and conference centers. Between June 2012 and June 2013, travelers lost over 10,000 laptops, smartphones, tablets and other electronic mobile devices in seven of the largest airports in the world. Thousands more are left in hotel rooms, restaurants, airports, cabs or coffee shops by people in a hurry. The FBI reports that only 3 percent of lost laptops are returned. Protect your laptop and your electronic mobile devices by following the guidelines below.

Cars

Never leave any electronic mobile devices, including a laptop, in a vehicle

where they can be seen through a window. Before arriving at your destination, place them in the trunk and use a cable lock to secure your laptop to the trunk lid. Even if thieves are able to open the trunk, it will be more difficult for them to carry out their crime. If you store your electronic mobile devices in the vehicle for any period of time, keep in mind that the extreme temperature ranges may damage electronic devices. In the summer, the inside of a parked car can reach temperatures that can melt the components of your electronic mobile devices. In winter, LCD screens can freeze solid and split.

Hotels

If you're going to leave any electronic mobile devices in your hotel room, remember to secure them. A hotel safe can be used to secure your electronic mobile devices when they're not in use. Alternatively, bring a secure laptop cable lock and use it. Secure it to a strong immovable object. Remember, they only work if you use them properly.

Airports

Keep all of your electronic mobile devices with you at all times. Just

before you go through screening, place your electronic mobile devices in your last bin on the security conveyor belt. Once they go through the x-ray, pick them up immediately.

Protect Information

Protect all of your data by backing it up. Your FSIS laptop has full disk encryption to prevent theft of data contents.

Make Security a Habit

People are the weakest link in the security chain. Get into the habit of locking up your electronic mobile devices when you're not working on them or when storing them. Use common sense when traveling and try to stay in physical contact with your electronic mobile devices at all times.

If you have questions about laptop and electronic mobile device security, contact the SOC at OCIOSecurityOperationsCenter@fsis.usda.gov.

To report lost or stolen equipment, contact the Agriculture SOC 24-Hour Incident Hotline at (866) 905-6890 or cyber.incidents@usda.gov.

GREEN CORNER

Conserving Water During Summer

By Lara D'Amore, OOEET
Phone: (301) 504-3054

The summer season is in full swing and activities often focus on water. However, low rainfall and summer droughts are affecting many parts of the country, and many states and local counties must impose water restrictions. Below are things you can do to conserve your water usage.

✓ Use a rain barrel to harvest rain water from gutters and use it to water gardens and landscapes.

✓ When the kids want to cool off with a sprinkler, place it in an area where your lawn needs it.

✓ Shorten your shower by a minute or two. It can save up to 150 gallons per month.

✓ Run your washer and dishwasher only when full. This can save 1,000 gallons a month.

✓ Collect the water you use when rinsing fruit and vegetables. Then use it to water house plants.

✓ When rinsing your razor, plug the sink instead of running water. It can save up to 300 gallons a month.

✓ Turning off the water while you brush your teeth will save up to 4 gallons a minute – 200 gallons a week for a family of four!

If you have any ideas or stories about how you have made adjustments at home to conserve or reuse water, email them to GoGreen@fsis.usda.gov.

RECALLS <<<

July 3

HEB Meat Processing, a San Antonio, Texas, establishment, recalled approximately 75,465 pounds of various fresh beef products because they may be contaminated with foreign materials (metal shavings). The products were produced June 9-10 and distributed for retail sale in Texas. No reports of injuries due to eating these products.

July 3

Kanani Foods, a Las Vegas, Nev. establishment, recalled approximately 59 pounds of various chicken products because the products were not produced under a fully implemented Ready-To-Eat Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan. The products were produced June 24-30 and distributed for retail sale in Nevada. No reports of illness due to eating these products.

July 4

Foster Farms, a Livingston, Calif., based establishment, recalled an undetermined amount of chicken products that may be contaminated with a particular strain of *Salmonella* Heidelberg. The chicken products were produced from March 7-13 and shipped to Costco, Foodmaxx, Kroger, Safeway and other retail stores and distribution centers in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah and Washington. The products are known to be associated with a specific *Salmonella* Heidelberg illness which involved the consumption of a boneless skinless chicken breast product. One case-patient had been identified in California with an illness onset date of May 5. It was determined that there was a link between the boneless skinless chicken breast products from Foster Farms and this illness.

July 18

B. Roberts Foods, a Charlotte, N.C., establishment, recalled approximately 202 pounds of individual serving grilled chicken entrées due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen, milk, a known allergen which is not declared on the product label. The product was produced on July 10 and distributed to retail stores in Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and Washington, D.C. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating this product.

July 22

A facility doing business as Sara Lee Foodservice in New London, Wis., recalled approximately 82,440 pounds of smoked sausage due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen, hydrolyzed soy protein, a known allergen which is not declared on the product label. The product was produced from Jan. 1 through June 6 and sent to distribution centers for further shipment to institutional users across the United States. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating this product.

July 24

Great American Marketing, a Houston, Texas establishment, recalled approximately 475 pounds of FSIS- and FDA-regulated, ready-to-eat products due to possible contamination with *Listeria monocytogenes*. The sandwich and wrap products were produced on July 15 and shipped to retail locations in Texas. The problem was discovered when FSIS collected a sample of a separate product on July 15 that was confirmed positive for *L. monocytogenes* on July 23. The sampled product was held; however, the plant produced the additional FSIS- and FDA-regulated products without conducting a complete cleanup of the production equipment. No reports of illnesses associated with eating these products.

July 26

Puritan Foods Co., Inc., a Boston, Mass., establishment, recalled approximately 2,476 pounds of raw boneless turkey breasts due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen. The product contains milk, a known allergen which is not declared on the product label. The product was produced on June 11 and July 18. The product was distributed to a local distributor, which sold the product to hotels, restaurants and institutions in the New England area. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating this product.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

>>> PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

FSIS issued a public health alert on July 25 because VU Foods, LLC, a Kansas City, Mo., establishment, refused to issue a recall of breaded chicken products for which there is reason to conclude that they were unfit for human consumption. The products were considered for recall because they were produced without inspection. The products were shipped to distribution centers. No reports of illness due to eating these products.

>>> POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&Policies/index.

- **Directive 6100.1, Rev. 2, Ante-Mortem Livestock Inspection**
- **Directive 13000.2, Rev. 1, Performing Sampling Tasks in Official Establishments Using the Public Health Information System**
- **Notice 31-14, Supplemental Instructions for Performing the Hazard Analysis Verification Task in Establishments That Produce NRTE Stuffed Poultry Products**
- **Notice 34-14, Resumption of Normal Sampling and Testing for Species in Imported Products**
- **Notice 35-14, On-Going Foreign Equivalence Verification Audits**

Administrative issuances were also published. They are at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=policy>.

- **Notice 30-14, Length of Service: April, May and June 2014**
- **Notice 32-14, 2014 Yearend Closing**
- **Notice 33-14, Annual Notice of Right to Request Union Representation**

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

Internships

... Continued from page 1

OOEET Training Intern Christopher Liao believes that FSIS interns "deliver a new generation of diversity." With fresh outlooks and passion, interns help move the agency forward.

The internship program serves as a valuable training ground for potential future employees. At a July 8 intern town hall meeting, Administrator Al Almanza told interns that they are the future of FSIS. As Almanza fielded questions, many students asked for tips on how to transition to a permanent career with the agency. Almanza encouraged interns to work a little harder each day in order to set themselves apart from the crowd and advised them to seriously consider every opportunity presented to them. Although a standardized route to success was not outlined, interns were encouraged by Almanza's personal rise from food inspector to FSIS Administrator.

Some interns explained that their internship has encouraged them to pursue a career in public service. "The internship has portrayed the federal government and agency as a positive place to begin a career and to grow," said Gabby Edding, an OFO public health veterinary intern located in the Denver district.

When asked about their experiences, most interns were extremely positive, but had a few suggestions for the program. OCFO Cost Analysis Intern Andrew Behm suggested, "I'd like to see more events planned where interns can meet and get to know each other. This would allow us to network with potential future colleagues and to learn about other parts of FSIS that we won't have the opportunity to work in directly."

Civil Rights Staff Intern Emmanuel Olufotebi believes that every FSIS staff member can contribute to a positive internship experience. "The success of the USDA internship program is dependent upon how well offices integrate their interns. Within FSIS, I have been very satisfied with the program and believe it has done a great job in developing my talents and abilities."

When their internships conclude, interns will be able to spread food safety awareness and the agency's messages as they share their experience about FSIS with their families, friends and colleagues.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Volume
18

Number
8

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

August 2014

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

You can tell the stories of FSIS better than anyone! Send us your articles, photos and feedback. It's simple. Just prepare an article and include: who, what, when, where, why and how. Clear your article through your program area. Then send your article to Beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Candid photos preferred. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

FACES OF FOOD SAFETY

In this month's Faces of Food Safety, FSIS spotlights CSI Guillermo Orquiz from the Dallas district. To read about Orquiz and how he protects public health, go to page 3.

Photo contributed by Jeannine Kreln, OFO



Modernizing Poultry Slaughter Inspection

By Catherine Cochran, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

Two and a half years after it was first proposed, FSIS is on its way to implementing the Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection final rule that will allow the agency to prevent up to an additional 5,000 foodborne illnesses per year. Since FSIS proposed the inspection overhaul in January 2012, the agency has carefully listened to feedback from the public, experts and other federal partners. The result is an improved modernization effort that represents the most significant update to America's poultry safety system since the 1950s and also promotes safeguards for worker safety.

When FSIS first began inspecting poultry in 1957, people associated quality defects with safety. Today, we know that a perfectly healthy looking chicken may contain harmful bacteria that, if not properly addressed, can make someone sick. FSIS is responsible for protecting the health of more than 300 million Americans. They deserve, and it is imperative that we deliver, a 21st century food inspection system that is based on current scientific knowledge about the best ways to make food safer to eat.

The Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection effort brings America's inspection system into the 21st century through two main components. The optional New Poultry

Inspection System (NPIS), which was informed by the 15-year HIMP pilot, positions poultry inspectors throughout slaughter facilities in a smarter way, allowing them to focus on those tasks that matter the most to food safety. Through the Modernization effort, FSIS is also placing first-time-ever documentation and testing requirements on the industry to demonstrate that they are controlling, rather than reacting to, enteric pathogens like *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*.

The final Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection rule, particularly NPIS, has undergone some changes since it was first proposed. For example, the line speeds for young chicken plants that newly adopt NPIS have been capped at 140 birds per minute. These changes demonstrate the agency's desire and ability to listen to stakeholders while still meeting our statutory obligation to protect public health.

Implementation Timeline and Impact

Based on comments received, FSIS has decided to give young chicken and all turkey poultry companies a choice between NPIS and their current inspection systems. If a facility chooses not to adopt NPIS, we will continue to staff them with the same number of inspectors as

Continued on page 16 ...

The Beacon is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Office for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

Sept. issue – due Aug. 1
Oct. issue – due Sept 1
Nov. issue – due Oct. 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to e-mail.

ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN



Al Almanza

In recent weeks, FSIS has moved forward on a number of key policy changes, each aimed at modernizing and improving how we achieve our mission of protecting public health through the implementation of sound food safety practices.

Much has been said and done, but after 2 ½ years as a proposal, FSIS is on its way to implementing the New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS).

Since FSIS proposed the poultry inspection overhaul in January 2012, the agency listened carefully to the input of the public, experts and other federal partners. The result is an improved modernization effort that represents the most significant update to America's inspection of poultry since the 1950s.

There have been many changes from the proposed rule, so I want to clarify a few points.

NPIS is based on a 15-year pilot. NPIS positions poultry inspectors throughout slaughter facilities in a smarter way, allowing them to focus on tasks that matter the most to food safety. NPIS caps line speeds at 140 birds per minute, the current maximum rate. Companies will have to formally elect to use the NPIS. Otherwise we will continue to regulate their production in the manner that we do now.

Which brings me to my next point: I want to squash rumors and allay any fears that this change may cause.

First and foremost, FSIS in-plant inspectors are at the core of the agency's public health mission. Any reductions in positions *will not* mean layoffs of current personnel.

As companies begin to operate under the NPIS, approximately 1,500 food inspectors and 240 relief inspectors would be in line to receive upgraded positions, greater experience in food safety and public health, and increased pay.

Over the next 3 to 4 years, positions that become vacant through attrition and that are not needed in the new inspection system will not be backfilled. Presently, we estimate approximately 630 inspection positions and 140 supervisory positions would be phased out by managing vacancies. FSIS plans to offer another job within the agency to all current employees whose positions are affected by this final rule.

Through the modernization effort, FSIS is also placing first-time-ever documentation and testing requirements on the industry to demonstrate that they are controlling, rather than reacting to, *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*.

The rule also increases worker safety in the establishments by giving FSIS inspectors new tools to report hazardous work conditions. A toll-free number to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration will allow inspectors to report workplace hazards that may affect both plant workers and our own employees. Previously, the agency was only able to report conditions as they had an impact on our own employees.

You can gain a wider understanding on this subject in an accompanying article in this edition of *The Beacon*.

I encourage each of you to learn more about this important measure and how your daily work activities play a key role in the agency's success. I understand that change brings some degree of apprehension, but as we have in the past, we will remain One Team with One Purpose – to protect public health.

Read and Join in a Discussion with Al Almanza

To check out the Administrator's Blog, go to *InsideFSIS* at <https://connections.usda.gov/blogs/FSIS/>.

FACES OF FOOD SAFETY

CSI Guillermo Orquiz, Proud to Protect Public Health

By Felicia Thompson, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

Impacting the Lives of Others

Practicing food safety at work, at home and in the community is essential for Guillermo Orquiz, a rotating CSI in the Albuquerque, N.M., circuit. The 7-year FSIS employee knows the importance of his job and tries to impart his knowledge to consumers of all ages.

"Every year, I perform at least four outreach events," Orquiz said. "I do some at my kids' middle and elementary schools, where I give a food safety presentation and hand out food safety publications to students, teachers and parents who attend. I also participate in high school job fairs because many of these students will be entering the food industry – working in fast food or some other type of restaurant environment. I feel that it's really important for them to know the basics of food safety."

Orquiz has become so popular in Albuquerque, where he lives and works, that he finds himself being recognized in public. "Hello, meat inspector!" the kids call out. He states that he likes his "rock star status" because it means he's doing his job in getting out the agency's food safety messages. He also assists with distributing the agency's messages as a member of his district's EEOAC (Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee) and often contributes to the committee's monthly newsletter.

"I participate in these types of activities because I truly believe that I'm making a difference in other people's lives," he said. "And that's how I feel about being an FSIS employee. FSIS has prepared me to protect public health and I want to prepare others."

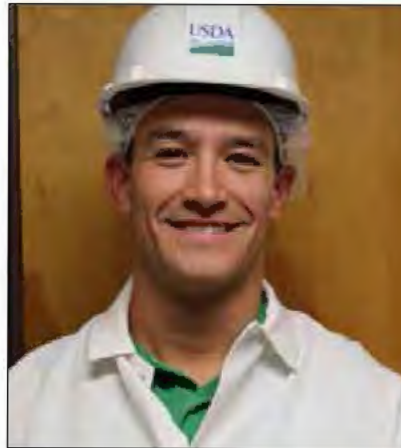


Photo contributed by Jeannine Krein, OFO

Passion for Food Safety

"I know how important and critical my job is; no matter if I'm inspecting 1 pound of product or thousands ... safe food is my main focus," Orquiz said passionately. "I have to make sure the products in the plants that I work in are safe for consumption. Consumers count on inspectors to ensure that their food is safe. This job isn't a fad; it will never go out of style to eat, and each and every day I ask myself, 'Would I feed this food to my kids?'"

Orquiz gives credit to his parents and an FSIS inspector for pursuing a career with the agency. His parents have owned and operated a USDA-inspected ready-to-eat facility in Deming, N.M., since 1977. Growing up and working in his parents' business, Orquiz learned the ins and outs of the food business.

"My parents taught me all about the food industry and producing a wholesome product. I learned from my parents that it is a partnership between the plant and the inspector," he said. "When we went under HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) in the late 90s, we had to attend a training seminar that was held by the state of New Mexico and USDA inspectors. I thought that HACCP was going to revolutionize the food industry, and I really understood how the plants needed to have the responsibility to design their own plan."

Orquiz met a lot of inspectors while working in his parents' business, but it was one inspector, in particular, that encouraged him to apply for an FSIS position. "I became friends with CSI Lloyd Massey, and he taught me a lot about USDA's regulations. I took what he taught me and what I learned from working with my parents and applied it to my job at FSIS," he said. "I've been on both sides of the fence, and it has afforded me the advantage to see from both perspectives—USDA's and the plants."

KUDOS

Would you like to thank, congratulate or give a shout out to someone in FSIS? Here's your chance. Send your kudo to beacon@fsis.usda.gov and we'll publish one or more each month. Please keep your kudos to a few sentences.

If you didn't know, there's a place on *InsideFSIS* where you can submit kudos as well. To find out who's done just that, go to <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/employee/balance/kudos/kudos.jsp>. If you would like to place a kudo on *InsideFSIS*, click on the "Submit Kudos" link at the top of the box. You may also send your kudo to intranet.manager@fsis.usda.gov.

NPIS Notes

NPIS Mailbox

FSIS has set up a mailbox for any employee inquiries about NPIS. If you have questions about NPIS, you can send them to askNPIS@fsis.usda.gov.

Employee Meeting Transcript Posted

To read the transcript of the employee meeting on July 31, 2014, go to *InsideFSIS* at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=townHall1234>.

Voluntary Resume Writing Training Begins in September

OOEET will begin offering 1-day training courses designed to help employees with resume writing basics and how to navigate and use the *USAJobs* application website. Participants will have the option of writing a resume – either paper-based or electronically. Information about how to sign up for these trainings will be announced by the Center for Learning through your district office.

Dates/Locations:

- Saturday, September 13 – Panola College, Center, Texas
- Saturday, September 20 – University of North Georgia, Gainesville, Ga.
- Saturday, September 27 – Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, N.C.

Resume Writing Workshop (9 to 11:30 a.m.)

This workshop will offer hands-on instruction with resume templates.

USAJobs Search and Application Workshops (12:30 to 1:45 p.m. & 2 to 3 p.m.)

The afternoon session is being offered twice and will focus on the use of *USAJobs* as a job search and application tool. Computers will be made available for hands-on application, and one-on-one assistance will be provided as needed.

Additional locations for training will be announced soon.

Please note that since this training is voluntary, the agency will not pay for travel or overtime.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Photo contributed by Della Snead and Richard O'Quinn, OFO

At Est. P-18873 in Vienna, Ga., FSIS employees congratulated IIC Dr. Johnny Laidler as he was presented with a length of service certificate and a gold pin by FLS Dr. Rex Holt in recognition of 40 years of service with FSIS. From left: Dr. Johnny Laidler, Dr. Rex Holt, FI Theran Parker, FI Carmen Teal, CSI Jacqueline Hoskins, CSI Angela Jones, FI Youvordka Taylor, CSI Sharon Flanders and FI Yvonne Jones.

"OUR MISSION IN ACTION" Photos Needed

Do you have a good photo of our mission in action? The agency is looking to build its FSIS image library and needs photos that show what we do as a public health agency to ensure that the nation's meat, poultry and egg products are safe, wholesome and correctly labeled and packaged. Send your images to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

- Photos must be high quality resolution—300 ppi or higher. Size: 5x7 or 8x10.
- Provide a caption explaining what is being done in the photo.
- If there are people in the photo, provide a signed USDA Consent/Release Form, available on *InsideFSIS* at <http://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/DocumentViewerServlet?filename=FSISIntranet/News/Documents/fsisprdb20130730023735.doc>, from each person.

Administrator's Award for Excellence Program

By Christina Williams, OM
Phone: (202) 720-9275

The Administrator is now accepting nominations for the 2014 Administrator's Awards for Excellence Program (Administrator's Awards). The Administrator's Awards are the most prestigious awards presented by FSIS. We invite you to submit your nomination to highlight an employee's noteworthy accomplishments that significantly contribute to the achievement of FSIS' goals and objectives.

This year, the program was streamlined and revitalized to show the link between employees' extraordinary accomplishments and how these contributions directly link to one or more of the agency's strategic goals. Also, based on feedback received from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, new categories were added, to include the Employee and Leader of the Year awards.

We are looking for nominations that recognize FSIS employees, at all grade level, in one of the seven award categories listed below:

1. Excellence in Mission Results
2. Excellence in Workplace Harmony
3. Excellence in Safety and Health
4. Excellence in Civil Rights and Diversity
5. Excellence in Labor Management Collaboration
6. Administrator's Award: Employee of the Year
7. Administrator's Award: Leader of the Year

If you are interested in submitting a nomination under this award program, please review the Administrator's Awards Categories and Criteria, available at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/inside.fsis/DocumentViewerServlet?filename=FSISIntranet/Benefits/Documents/fsisprdb20140827014452.doc>, which outlines the instructions to submit a nomination on the Administrator's Award Nomination Form, available at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/inside.fsis/DocumentViewerServlet?filename=FSISIntranet/Benefits/Documents/fsisprdb20140827014537.doc>.

Nominations must be signed and approved by the appropriate Assistant Administrator (AA), as well as the respective AA if the nomination includes employees from other program areas. An electronic scanned copy, as well as an electronic

Continued on page 15 ...

A Q&A SERIES: Dr. Dan Engeljohn on OPPD

How does your program area support the agency's mission?

In the broadest sense, the Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD) writes the regulations that carry out the agency's roles outlined in the authorizing statutes (i.e., the Federal Meat Inspection Act, the Poultry Products Inspection Act and the Egg Products Inspection Act). In order to ensure uniform and complete enforcement of these regulations, as well as the administrative-type regulations covering such things as work life and travel, we also write the FSIS directives and notices conveying instructions to FSIS personnel.



What is the most exciting (or significant) initiative or effort that your program area is working on right now?

Modernization of poultry inspection is uppermost in our work agenda. Finalizing the regulations and developing the instructions that will form the basis of training and inspection activity will be occupying significant resources.

What is the greatest challenge your program faces right now?

Developing policy that is effectively implemented day in and day out in light of so many important public health activities that inspectors must carry out each day. For the most part, the food safety hazards of greatest public health concern are invisible to the eye.

What is your future vision for your program area?

Our food safety policies will be developed along with new tools that the inspectors can use to better address the invisible food safety hazards that could be present in the foods that we regulate.

What are some ways in your program area that staff can provide suggestions or raise questions or concerns with you?

AskFSIS is a super way of asking questions that get reviewed by subject matter experts in order for a response to be generated. In addition, I like inquiries that come via email directly to me. I also welcome staff to meet with me. If I can't answer the question or immediately address the suggestion, I generally know who can act on the issue.

Inside the FSIS Intern Experience

Each summer, FSIS hosts interns to help them prepare for the workforce and gain insight on what our agency does to safeguard the food supply. The interns are recruited through the federal Pathways Internship Program and other independent groups. These programs exist to promote working in the public sector and give interns a better understanding of the work being done by the federal government.

Interning in OPACE

By Katherine Scheidt, OPACE Intern
Phone: (202) 260-8912

This summer I graduated college from Truman State University, packed up my car and moved from St. Louis, Mo., to Washington, D.C., to start a summer internship with FSIS.

Prior to my first day at FSIS, I was unsure of what to expect from my internship in the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education (OPACE). I hoped that my time at FSIS would help me develop important communications skills as well as give me a greater understanding of what it means to be a public servant. I knew very little about meat, poultry and processed egg inspection, but I was eager to learn.

I've been with FSIS for more than 2 months now and don't claim to be a food safety expert, but I am impressed with how much I have learned so far. FSIS has given me the



Photo contributed by Joan Lindenberg, OPACE

tremendous opportunity to gain hands-on experience in a federal agency that makes a huge impact on consumer safety. By drafting press releases, assisting with product recalls and answering media calls, FSIS has helped me develop skills that I will use in my future career.

At FSIS, I have been able to work both in headquarters and out in the field. While visiting beef and pork plants, I have learned more about meat processing and gained a greater appreciation for the work of both FSIS inspectors and plant employees. During my time volunteering with the Food Safety Discovery Zone, I enjoyed working directly with consumers and promoting food safety in a personal way. Throughout all of my experiences with the agency, the people I have met have shown me that all FSIS employees work together towards a common mission.

Throughout my internship experience, my co-workers have been my greatest resource. I am extremely grateful for the help of every FSIS employee who has helped make my time with FSIS a productive and enjoyable experience. When my internship concludes, I know that I will leave FSIS with new knowledge and a great appreciation of the work it does.

My Summer Internship in OA

By Raquel Azcue, OA Intern
Phone: (202) 720-9508

Like most people in America, I love to eat food. But, like a lot of people, I knew very little about the food system or what FSIS does. It wasn't until I began working this summer at FSIS as an HACU intern did I understand and appreciate the important role that the agency plays in ensuring that the foods we eat are safe and wholesome.

HACU is the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, an organization that promotes the presence of Hispanics in higher education. As a way to extend its mission, HACU's National Internship Program combines academic and practical knowledge by providing students with internships at government agencies and corporations in the private sector. During my break this summer as a political science and Spanish literature major at Bryn Mawr College, I was fortunate to be selected and placed as an intern in the Office of the Administrator (OA).

Given FSIS' regulatory authority of meat, poultry and processed egg products, I have learned a lot about how processing plants operate and the international equivalence

standards for imports and exports. I've also learned about how food safety fits into the political landscape and how it can involve diplomacy (i.e., cultural etiquette during international meetings). I have also come to learn how reviewing a directive, creating a briefing, researching equivalence issues or working as a group to find ways to decrease *Salmonella* illnesses nationwide fit together to accomplish the ultimate goal of protecting public health.

In addition to learning about FSIS responsibilities, I've also learned about the richness and diversity of its employees. On any given day, I can walk around and meet people who differ in age, orientation, ethnicity and much more. Not only was I able to learn more about the structure and nature of the USDA, but I was also able to grow personally and professionally alongside a variety of inspiring individuals.

I am very thankful to have been placed in such a hard working agency and to have a supportive OA staff. I have a whole new appreciation for our food supply and the people and agencies protecting it, and I can't wait to let my family, friends and acquaintances know of the wonderful opportunities at FSIS.

Labor and Employee Relations: Guardian of the Work Rules

By Joseph Abbott, OM
Phone: (202) 690-0279

The FSIS Labor and Employee Relations (LER) staff is tasked with administering the agency's conduct and discipline program to preserve the integrity of the workforce and to maintain the ethical standards of conduct expected of our employees as public servants. Recent Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) feedback indicated that employees want more transparency and to know what the agency is doing to hold employees accountable for acts of misconduct. Employees also want to know why it takes so long for something to be done about employees who don't follow the rules.

LER spent some time reviewing the disciplinary cases and existing inventory of work to address these employee concerns.

- For FY 2014, FSIS has reviewed approximately 550 requests for investigation or disciplinary action. Approximately 68 percent, or around 378, of those inquiries resulted in some form of discipline.
- For the remaining 32 percent of inquiries, LER provided guidance to managers for issuing formal counseling on 11 percent of them, while the remaining 21 percent were resolved through separations from the agency, but not disciplinary types.
- A majority of the disciplinary actions were in the range of reprimands to suspensions of 14 days, constituting 83 percent of the disciplinary actions.
- The more serious misconduct accounted for 17 percent of the disciplinary actions within the range of 15 days of suspension, up to and including removal.

The LER staff also looked at the patterns of misconduct across the workforce for FY 2014 actions and identified several categories which employees should be aware. The categories, while not all inclusive, do represent the types of misconduct most likely to result in disciplinary action.

- Attendance: 26 percent
- Unbecoming Conduct: 26 percent
- Failure to Follow Instructions: 19 percent
- Neglect of Duty: 7.5 percent
- Misconduct: 4 percent
- Sexual Harrassment: 3 percent
- Misuse of Government-Owned Vehicles: 2 percent

By comparison to other federal agencies, FSIS' workforce adheres to the standards of conduct and does what is best in their positions of public trust.

Since October 2013, LER has been diligently working to reduce the backlog of requests for discipline while still responding to the current requests. It is a delicate balance between speed and quality, because the agency wants to do the right thing to correct inappropriate conduct, but also wants to make sure that the corrective action is relevant and timely. Allegations of misconduct are serious and cannot be taken lightly.

As Guardian of the Work Rules, we are aware that the time it takes to investigate and take action could affect whether or not the action will make a difference in an employee's behavior. However, the process is deliberate and methodical because the decisions FSIS makes about an employee and their future career are not always simple. With every decision, FSIS looks at a series of factors that influence what corrective action is needed and what action, if any, is appropriate. We do not disclose that information publicly out of respect for the employees and the privacy associated with each of those decisions. To make those decisions more effective, FSIS is committed to having a business process in place that reduces the average time it takes to complete a case to less than 90 days, from start to finish, by the end of this fiscal year. We know that doing the right thing for the agency is important to our employees who work so hard to apply the regulations and keep food safe for the public.

DONATE TO THE LEAVE TRANSFER PROGRAM

There are a number of your fellow employees who are in need of annual leave for a variety of reasons. If you have annual leave that you don't need, you can help them by donating it through the Leave Transfer Program.

The Beacon will print the current list of leave recipients at various times. You can also view it on *InsideFSIS*. In the "I Want To" box, select "Access Public Folders." Then click on the "Personnel" folder and select "Leave Transfer Program." You will find more information about donating leave, forms, rules, eligibility and requirements.

For more information, contact Dwaynya Goodson in OM's Employment, Classification and Compensation Branch at (202) 720-8966.

Springdale District

OIEA's Compliance and Investigation Division (CID) presented an award to Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA) Patrick Lemon, Southern District of Mississippi, for his extraordinary efforts in the prosecution of Joel Cervantes and El Ranchito, Inc. Cervantes inhumanely slaughtered animals in Mississippi in insanitary conditions and transported the product to Louisiana, where he sold it in his retail store/restaurant. El Ranchito pled guilty to a felony. Cervantes pled guilty to a misdemeanor and received 1 year of probation, a \$1,000 fine and community service. From left: U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Mississippi Gregory Davis; Sanitric Brown, OIEA; James Reed, OIEA; AUSA Patrick Lemon; and Larry Hortert, OIEA. Photo contributed by James Reed, OIEA.



Springdale District

Supervisory EIAO Dr. Bryan Trout and Splash, his Labrador retriever, made a recent visit to Stepping Stones Daycare in Lawrence, Kan. Dr. Trout spoke about the importance of providing pets with proper food, water, shelter, love and exercise. Splash showed off her skills and knowledge of hand signals and whistle commands. The students got to meet Splash up close and Dr. Trout emphasized the importance of washing their hands after handling pets. Photo contributed by Linda Kendrick, OFO.

Atlanta District

It was certificates all around for FSIS employees at Est. P-00855 and P-00855D in Athens, Ga. Dr. David Barnett, SCSU Susan Kelley and CSI Vickie Trammell received length of service certificates for 30 years of service; CSI Atasha Atkins for 20 years; and CSI Patricia Wilson for 10 years. FI Tammy Jackson received a Certificate of Merit for outstanding mission support and personal contacts. From left: Dr. David Barnett, Patricia Wilson, Susan Kelley, Tammy Jackson and Atasha Atkins. Not pictured: Vickie Trammell. Photo contributed by Susan Kelley, OFO.



FROM THE **FIELD**

Atlanta District

During a work unit meeting at Est. 8509 in the Douglas circuit, FLS Donna Savage took the opportunity to present CSI Tommy "Russell" Beasley with a non-monetary award for his extra efforts in providing relief breaks during recent staffing shortages at a local poultry slaughter facility. Beasley received a blue polo shirt with the agency's logo. From left: Tommy "Russell" Beasley, Donna Savage, CSI Willie Lane and Export Inspector Glenda Suits. Not pictured: Export Inspectors Chandra Walters and Thomas Roberts. Photo contributed by Donna Savage, OFO.



Atlanta District

Albany circuit inspectors at Est. P-2686 in Camilla, Ga., and Est. P-32182 in Moultrie, Ga., participated in a friendly competition called "Operation Beat the Heat" to see which team could donate the most box fans to help local elderly residents. It was a close competition—Team Camilla (41 fans) and Team Moultrie (39 fans). Camilla donated the fans to the South West Georgia Council on Aging. Moultrie donated to elderly residents in the area. FSL Dr. Rex Holt thanked both shifts at P-2686 with a pizza party.



Team Camilla, from left: Angelia Neville, Neenicho Lester, Glenda Dudley, Kelsey Kilpatrick, Rosa Mobley, Kevin Swords, Annie Carter, Debbra Culbreath and Orangie James-McCraw. Photo contributed by SCSi Deirdre Monroe, OFO.

Team Moultrie, from left: Deborah Jones, Nikki Burks, Reuben Young, Betty Burden and Rose Smith. Photo contributed by Rose Smith, OFO.



What to Know About Short Form Closure Cases

By Caroline Howard, OM
Phone: (202) 260-9216

A short form closure refers to an administrative case status used by the Department of Labor (DOL) in many new traumatic injury cases. These cases are recorded into DOL without review by a claims examiner. The cases will stay in this status unless the expenses exceed the pre-established limit of \$1,500 for medical expenses or when the employee submits a claim for wage loss compensation. Once the claim has reached \$1,500 or a wage loss claim has been submitted, the case will be formally reviewed by a claims examiner and a decision will be rendered. The premise behind the short form closure process is to allow cases with low medical and compensation costs to be addressed quickly with minimum manpower.

Short Form Closure Facts

- Short form closures are “accepted” for up to \$1,500 for medical expenses and continuation of pay (COP) as applicable.
- Serious injuries including burns, paralysis, dog bites and motor vehicle accidents are examples of the type of injuries that should not go to short form closure.
- Challenged cases or cases with form CA-7, Claim for Compensation, should be reviewed by a claims examiner.
- Short form closure is also sometimes referred to as an administrative closure.
- If and when medical expenses exceed \$1,500, the case will “flip” and be reviewed by a claims examiner. If the “flip” doesn’t happen automatically, contact a claims examiner.

How do you know a claim is a short form closure case?

- The DOL case status will be “traumatic injury cases.”
- The annotation on DOL’s Agency Query System page will also read “short form closure.”

Notes:

- If a medical bill has not been paid and the case is in a short form closure status, determine why the bill has not been paid and contact the Automatic Control System at <http://owcp.dol.acs-inc.com/portal/main.do>.

- If a claim is listed as a short form closure claim and the employee or medical provider has adjudicated that the claimant will need further treatment, contact the claims examiner. The case can be reopened with just a verbal request or it may require submission of form CA-2a, Notice of Recurrence. (Note: Adjudication is the process of examining and developing the evidence in a workers’ compensation case and rendering a formal decision.)
- Surgery is not usually approved in a short form closure status unless there is a need for emergency surgery. If the claimant or provider contacts the technician regarding surgery and the case is in a C1 status (see definition below), the claimant should be notified that the case needs to be adjudicated.

All of the following must apply, based on the data entered at the time the case was created in a short form closure status:

- The claim must be a traumatic claim using form CA-1, Federal Notice of Traumatic Injury and Claim for Continuation of Pay/Compensation.
- The claim is not controverted and/or not challenged by the employing agency.
- The claim is created within 6 months of the injury.
- The claim does not involve a fatality.
- The claim does not involve a claim for wage loss compensation.

The appropriate closure codes for adjudicated cases involving no-time-lost, leave or short-term disability situations are:

- **AM/C1:** Condition accepted. Up to \$1,500 in medical payments can be made without adjudication by the claims examiner. No time lost.
- **AM/C2:** Condition accepted. Some disability supported and covered by COP. No further claim or bills expected.

Reminders

- All CA-1, CA-2 and CA-2a claims must be submitted within 14 calendar days to DOL for processing.
- All CA-7 claims are required to be submitted to DOL for processing within 7 calendar days.

FSIS Retirees: July 15 - Aug. 15, 2014

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Ade, Michael R., CSI	Cudahy, WI	20	Holmes, Virgilene B., CSI	Decatur, AL	12
Ainsworth, Gloria T., FI	Forest, MS	20	Hubbard, Mark R., FI	Dakota City, NE	20
Bates, Betty C., CSI	South West City, MO	27	Keeting, Michael L., CSI	Springdale, AR	31
Carney, Ronald A., CSI	Greensburg, PA	31	Langley, David,	Washington, DC	37
Chaudhry, Muhammad A., SVMO	Petaluma, CA	32	Supvy. IT Spec.		
Deknikker, Everett P., CSI	Stanton, ND	33	Lessard, Daniel J., CSI	Cranston, RI	40
Frerichs, Raymond L., CSI	Sioux City, IA	20	McDonald, Carolyn S., CSI	Demopolis, AL	25
Gwin, Rickey L., CSI	Anniston, AL	39	Roberts, Thomas H., FI	Savannah, GA	29
			Scott, Priscilla A., FI	Union Springs, AL	26

Using the Internet at Work

By Leigh Ann Acree, OCIO
Phone: (202) 418-8816

FSIS employees are expected to access the Internet using FSIS-owned equipment and services to improve their job knowledge or access scientific, technical and other information relevant to the agency's mission or mission-related activities.

Directive 1300.7, Managing Information Technology Resources, states that the expectation of privacy or confidentiality does not apply when accessing the Internet using FSIS-owned equipment and services. Employees are expected to communicate electronically in a manner that reflects positively on them and the agency. Also, employees who accidentally access an unacceptable website must click out of the site immediately and close the browser.

Internet access can provide significant performance benefits for the agency; however, there are significant legal, security and productivity issues and concerns related to Internet use. They include:

- Transmitting computer viruses and malware from Internet sources.
- Consuming limited/costly storage space with downloaded information from the Internet onto FSIS network drives, data center network drives and users' computers.
- Accessing employee transmissions (these might include passwords, sensitive data or correspondence) by hackers.
- Breaching data security, confidentiality and intellectual property rights.

FSIS' Limited Personal Use Policy prohibits access to Internet websites that are deemed inappropriate or constitute a security concern. This includes, but is not limited to, employees using the Internet on FSIS-owned

equipment and services for personal use and downloading or transmitting greeting cards, screen savers, video, sound or other large file attachments.

Inappropriate Personal Use of the Internet

- Viewing material or accessing adult/mature content sites.
- Viewing/accessing child pornography sites.
- Visiting or participating at gambling sites.
- Creating, downloading, viewing, storing, copying or transmitting materials related to gambling, weapons, terrorist activities and any other illegal or prohibited activities.
- Downloading, copying and/or playing computer games.
- Posting agency information to external news group bulletin boards or other public forums without authorization.
- Downloading/sharing music.
- Listening to radio stations or watching non-mission-related content.
- Accessing the Internet in a way that does not go through an FSIS-approved gateway (i.e., firewall), such as a VPN (virtual private network) or LAN (local area network).
- Using the Internet for commercial purposes or in support of "for profit" activities, other outside employment or business activities.
- Creating, copying, transmitting or retransmitting chain letters, jokes, solicitations or any unauthorized mailing, regardless of the subject matter.

If you have any questions regarding approved or prohibited Internet usage, contact the FSIS Security Operations Center at OCIOSecurityOperationsCenter@fsis.usda.gov.

OAS Customer Service Survey Feedback

By Sheila Santiago, OM
Phone: (301) 576-4142

OM's Office of Administrative Services (OAS) would like to thank everyone who participated in the OAS Customer Service Survey. Thanks to the suggestions and constructive feedback received, OAS is better informed on which areas customers would like improvements.

As a direct result of comments received from field employees, OAS is reevaluating the supply ordering process and working with the Beltsville Service Center (BSC) to make the process more user friendly.

Survey comments identified agency mailings as an area for possible improvement. OAS is pleased to announce the upcoming implementation of a new tracking database that will greatly reduce erroneous and duplicate mailings and decrease the costs and inconvenience associated with returned mail.

As always, OAS is committed to our customers, bettering our services and increasing process efficiency. Thank you again for taking the time to help make this office and our agency better.

If you have any other suggestions, email them to askOas@fsis.usda.gov.

Below are a few general questions that were received.

Why aren't directives, notices and *The Beacon* mailed to field personnel all in one envelope instead of in multiple mailings (an average of three per envelope)?

Our goal is to ensure employees receive agency policy and information as soon possible. Also, as a result of union negotiations, all FSIS employees at establishments must receive hard copy issuances regardless of whether they have electronic access or not.

We have documentation on inspectors that dates back several years. I believe we only need to keep personnel records in the in-plant government office for 1 year. Where is the information regarding this?

The Inspection Operations In-plant Filing System Handbook, available at the BSC, should be included in the filing system in the inspector's office. However, supervisors and district personnel should consult the FSIS Record Control and Disposition Schedules on *InsideFSIS* at <http://go.usa.gov/Nyf3>. You may also use the General Record Schedules (GRS) provided by the National Archives and Records Administration at www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/grs/. Please note that the FSIS record control schedule will supersede the GRS record control schedules. For more guidance on records, you can contact the OAS' Records Management Staff at recordsmanagement@fsis.usda.gov.

Except for shipping lab samples, wouldn't it be cheaper and less aggravating to use the United States Postal Service (USPS) for shipping?

In 2012, the department mandated that USDA agencies use UPS for tracked shipping, except for shipping laboratory samples (shipped via FedEx).

August is National Breastfeeding Awareness Month

By Kellie Upshaw, OM
Phone: (202) 260-8275

The National Breastfeeding Campaign, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Women's Health, hopes to empower women to commit to breastfeeding by highlighting new research that confirms that babies who are exclusively breastfed for 6 months are less likely to develop ear infections, diarrhea and respiratory illnesses, and may be less likely to develop childhood obesity.



Womenshealth.gov

For information, resources and support for nursing mothers, check out the websites below.

- www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/index.html
- <http://breastfeeding.nichq.org/About/National-Breastfeeding-Month/Overview.aspx>
- www.fitpregnancy.com/baby/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-awareness-month

Workplace Violence Prevention 101 Webinars

By Kerrie Tao, OM
Phone: (202) 403-0433

The Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Program offers 1-hour webinars to help employees understand the motivations that trigger violence in the workplace, prevent workplace violence from occurring, recognize the early warning signs of impending workplace violence and provide actions they can take to prevent and reduce workplace violence. Offered at least four times a month, the webinars offer employees information on reporting workplace violence using FSIS Directive 4735.4, Reporting Assault, Harassment, Interference, Intimidation or Threat. The directive covers **all** agency employees who experience assault, harassment, interference, intimidation or threat

Lunch Sessions:

12 p.m. ET
2nd and 4th Wednesdays

Evening Sessions:

5 p.m. ET
2nd Tuesdays and 4th Thursdays

while performing or as a result of performing their official duties and responsibilities.

If you wish to sign up, webinar registration information is provided in *Wednesday Newsline*. If you don't have computer access, contact Kerrie Tao at (202) 403-0422.

FSIS remains committed to providing a safe working environment that fosters the health and well-being of our employees and clients. As agency employees, we must treat every employee and client professionally, equitably and with dignity and respect. This includes each employee's responsibility to avoid inappropriate behavior such as bullying, harassment or horseplay at the worksite.

WVPRP Helpline: 1-877-987-3747 (1-877-WVP-FSIS)

The WVPRP Helpline is available to assist employees who believe they have or are experiencing workplace violence. You may also contact the program by emailing workplaceviolenceprevention@fsis.usda.gov.

Mental Health Awareness: Changing the Stigma for Peace of Mind

By Jodi Hallstrom, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8597

So many of us today are faced with the challenge of balancing work and other full-time responsibilities at home while attempting to manage our own personal health and well-being. In a world of information overflow, demanding careers and day-to-day life management, our physical, mental and overall health can easily be impacted, but often goes unaddressed.

One in five Americans over the age of 18 will experience a mental health condition this year, and adults with depression miss an average of 4.8 workdays in a 3-month period. Unfortunately, fewer than half of Americans in need of mental health care will receive it.

In an effort to emphasize mental health support for federal employees, OPM and DHHS' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration recently issued a memorandum, "Federal Workplace Conversations About

Mental Health," that provides information about mental health services available to employees and emphasizes the need to de-stigmatize seeking treatment for mental health concerns. You can read the memo at www.chcoc.gov/Transmittals.

FSIS' Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers federal employees direct and confidential access to licensed mental health professionals who provide in-person assessment referral and short-term counseling with concerns such as stress, grief, family issues, relationships, substance abuse and workplace difficulties. You can contact EAP 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

EAP and **WorkLife4You** services are available to all employees and their household members at no cost and is 100 percent confidential. Call **1-800-222-0364** (TTY: 1-888-262-7848) at any time of the day or night to discuss your needs with a specialist. You can also go to www.foh4you.com or www.worklife4you.com (new user registration code: **FSIS**).



New Beef, Poultry and Veal Sanitary Dressing and Process Control Procedures Courses Available

By Erasmo Nieves Martinez, OOEET
Phone: 1-800-366-3747

If you would like to learn or refresh your knowledge about sanitary dressing and process control procedures in cattle and poultry slaughter operations, *AgLearn* has the solution. New sanitary dressing and process control procedures courses on beef, poultry and veal are available through *AgLearn+*, and FSIS will be posting a new swine sanitary dressing course by the end of summer.

These courses explain how sanitary dressing and process control procedures fit into an establishment's food safety system and what IPPs should look for through the application of Directive 6410.3, Verifying Sanitary Dressing and Process Control Procedures by Off-line Inspection Program Personnel (IPP) in Poultry Slaughter Operations.

Why should I take these courses?

Most of the food safety hazards inherent in raw processes originate with the live animals that enter the slaughter

establishment. These hazards are common in all raw processes. Effective sanitary dressing procedures during slaughter and pathogen reduction interventions can reduce microbial contamination. By taking these courses, you will be able to learn about the importance of sanitary dressing and process control procedures and how following these steps contributes to our food safety system and product wholesomeness.

How can I access these courses?

To access these courses, go to www.aglearn.usda.gov and search for "Sanitary Dressing."

It's Free

Remember all the books and courses on *AgLearn* are available now at no additional cost to you since FSIS has prepaid for your license.

POLICY UPDATES <<<

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/index.

- Directive 7120.1, Rev. 19, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry and Egg Products
- Notice 37-14, Procedures for Notifying the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
- Notice 38-14, Certifying Products under the Export Verification and the Less Than 30 Months of Age Verification Quality System Assessment (EV/QSA) Programs
- Notice 39-14, Clarification and Expansion of Sampling Eligibility Criteria for the Routine Beef Manufacturing Trimmings (MT60) and Bench Trim (MT55) Sampling Programs
- Notice 40-14, Notification of Availability of Revised Document For Pre-Harvest Management Controls and Intervention Options for Reducing Shiga Toxin-Producing *Escherichia coli* Shedding in Cattle

Administrative issuances were also published. They are at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=policy>.

- Directive 1210.3, Rev. 2, Interagency Agreements
- Directive 2660.1, Rev. 4, Mail Management Program
- Directive 3820.1, Rev. 4, Relocation Allowances for FSIS Employees
- Directive 4300.8, Rev. 1, Recruitment, Relocation and Retention Incentives
- Notice 42-14, Fiscal Year 2015 Pay Periods and Official Payday Dates

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

August 6

Zemco Industries Inc., a Buffalo, NY, establishment, recalled approximately 106,800 pounds of smoked sausage due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen. The products contain soy, a known allergen that is not declared on the product label. The product was produced on June 11, 13 and 19; July 10 and 19; and Aug. 1; and sent to distribution centers for resale, as well as retail establishments, nationwide. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating this product.

August 9

Oberto's Brands, a Kent, Wash., establishment, recalled approximately 57,578 pounds of chicken strip products due to company quality issues. The Smokey Sweet BBQ Style Chicken Strips were first produced on May 14 and last packaged on July 28. The Spicy Buffalo Style Chicken Strips were first produced on May 16 and last packaged on Aug. 6. The products were sent to retail establishments nationwide, as well as through Internet sales. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

August 12

Perdue, a Gainesville, Ga. establishment, recalled approximately 15,306 pounds of frozen, fully cooked chicken nugget product that may be contaminated with extraneous materials (small pieces of plastic). The product was produced on Feb. 5 and shipped to retail outlets nationwide. No reports of injury or illness due to eating this product.

August 15

Whole Foods Market locations in South Weymouth, Mass., and Newton, Mass., recalled 368 pounds of ground beef products that may be contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7. Products were produced on June 8 at the Newton, Mass. location; June 10 at the Newton, Mass. location; and June 21 at the South Weymouth, Mass. location. Based on an epidemiologic investigation, three case-patients were identified in Massachusetts with *E. coli* O157:H7 illness onset dates ranging from June 13 to June 25, 2014.

August 21

APPA Fine Foods, a Corona, Calif. establishment, recalled approximately 92,657 pounds of fully cooked chicken Caesar salad kit products due to concerns about possible *Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm) contamination. The salad kits were shipped nationwide to one bulk warehouse chain for retail sale in its in-store cafés. No reports of illnesses associated with eating these products.

August 27

TNUVA USA, a Fairfield, N.J., establishment, recalled approximately 8,316 pounds of Mom's Chicken Extra Thin Cutlets product due to possible contamination with *Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm). The product was produced on Aug. 18 and shipped to the company's distributor in New Jersey. No reports of illnesses associated with eating this product.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

Administrator's Awards

... Continued from page 5

non-scanned version of the Administrator's Award Nomination Form must be emailed to Christina Williams, Performance Management Branch, at christina.williams@fsis.usda.gov, no later than **October 1, 2014**. Please note that we will not be able to consider nominations received after this deadline.

Awardees will be recognized at the Administrator's Awards ceremony and will receive a monetary and/or non-monetary award. An honorable mention category will also be included to highlight nominations that were not selected, but worthy of recognition, through this category. All honorable mention nominees will receive a certificate of appreciation. In addition, awardees may receive further consideration for recognition of a Secretary's Honor Award.

Stay up to date ...



The *Wednesday Newsline* is e-mailed to headquarter and field employees every Wednesday with important information about the agency.

Be sure to read this valuable resource every week to stay up to date with agency happenings. To submit an item to the *Wednesday Newsline*, please send it to wednesdaynewsline@fsis.usda.gov.

they currently have. Facilities are asked to notify their district office within 6 months if they want to operate under NPIS, and FSIS will phase in the interested facilities in geographic clusters as FSIS' and companies' readiness allows.

Because of the longer implementation period, some of the effects that we predicted for NPIS will be delayed. As companies begin to operate under NPIS, assuming all opt in, approximately 1,500 food inspectors and 240 relief inspectors would be in line to receive upgraded positions and pay. Up to 630 inspection positions and 140 supervisory positions would be phased out by managing vacancy and refill rates as establishments transition to NPIS.

FSIS' in-plant inspectors are at the core of the agency's public health mission. To be clear, reductions in positions do not mean layoffs of current personnel. As NPIS is phased in over several years, positions that become vacant through attrition and are not needed in the new inspection system will not be refilled. FSIS plans to offer another job within the agency to all current employees whose positions might be affected by this final rule.

Worker Safety Considerations

While FSIS is not a worker safety agency, the rule now includes a number of measures that reflect FSIS' commitment to promoting greater awareness of worker safety and health within the poultry industry, and it gives FSIS inspectors a better means for reporting hazardous work conditions. FSIS Notice 37-14, Procedures for Notifying the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), was issued on Aug. 11, 2014, as guidance to help inspectors report workplace hazards that may affect themselves or plant workers, including access to a 1-800 number to report an occupational safety or health concern for a plant worker directly to OSHA. The notice is posted on the FSIS website at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/regulations/fsis-notices.

All companies operating under NPIS are expected to maintain a program to encourage the early reporting of work-related injuries and illnesses, notify employees of the nature and early symptoms of occupational illnesses and injuries and closely monitor logs of injury and illness information. Companies must now submit an attestation of such a program to FSIS on an annual basis.

Mandatory Components for All Poultry Facilities

Consistent with what the agency proposed, all poultry companies will have to include processes in their HACCP systems for controlling enteric pathogens (e.g., *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*) and visible fecal material throughout the production process. With some exceptions for low-volume establishments, they also will have to test for enteric pathogens at two points in the production process to prove to FSIS that their preventative processes are working and make documentation available to FSIS on an ongoing basis. Previously, they tested in one location only for generic *E. coli*, which may not be as useful in indicating food safety control as we previously believed.

These requirements apply whether or not a company adopts NPIS, and they have no effect on the agency's own verification testing, which we will continue to perform. These mandatory requirements will be phased in across the industry, with effective dates as follows:

- Large establishments: Nov. 19, 2014
- Small establishments: Dec. 19, 2014
- Very small establishments: Feb. 17, 2015

Modernization Across the Agency

The Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection is part of a broader agency movement towards better, smarter food safety protections. More important than the number of employees working at FSIS is what our employees are doing. Modernization does not mean fewer inspectors. It means placing those inspectors where they can have the greatest impact on food safety, and it could even mean more inspectors in the future.

Modernizing poultry slaughter inspection is number one on our *Salmonella* Action Plan, which we unveiled in December 2013. One-third of all *Salmonella* illnesses in the United States can be attributed to FSIS-regulated products, and the *Salmonella* Action Plan is our agency's blueprint for addressing that problem.

First-time-ever *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* performance standards for poultry parts and a new standard for comminuted poultry are another part of that effort. FSIS has committed to issuing these standards this fall. When we issue those standards, we will be able to predict the number of illnesses that those standards will prevent, which will be in addition to the thousands of foodborne illnesses prevented by NPIS.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Volume
18

Number
9

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

You can tell the stories of FSIS better than anyone! Send us your articles, photos and feedback. It's simple. Just prepare an article and include: who, what, when, where, why and how. Clear your article through your program area. Then send your article to Beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Candid photos preferred. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

FACES OF FOOD SAFETY

In this month's Faces of Food Safety, FSIS spotlights Pam Ogasawara from the Recall Management and Technical Analysis Staff. Read about Ogasawara on page 3.

Photo contributed by Felicia Thompson, OPACE



Agencies Seek Greater Collaboration in Fighting Foodborne Illness

*By Richard McIntire & Edward Stoker, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113*

When working with other agencies on our shared food safety mission, it is common experience to feel as though one is communicating into a void. In order to combat this problem and foster increased collaboration in fighting foodborne illness, the CDC, FDA and FSIS have created the Interagency Foodborne Outbreak Response Collaboration (IFORC).

The purpose of IFORC is to strengthen federal foodborne illness prevention and mitigation efforts by recognizing the different roles and responsibilities of the federal agencies responsible for food safety and by coordinating foodborne outbreak detection and response activities.

Formally established with support from interagency leadership, the charter for IFORC was signed by Deputy Under Secretary Alfred Almanza; Mike Taylor, deputy commissioner for FDA's Office of Foods and Veterinary Medicine; and Beth Bell, director of CDC's National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases.

In the past, when seeking to collaborate with other agencies on shared food safety objectives, agency representatives found themselves in uncharted territories that sometimes crossed

jurisdictional boundaries. Without interagency understanding, cooperation and leadership support, collaboration efforts were often limited in scope and impact.

Today, respectful of the missions and jurisdictions of other agencies and focused on increased public service, IFORC is fostering collaboration. Recent IFORC collaborative efforts have included defining epidemiologic strength of evidence to implicate a food product as the cause of an outbreak; conducting activities associated with the System for Enteric Disease Response, Investigation and Coordination (SEDRIC), a FSIS/CDC food safety hazards assessment; and finding new uses for whole genome sequencing (WGS) of clinical, food and environmental bacterial isolates and using the data in epidemiological investigations.

In addition to interagency collaboration, IFORC is also considering ways to increase collaboration between federal agencies and industry. During a foodborne illness outbreak, early consultation with industry experts may enable federal agency investigators to more quickly identify the types of food in the marketplace which may be causing illnesses and the food production and distribution systems that are helping it spread.

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The Beacon is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Office for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

Oct. issue – due September 1
Nov. issue – due October 1
Dec. issue – due November 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to e-mail.

ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN



Al Almanza

I've enjoyed meeting with many of you this summer as I've attended agency meetings and town hall events. I appreciate the time many of you have taken to meet with me in person or by phone, and the emails I've received from many more expressing your dedication to the agency's mission. As we transition into fall, I don't expect my travel to slow down and am looking forward to visiting with as many of you as I can.

By now, you should have received my email that the Secretary recently named me Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety. What does that mean? Well, I'll be working side by side with Deputy Under Secretary Brian Ronholm and will also maintain my duties as Acting Administrator. I am just as committed as ever to the food safety mission and look forward to continuing that effort in this new capacity.

At this point, you have also likely heard me say that we have implemented a number of exciting policies this year, including how we analyze raw beef in the *Salmonella* verification program and how we verify compliance in egg products plants using PHIS.

And as we implement new initiatives, my respect for each of you and what you do remains constant.

The new initiative on the minds of most is how we will inspect poultry – i.e., the New Poultry Inspection System or NPIS. Let me just share a few points on that.

I believe that most poultry plants will opt into NPIS over the next 4 to 5 years. For some field staff, this will mean re-assignment. For others it may mean opportunities for promotions, and still others may be shifted to catfish inspection duties as that program comes online.

I wanted to expand a little on this based on some questions I received in our town hall conference call on this topic. I thought there were some great questions asked, and so I wanted to share those along with the responses.

One employee asked how inspectors will be chosen to staff the NPIS plants. There is no intent to move people right away. We have piloted three resume writing workshops and "How to Navigate USAJobs." We plan to expand these workshops throughout the country in coming months.

Someone else inquired about the status of temporary employees during these ongoing changes. We don't anticipate releasing them, at least not right away. They can certainly compete for full time slots that need filling.

Another person wanted to know about the number of catfish inspectors we expect to bring on. We'll have to take a look at the number of catfish plants, supplemented by the estimated 160 processing facilities that may deal with a variety of seafood, including catfish, that will have to be added to existing patrols. Obviously, we'll have to create a number of positions to adequately staff those plants. Once we get close to knowing those numbers, we will talk about our expectations and how we will move forward.

I feel fortunate to have a strong and flexible staff – not only at headquarters, but also in the field. Each of you has contributed to FSIS' success in the past and I anticipate that each of you will contribute to FSIS' future success.

I want you to know that there is a mailbox that has been set up to receive your questions. You can send them to askNPIS@fsis.usda.gov.

Also, if you have suggestions for further innovations or agency improvements unrelated to NPIS, feel free to send those through your normal employee suggestion process or to employeefeedback@fsis.usda.gov.

As always, I encourage each of you to remain innovative and to stand together as one team; committed to shared values that will move each of us and our agency forward.

Pam Ogasawara Defines Dedication

By Felicia Thompson, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

While Pam Ogasawara, a senior staff officer in OFO's Recall Management and Technical Analysis Staff, has donned so many hats in her 28 years with FSIS, it's hard to describe her work in just a few sentences. Currently, she is the lead on no less than 10 projects, yet she still finds time to mentor new staff and volunteer in her community. She is the epitome of a dedicated public servant.

When asked why she does all the things that she does, Ogasawara responded, "I feel that it's my duty to help others!" she said. "My ancestors were interned in Japanese internment camps during World War II here in the United States and they weren't always treated well in those camps, but they endured and persevered. I am a part of that heritage, and I have to give and help others because I am able," she explained. "And I love my job at FSIS because I think it's important to the nation, and I know what I do help to keep American families safe."

In her years at FSIS, Ogasawara's chief responsibilities include being the national coordinator for the Cooperative Interstate Shipment program, which grants certain small and very small state-inspected establishments to transport meat and poultry products into interstate commerce. She also assists with the Talmadge-Aiken program, which allows the use of state inspectors, instead of federal inspectors, in federally inspected establishments. "These programs are very important to the agency because it builds on our partnership with state officials," she explained. "It also puts in place a standard operating practice in these establishments that is comparable to FSIS'. It's a win-win for FSIS and the states."

Some of her other duties consist of keeping FSIS plant employees informed of any changes to the agency's regulations, notices or directives. For example, changes could affect the way a sample is taken or processed. Ogasawara schedules regular conference calls and webinars with OFO employees, which include frontline supervisors, enforcement investigations and analysis officers and district case specialists. "These meetings are very important because they give information directly to our boots-on-the-ground employees," Ogasawara said. "Our program experts speak at these meetings. They address issues that employees have and respond to questions."



Reducing Salmonella

One of Ogasawara's most important responsibilities is being a member of the agency's Strategic Performance Working Group on *Salmonella*, which focuses on a series of activities on identifying potential interventions to decrease FSIS-attributable salmonellosis. Currently, Pam and other members of the working group are designing and developing a baseline study for *Salmonella* in Not-Ready-to-Eat comminuted poultry.

"Being part of the working group is really important to me because reducing *Salmonella* is part of the agency's yearly goal. If I can keep just one person from contracting salmonellosis, then all my hard work would have made a difference. I would be satisfied!" she declared.

Emergency Support Function

Another responsibility is being the lead for the agency's Emergency Support Function #11 Red Team 1 where Ogasawara helps to head up the agency's mission of protecting public health if a natural or man-made disaster should occur. The 10-person team is ready to activate and deploy at a moment's notice. They train every other month so they are prepared to rendezvous at the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Response Coordination Center should a tragedy occur anywhere in the nation, American Samoa, Guam or Puerto Rico. "My team's role in these situations is to provide FSIS expertise and ensure that the continuity of the agency's food safety policies and regulations are in place," Ogasawara said.

Mentoring Others

Although Ogasawara has a full workload, she still finds time to be a mentor to OFO field employees who are on detail to OFO offices at headquarters. "I provide new employees as much help as they need when they come on board," Ogasawara said. "There's always a learning curve when someone is new, so I try to alleviate some of their stress by being as helpful as possible. That could include something as small as showing them where the cafeteria is to assisting on them on their first project."

Continued on page 6 ...

A Q&A SERIES:

Terri Nintemann on ODIFP



How does your program area support the agency's mission?

The Office of Data Integration and Food Protection (ODIFP) supports the food safety and public health mission of FSIS through three main functions: emergency coordination; food defense; and data analysis and integration. We coordinate preparedness, response and recovery initiatives for significant incidents, including natural disasters. We work with government agencies, industry and other organizations to establish and maintain a food defense infrastructure for preparedness and response to chemical, biological and radiological emergencies. We also coordinate data analyses and integration activities, including the development and maintenance of analytics from multiple data streams, to determine trends and patterns that may be of public health significance and help FSIS make informed, data-driven choices.

What is the most exciting (or significant) initiative or effort that your program area is working on right now?

We have many! One example is determining foodborne illness attribution, i.e., the fraction of illnesses that occur from pathogens in the products we regulate. This work is important because attribution relates to one of the measures found in the agency's Strategic Plan – the All Illness Measure. We, along with OPHS, have been collaborating on analyses with FDA and CDC that will result in harmonized attribution fractions that each agency can utilize to help it determine how to prioritize activities and measure progress in reducing foodborne illnesses. This work is being carried out through the Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration (IFSAC).

What is the greatest challenge your program area faces right now?

ODIFP is continually looking at how to fully utilize data to help the agency set priorities and make decisions. We have a wide variety of PHIS role-based reports now available throughout FSIS. We are working to expand the alerts

through PHIS, particularly for in-plant inspection personnel for which we'll be seeking input from the field. We are also working hard to encourage establishments to have food defense plans since we have a target participation rate of 90 percent by 2015. In addition, we are continuing to work with other program areas to identify and provide exercises to help them be prepared, whether it is for an illness outbreak, a pandemic or cyber security.

What is your future vision for your program area?

We will further strengthen the "feedback loop," ensuring that data collected is available to others and utilized in analyses, and that the results are shared as widely as possible and used for program and agency decision-making and priority setting. We will also have an incident management system that provides rapid accountability for the safety of FSIS employees and the products we regulate and better connects with other agency data. In addition, we will continue to evolve our activities related to food defense, taking into account what we have learned, addressing any remaining gaps and making sure we best utilize the time spent on food defense by inspection personnel.

What are some ways in your program area that staff can provide suggestions or raise questions or concerns with you?

There are many opportunities for employees to share ideas or concerns with me. For example, I asked our staff how we can strengthen communications, for nominees for employee awards and to comment on the draft FY 2015 Annual Performance Plan. I meet with everyone throughout the year so we can stay in touch, get to know each other better and get briefed on ongoing work. And, at least once a year, we have our field personnel come to D.C. for an in-person meeting. Our meetings have purpose and we follow up as necessary. For an all-staff meeting held earlier this year, we have a workgroup that is reaching out to employees, following up on concerns raised and reporting back to me periodically.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Photo contributed by Will Gillingwater, OIEA

OIEA presented awards to Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSA) Gary Fry and Casey O'Neill, Northern District of California, for their outstanding efforts in the prosecution of Trinh Company, a former federally inspected establishment in San Jose, Calif., for violations of the FMIA. Linda Chen Mai, the company's manager, was convicted on two felony and two misdemeanor counts for selling and transporting uninspected meat and falsely representing that the meat products had been inspected and passed. Mai was sentenced to 90 days at a community confinement facility and 3 years probation and ordered to pay a special assessment of \$250. It was the first case to be adjudicated in front of a jury since 2005. From left: David Hori, OIEA; Will Gillingwater, OIEA; AUSA Jeff Nedrow; AUSA Casey O'Neill; Mark Crowe, OIEA; and AUSA Gary Fry.

New Poultry Inspection System

NPIS Notes

Question of the Month

Will industry be subject to more requirements under the final rule? How will this rule protect public health and prevent food borne illness?

Yes, industry will now be subject to multiple additional requirements.

All poultry slaughter establishments, including those that choose not to operate under NPIS, will be required to treat pathogens like *Salmonella* as food safety hazards, and failure to implement effective measures to control these pathogens would be a basis for an inspector to take appropriate regulatory action, including suspending operations at the establishment. Previously, no such requirement existed.

All establishments, with some exceptions for very small businesses, will be required to conduct microbial testing at two points in the slaughter process to ensure they are controlling *Salmonella* and other pathogens. The smallest establishments will be required to conduct microbial testing at one point in the process. Previously, plants were required to test at one location for generic *E. coli*, which is not as valuable for indicating food safety as we previously thought, and the vast majority of facilities easily met this requirement. Therefore, we are implementing a more aggressive testing requirement.

Additional questions and answers about NPIS can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/3b7e7781-c17e-4f73-810f-f66a904f66f3/Poultry-Slaughter-FAQ_073114.pdf?MOD=AJPERES.

NPIS Mailbox

FSIS has set up a mailbox for any employee inquiries about NPIS. The NPIS mailbox is a one-stop shop to find answers to questions regarding the new poultry inspection system. Whether there is a policy, procedure or system question regarding NPIS, you will get feedback to your question here.

All questions will be collected and triaged among four senior management officials, who will review them and provide responses in the shortest amount of time possible. All questions and responses will be tracked and used to assess the need to develop FAQs for posting on the web.

If you have questions about NPIS, send them to askNPIS@fsis.usda.gov.

Transcripts for Town Hall Meetings Posted

To read the transcript or listen to the audio files of the employee town hall meetings on July 31, 2014, and Sept. 4, 2014, go to *InsideFSIS* at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/townhall>.

National Food Safety Education Month

By Kristina Beaugh, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-2821

For many, September meant back-to-school shopping, football games, parties and preparing for the cool fall weather. For FSIS, September was National Food Safety Education Month (NFSEM).

Year round, OPACE's Food Safety Education Staff (FSES) works to educate consumers about proper steps to take to avoid foodborne illness. The staff also builds and maintains partnerships with national organizations and media outlets that reach populations who are at risk for foodborne illness, such as older adults, pregnant women, children under 5 years old, diabetes patients, HIV/AIDS patients and people with cancer. To celebrate NFSEM, FSES amped up outreach in a variety of ways.

The FSIS Twitter account (@USDAFoodSafety) saw a significant increase in activity in recent months. At the end of July, FSIS "live-tweeted" the premier of the film "Sharknado 2" on the Syfy channel. FSIS used the movie as a non-traditional outreach opportunity to promote food safety messages related to severe weather. Four tweets were published and all received higher than average engagement. One of the tweets was highlighted by the *Hollywood Reporter*. Since this pilot project, retweets and new followers both reached record numbers for the month of August. For NFSEM, FSES tweeted daily food safety tips and engagement numbers increased steadily through September.

FSES also hosted a two-part webinar series titled "Food Safety 101." The first session, "Back to Basics," was held on Sept. 10 and discussed foodborne illnesses, where they are found, risks associated with poor food safety and what steps you can take to be food safe. Presenters included Dr. Karen Becker, director of OPHS' Applied Epidemiology Staff and Tina Hanes and Marianne Gravely, technical information specialists on the Meat and Poultry Hotline. The second session, "Everyday Application," took place on Sept. 17 and



Photo contributed by Nicholas Papapietro, OIEA

FSIS employees staff the Discovery Zone at the Erie County Fair in Hamburg, N.Y., in August. The 2-week fair drew an estimated 2 million people. From left: Janell Goodwin, OPACE; Emily Southard, OPACE; Kari Skiver, OIEA; James Brautlacht, OFO; Marie Bucko, OPACE; Luis Delgadillo, OPACE; David Custozzo, OFO; and Jason Orlando, OFO.

covered research on the current food safety behaviors of most Americans.

FSIS continues with "boots on the ground" outreach through the Food Safety Discovery Zone tour. In September, the Discovery Zone exhibited at the Great Frederick Fair in Frederick, Md., and Durham Agricultural Fair in Durham, Conn. Thermy and BAC, the popular food safety mascots, also made special appearances. The Discovery Zone offers fairgoers an inside look into FSIS' main food safety messages—Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill. FSIS staff also distribute educational materials and answer food safety questions from consumers. If you are interested in volunteering with the Discovery Zone, contact Kristina Beaugh at kristina.beaugh@fsis.usda.gov.

Faces of Food Safety

... Continued from page 3

Ogasawara recalls when she first arrived in the agency so many years ago, she was mentored herself and is only doing what she learned. "I only have a few years left before I will be retiring, and I feel that it's my responsibility—and every other seasoned FSIS employees' duty—to mentor and train the next group of agency leaders" she said. "Giving of my time, knowledge and skills to new employees is one of the key ways I know that continuity in my areas of expertise will continue. My goal, and hopefully theirs as well, is to continue to move the agency forward during my time with FSIS."

Helping Others

In her hours off, Ogasawara volunteers by conducting food drives for the Feds Feed Families campaign and by participating in the agency's Combined Federal Campaign activities. She also gives her time to endangered creatures. For more than 30 years, she has adopted and supported endangered manatees in Florida, nene birds in Hawaii, musk oxen in Alaska and Kemp's ridley sea turtles in Texas. "These animals are special to me because they could die out and be forgotten. I don't want that to happen," she said. "The tragedy that occurred to my people from 1942-1946 must not be forgotten either."

Food Safety Project Receives HHS Innovates Award

By Kristin Holt and Stephanie Defibaugh-Chavez, OPHS
Phone: (404) 639-3379 and (202) 690-6042

Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Sylvia Burwell recently honored a CDC/FDA/FSIS/NIH food safety project with an HHS Innovates award, which recognizes federal innovation and collaboration on issues in public health. The project, "Whole Genome Sequencing: Future of Food Safety," was awarded a "Secretary's Pick" award. "This award highlights the collaboration between CDC, FDA, FSIS and NIH to implement this new technology for public health surveillance and food safety," said OPHS AA Dr. David Goldman.

The whole genome sequencing project paves the way for replacing the many laboratory methods used today to detect and investigate foodborne illness with a single, fast approach to cut the time needed to identify and characterize bacteria that cause outbreaks and make people sick. This cross-governmental project has the potential to revolutionize foodborne disease tracking and make food safer for all consumers.

Project team members include: Kristin Holt, FSIS; Stephanie Defibaugh-Chavez, FSIS; Peter Gerner-Smidt, CDC; Christopher Braden, CDC; Cheryl Tarr, CDC; Peter Evans, FDA;



Photo contributed by Stacy Kish, OPHS

From left: Edward Hunter, Director, CDC Washington office; William Klimke, NIH; Kristy Kubota, APHL; Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services Bill Corr; Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Burwell; Cheryl Tarr, CDC; Ruth Timme (for Peter Evans), FDA; Stephanie Defibaugh-Chavez, FSIS; and Peter Gerner-Smidt, CDC. Not pictured: Christopher Braden, CDC; Kristin Holt, FSIS; and Bobbie Witczak, FDA.

Bobbie Witczak, FDA; William Klimke, NIH; and Kristy Kubota, Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL).

FSIS work group members include: Kristin Holt (group lead), Joseph Hill, John Johnston, William Cray, Neelam Narang, Jamie Wasilenko, Glenn Tillman, Mustafa Simmons, Todd Lauze, Frankie Beacorn, Uday Dessai, Stephanie Defibaugh-Chavez, Philip Bronstein, Cathy Pentz, Karen Becker, Kis Robertson, Bonnie Kissler, Marcus Head, Robert Phillips, Karen Thomas-Sharp and Kevin Crowley.

FSIS Retirees: Aug. 15 - Sept. 15, 2014

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Admire, Johnny L., CSI	Fort Bragg, CA	36	Owens, Roy A., CSI	St. Louis, MO	25
Bossler, Wayne N., Lead Complnc. Spec.	Washington, DC	42	Page, James C., CSI	Jasper, AL	16
Collins, Gaile E., CSI	Morganton, NC	21	Phillips, Michael B., SCSO	Cumming, GA	37
Compton, Herman D., CSI	Carthage, MS	29	Powers, David F., FI	Newark, NJ	44
Garrett, Terry, FI	Fort Morgan, CO	8	Reller, Janet M., CSI	Fargo, ND	29
Goodson, Frank T., CSI	Monroe, NC	48	Steffen, Marvin A., CSI	Lincoln, NE	42
Greene, Jerald L., FI	Lewiston, NC	17	Terrell, Steven C., Lab Support Wrkr.	St. Louis, MO	21
Harries, Ricky L., Prog. Mgr.	Washington, DC	30	Tester, Erwin R., SVMO	Green Forest, AR	17
Heath, George A., FI	Marietta, GA	10	Thrasher, Jack O., FI	Baker Hill, AL	20
Law, Billy D., CI	Las Vegas, NV	20	Tomey, David W., CSI	Dallas, TX	30
Loerzel, Bruce M., FI	Faribault, MN	23	Walker, Linda R., FI	Savannah, GA	30
Munro, John S., SVMO	Springfield, OR	27	Williamson, Carol C., Tech. Info. Spec.	Beltsville, MD	12

SNAPSHOTS



Chicago District

Dearborn circuit employees recently cleaned out their closets to help the needy. They collected clothing, blankets, personal items and food—over 500 pounds—with the assistance of the OIEA staff from the Oak Park, Mich., office. All items were donated to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in the Detroit area. From left: FLS Dennis Wlasiuk, CSI Amanda Post, CSI Renee Collins, CSI Michelle Headen, FI Claudia Edwards, OIEA Supervisor Deena Ismail and CSI Myra Kramp. Photo contributed by Dennis Wlasiuk, OFO.

Chicago District

OIEA, OPHS and OFO joined the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), FDA and Washtenaw County health officials in a multi-agency meeting in Lansing, Mich., on Aug. 20. The meeting was conducted to discuss the importance of federal, state and county agencies working together during foodborne illness outbreaks.

From left: Dr. John Tilden, MDARD; Bonnie Kissler, OPHS; James Borda, OIEA; James Lappin, OIEA; Deena Ismail, OIEA; Lisa Joseph, FDA; and Byron Beerbower, MDARD. Photo contributed by James Lappin, OIEA.



Denver District

FSIS employees at the Zorinsky Federal Building in Omaha, Neb., load up the last of their Feds Feed Families donations for delivery. Employees donated a total of 3,099 pounds of food and water to the Food Bank for the Heartland in Omaha. From left: OIEA employees Dexter Reavis, Mike Lathrop, Ron Eckel and Kris Kenne. Photo contributed by Deb Arthur, OIEA.

FROM THE **FIELD**

Philadelphia District



At Est. G1616, an egg processing plant in Klingerstown, Pa., OIEA employees from headquarters were given a tour of the plant's operations. Upon arrival, they were given a wonderful welcome by FLS/SPHV Teresa Martinez, CSI Ronnie Russell and CSI Rick Rovenolt and provided with safety gear to wear to prevent the contamination of egg products. From left: Juan Rodriguez, Dawn Calhoun, Michelle Goodman, Juandy Swinson, Teresa Martinez, Rowena Perez, Rick Rovenolt and Nader Memarian. Photo contributed by Juandy Swinson, OIEA.

Atlanta District

Night shift employees at Est. P-00855 and P-00855D in Athens, Ga., collected a total of 650 pounds of food for Feds Feed Families. The food was donated to People Living in Recovery, an organization that deals in recovery from addiction, homelessness and other challenging life circumstances. From left: Lillie Oglesby, Sandra Mitchell, LaKenya Bullard, Dorothy Fowler, Dr. David Barnett, Lee Warren, Kristian Lewis, Juanita Mack, Atasha Atkins, Susan Kelley, Paulette Buice and Tammy Jackson. Not pictured: Patrick Knights, Vickie Trammel, Lorraine Rhoden, Sebrina Thomas, Idella Redd, and Patty Wilson. Photo contributed by Susan Kelley, OFO.



Atlanta District

For Recovery Month, David Barnett (left) and SCSi Susan Kelley (right) from Est. P-00855 in Athens, Ga., participated in a Recovery Festival with PLR Athens and several other agencies. They handed out booklets on food safety, talked with festival visitors and spoke about what their offices have been doing to assist PLR Athens. Photo contributed by Susan Kelley, OFO.

USDA Celebrates and Honors Hispanics and Their Contributions to American Society



Photo contributed by Edward Stoker, OPACE

Keynote Speaker Maria Contreras-Sweet

*By Edward Stoker, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113*

On Sept. 18, at Washington, D.C., headquarters, USDA proudly launched Hispanic Heritage Month with a ceremony and surprise announcement. With the theme "Hispanics: A legacy of history, a present of action and a future of success," the ceremony included many USDA Hispanic leaders. Among those was Deputy Under Secretary Elvis Cordova, Marketing and Regulatory Programs, who provided remarks on behalf of Secretary Vilsack.

The keynote speaker was Maria Contreras-Sweet, administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). A first generation Mexican immigrant who came to the United States at the age of 5, Contreras-Sweet was nurtured by others, especially her mother, who worked in a poultry processing plant to support a family of seven.

From a past in which nurturing was coupled with hard work and determination, the day-to-day actions of Contreras-Sweet created a future of success. Today, Contreras-Sweet is one of three Hispanics

serving on President Barack Obama's second-term cabinet.

In her remarks, Contreras-Sweet emphasized the importance of the present day actions by the SBA to couple civil rights with market rights and economic empowerment so that everyone in America can succeed.

Recognizing the contributions of Hispanics to American society, particularly Hispanic contributions to American agriculture, USDA announced that it would name in honor of Cesar Chavez the second floor courtyard in USDA's South Building in Washington, D.C. Chavez was a Hispanic American farm worker, civil rights activist and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The courtyard will be dedicated in 2015 on Chavez's birthday, March 31.

Also at the ceremony was Chavez's granddaughter, Christine Chavez, a USDA employee in the the department's Office of Advocacy and Outreach where she serves as program lead for Farmworker Coordination.

Celebrated each year from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15, Hispanic Heritage Month is a special emphasis period which provides an opportunity for all Americans to recognize and celebrate the culture and heritage of the more than 54 million Hispanic-Americans in the United States and their contributions to our nation and our shared values and goals.

IFORC

... Continued from page 1

causing illnesses and the food production and distribution systems that are helping it spread.

To increase public awareness of foodborne illness outbreaks, the IFORC Communications Workgroup is working to boost interagency and external communications. One of the Communications Workgroup's main tasks is to increase understanding of each agency's opportunities and challenges when communicating with the public in regards to foodborne illnesses.

To bridge the understanding gap, members of the media/communications sections of each agency participated in a daylong orientation to learn about each other's processes pertaining to communicating foodborne illness outbreaks and

to identify opportunities, challenges and better techniques for collaborating on communications with the public.

"Often when coordinating messaging with another agency, it can seem like you've sent your document into a black box," said Doug Karas, a press officer at FDA's Coordinated Outbreak Response and Evaluation Network. "This meeting opened up that box and gave us all an understanding of the processes our fellow communicators deal with. This, in itself, will help me give them information they need when we work together."

The Communications Workgroup is also working on a project aimed at expanding communications to non-governmental associations and state public information officers that focus on food safety. Utilizing the right contacts in areas will prove invaluable in delivering proper food safety messages where and when an outbreak is identified.

Improving Field Connectivity

By Jennifer Dallis, OCIO
Phone: (202) 418-8800

OCIO has been working with national network providers to improve field connectivity at thousands of plants throughout the United States and its territories. This means stronger signals, more reliable connections and the capability for faster speeds. What field employees will see is the option to shift from evolution-data optimized (EVDO) broadband cards to mobile wireless hot spot (MiFi) devices.

MiFi's operate using higher fourth generation (4G) network speeds, where available, and can support multiple laptops simultaneously. These devices have improved reception for many employees who have difficulty finding strong signals in their workplaces because of physical obstructions. MiFi devices can be placed in areas where data reception is of higher quality because they do not need to be physically connected to the laptop. This will significantly improve network connectivity.

OCIO can order MiFi devices from multiple vendors to allow for the selection of the preferred network carrier for your location. MiFi devices are typically assigned on an individual basis and need to be requested through your district or program office.

If you have an EVDO device, it will need to be returned to OCIO or the program office representative once the new MiFi device is received.

OCIO looks forward to continuing to provide new technology to meet your connectivity needs.

FSAB Reviews State Meat and Poultry Programs Annually

By Andy Smith, OIEA
Phone: (402) 344-5053

The Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) and the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA) provide for FSIS to cooperate with state agencies in developing and administering state meat and poultry inspection (MPI) programs.

Currently, 27 states have their own meat and poultry inspection programs. These states are audited annually by OIEA's Federal State Audit Branch (FSAB), which is responsible for verifying that MPI programs are operating "at least equal to" FSIS' program.

The annual audits start each November with data and supporting information submitted by each state, which demonstrates and explains the totality of their inspection program. The data and supporting information submitted by states falls into seven specific components: 1) statutory authority and food safety regulations; 2) inspection; 3) product sampling; 4) staffing and training; 5) humane handling; 6) non-food safety consumer protection; and 7) compliance. The data is then compared to FSIS policies and procedures to make a determination if the state is meeting

the "at least equal to" standard required by the FMIA and PPIA. If the answer is yes, the FSAB auditor will need to document how they came to that decision. The documentation for each state can be extensive.

When the data and supporting information for each state is determined to be "at least equal to," a percentage of states are scheduled for an on-site audit. Each state should have an on-site audit performed at least every 3 years. During the audit, the FSAB auditor will observe establishment and state program employees, humane handling practices, HACCP and sanitation procedures, facilities, etc. If a problem or noncompliance is observed, they note how the state's inspection personnel resolve the issue. The way the state MPI program deals with regulatory noncompliance during the audit is a critical factor that is assessed in making the "at least equal to" determination.

An examination of records from the state headquarters office are also part of the on-site audit, and a more in-depth review of laboratory sampling, staffing, training and in-commerce compliance investigations and activities takes place. This also allows the FSAB

auditor to sit down with the state MPI program officials to discuss how they verify that all aspects of their program are being executed and carried out as intended. During these interviews, state MPI program managers and compliance officers can explain the SOPs and management controls they use to ensure their program is "at least equal to" federal requirements.

FSAB auditors may then determine that the state MPI program is "at least equal to," "not at least equal to" or a decision may be deferred. If the state program is determined to be "not at least equal to," FSIS will be required to designate the state and take over inspection authority in all state-inspected establishments. Designating a state program would require a final decision by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. If the decision is deferred, the state will need to provide more information or make changes to their program before it can be determined it meets federal requirements.

FSAB publishes a summary report and individual reports for each state MPI program at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/inspection/state-inspection-and-cooperative-agreements/reviews-of-state-programs.

New Supervisor Training Pilot

By Dr. Gregory Brookhouser, OOEET
Phone: (301) 504-3370

FSIS' New Supervisor Training Pilot (NSTP) was held in Alexandria, Va., August 11-22, with 21 participants in attendance. This consecutive 2-week pilot was designed in alignment with OPM's training mandates and the USDA New Supervisor Training Standards.

The goals of the NSTP are to prepare all new FSIS supervisors for an ever-changing work environment and offer an opportunity for supervisors from across the country to learn together and share experiences with each other in support of the *One Team, One Purpose* concept. Through an experiential training process, NSTP participants increased their self-awareness and developed new knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills to deal with performance issues, improve performance and productivity, conduct performance appraisals and mentor and coach employees within a new context of supervision.

For questions about the program or future sessions, contact the NSTP manager at gregory.brookhouser@fsis.usda.gov.



Photo contributed by Duane Robinson, OOEET

Pictured are NSTP participants and distinguished guests. Seated, from left: Deputy Administrator Philip Derfler, Administrator Alfred Almanza, OOEET AA Michael Watts and Dr. Greg Brookhouser, NSTP manager. Second row: Julie Harmon, Matt Nowicki, Sharon Course, Jim Miller, Dr. Nicki Humphrey and David Hori. Third row: Dr. William Okeke, Dr. Kelly Mowell, Dr. Judy Hill, Dr. Jena Highkin and Dr. Carter Hounsel. Fourth row: Dr. Philip Stanley, Melvin Mitchell, Dr. Craig Hummel, Dr. Courtney Baldwin and Dr. Megan Simon. Back row: Michael Dols, Dr. Jeffrey Baravik, Dr. Brian Stones, Eshael Johnson and Jeremy Palmer.

Workers Compensation

By Samilya Zurawski, OM
Phone: 1-800-370-3747

The Workers' Compensation Branch (WCB) processes about 800 injury or illness claims annually in accordance with Office of Workers' Compensation Program (OWCP) regulations. WCB strives to ensure that all agency employees who experience work-related injuries or illnesses receive the support and guidance they need to submit their claims and receive compensation and medical benefits. FSIS spends more than \$17 million each year to support OWCP claims.

Each year, FSIS investigates OWCP claims for reasons, such as:

- Providing potentially false or misleading information on various OWCP forms signed by the claimant.
- An employee, whose original claim was legitimate, has apparently extended an absence from work by providing false or misleading statements to a physician in order to obtain medically based work restrictions.

If the investigation determines that the claimant has provided false or misleading information, the result can be a disciplinary action or adverse action against the employee, up to and including removal. Employees may also face criminal prosecution.

Reminder: Employees are responsible for providing accurate and truthful information on OWCP forms and must sign a certification statement on all OWCP forms that the information, to the best of their knowledge, is true and accurate. In certifying, they acknowledge that they are aware that FSIS may pursue criminal prosecution for anyone providing false or inaccurate information or withholding information necessary to accurately adjudicate a claim.

If you suspect that an agency employee has filed a fraudulent claim for OWCP benefits or may be abusing the compensation system, please contact the WCB at 1-800-370-3747 (option 5).

Fraud Management

Donate to the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program

By Dwaynya Goodson, OM
Phone: (202) 720-8966

The Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP) is a government-wide program that encourages federal employees to assist each other in times of great need. It allows federal employees to donate annual leave for use by other federal employees who need it because of medical emergencies. Employees can voluntarily donate up to one-half of the annual leave that they will earn during the leave year to assist approved applicants.

Eligible applicants can take advantage of the program benefits for either a personal or family medical emergency. A request to become a leave recipient is not a request to be absent on leave, but is a potential alternative to remain in a pay status while out for a medical emergency.

To be eligible for assistance through the VLTP, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Must be a current federal employee.
- Must obtain approval from supervisor to be absent from work due to the medical emergency for which they are applying.
- Must be experiencing a personal or family medical emergency that results in serious financial hardship for

the employee because he/she has insufficient leave to cover the absence.

In order to apply to the VLTP, employees must provide:

- A completed form AD-1046, Leave Transfer Program - Recipient Application. The form must be signed by their supervisor.
- A personal statement that briefly describes the medical emergency.
- A signed medical document that explains the medical emergency, states the estimated duration of the medical emergency and is signed by a doctor.
 - ◇ If the employee is experiencing a family medical emergency, Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) documentation will be accepted as sufficient medical records.

Further instructions, forms and a listing of approved recipients are available on *InsideFSIS* at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/index.jsp>. In the "I Want To" box, select "Access Public Folders." Then click on the "Personnel" folder and select "Leave Transfer Program."

For more information, contact OM's Employment, Classification and Compensation Branch at (202) 720-6617.

Finding Balance is a Daily Challenge

By Jodi Hallstrom, OM
Phone: 1-800-370-3747, Ext. 8597

Getting all the moving parts of your life to work together smoothly is tough. Just when it feels like you've got everything in synch, something can change and suddenly you're out of balance. Finding balance is a challenge that everyone faces and requires flexibility and the willingness to re-examine how you're spending your time to better support your goals.

Signs that you're getting out of balance can include difficulty concentrating or feeling angry, sad, guilty, or frustrated. Developing a strategy for better balance can help.

Develop a Plan

- Keep your goals realistic. Focus on things you know you can accomplish and learn to respectfully say "no" so you're not over-scheduled.
- Drop activities that sap time and energy. Exclude things that don't help your career or personal life.
- Schedule downtime for family, friends and activities that help you recharge.

Coping Strategies

- **Share** your feelings about upcoming changes with friends and loved ones for new ideas, support and feedback.
- **Remain hopeful** about a positive outcome and remind yourself that you have the ability to cope with transitions.
- **Manage stress** that can drain you mentally and physically. Keep yourself healthy with exercise, a balanced diet and enough sleep. Take breaks throughout your day to stretch, refresh and shake off tension. Try meditation, progressive muscle relaxation or deep breathing to relax.

The Employee Assistance Program and WorkLife4You can help. Call **1-800-222-0364** (TTY: 1-888-262-7848) or go online at www.foh4you.com and www.worklife4you.com for free and confidential referrals for counseling, child or elder care and more, **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**.

(Information courtesy of HHS Federal Occupational Health.)

Jackson District Goes Green



Dr. Kermit Harvey holds one of the donated incubators.



Photos contributed by Dr. Pamela Abney, OFO

From left: Dr. David Thompson, Willis Wright III, Dr. Armia Tawadrous, Dr. Paul Resweber and Dr. Pamela Abney.

By Dr. Pamela Abney, OFO
Phone: (601) 988-8765

The Greening Initiative is alive and well in the Jackson district—they've been recycling old equipment to benefit education.

Instead of sending obsolete equipment to landfills, DVMS Dr. Kermit Harvey recently donated 12 obsolete agency in-plant incubators to local schools.

With the assistance of SRMA Christina Walker-Travis, Dr. Harvey began collecting the incubators on his rounds. He then cleaned and disinfected the incubators and found thermometers for them. He even found owner's manuals online and printed copies. In a few cases, he wrote microbiological teaching protocols for requesting schools. DDM David Thompson and other local in-plant personnel participated as well. (USDA Form AD-107, Report of Transfer or Other Disposition or Construction of Property, should be completed for each such donation.)

The group also recently gave a PowerPoint presentation that described the mission of the Greening Initiative according to FSIS Green Initiative Notice 31-12. During the presentation, EIAO Dr. Pamela Abney and EIAO Willis Wright III provided the group with handouts and shared information on recycling opportunities. The committee also provided some suggestions on going green at home.

To find out more about the Greening Initiative at USDA and FSIS, go to <http://greening.usda.gov/> or email GoGreen@fsis.usda.gov.

In Memoriam

We are sad to announce the recent passing of a member of our FSIS family.

Delphine Hyman, a Correspondence Control Officer in OPACE's Executive Correspondence and Issues Management Staff, passed away September 13, 2014. Hyman, age 54, had been with FSIS for 16 years. She is survived by two daughters, one son and seven grandchildren.

Sept. 4 Town Hall Meeting Transcript

If you weren't able to attend the Administrator's Town Hall meeting on Sept. 4, the transcript and audio file have been posted to *InsideFSIS* at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/townhall>.

National Cholesterol Education Month

By Kerrie Tao, OM
Phone: (202) 403-0422

Cholesterol, at normal levels, it is an essential substance for the body's normal functioning. However, if levels in the blood are too high, it becomes a silent danger that can put you at risk of a heart attack.

For more information on cholesterol, knowing your cholesterol level and simple steps you can take to lower your level and achieve a health balance in your life, check out the links below:

- www.cdc.gov/features/cholesterolawareness
- www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hbc
- www.webmd.com/cholesterol-management/ss/slideshow-lowering-cholesterol

More information on health issues impacted by your cholesterol level, go to <http://millionhearts.hhs.gov/index.html>.

Protocols to Address Emergencies or Imminent Danger in Your Workplace

- ☑ Stay calm
- ☑ Find a safe place (protect yourself)
- ☑ Call 911
- ☑ Call private or local security personnel
- ☑ Call your supervisor
- ☑ Call OIG at 1-800-424-9121 if there is criminal activity

Workplace Violence Prevention & Response Program

Hotline:

1-877-987-3747

Employee Assistance Program (EAP):

1-800-222-0364

(TTY: 888-262-7848)

E-mail:

workplaceviolenceprevention@fsis.usda.gov

www.FOH4you.com

Document all incidents of assault, harassment, interference, intimidation or threat per Directive 4735.4.

POLICY UPDATES <<<

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/index.

- Directive 7120.1, Rev. 20, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry and Egg Products
- Notice 43-14, FSIS Sampling of Raw Ground Beef Products for Nutrient Content
- Notice 48-14, Pathology Sample Reports Delivered Only Electronically

Administrative issuances were also published. They are at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=policy>.

- Notice 44-14, Submitting FSIS Form 5110-1, Services Rendered
- Notice 45-14, Submission of Fiscal Year 2015 Renewal Orders
- Notice 46-14, Performance Awards
- Notice 47-14, FSIS Standardized Evaluation Model for Non-Bargaining Unit Employees

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.



Read and Join in a Discussion with Al Almanza

To check out the Administrator's Blog, go to *InsideFSIS* at <https://connections.usda.gov/blogs/FSIS/>.

Sept. 6

Perdue Food LLC, a Salisbury, Md., establishment, recalled approximately 720 pounds of raw, fresh chicken products because they may have experienced a processing deviation in temperature during production. The products were produced Sept. 3 and shipped to a New York distributor for resale and foodservice use in Connecticut, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

Sept. 12

Interbay Food Company, LLC, a Woodinville, Wash., establishment, recalled approximately 4,820 pounds of pork Banger-style sausage products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen, milk, which was not declared on the products' label. The products were cooked in a Redmond, Wash., restaurant and sold to the general public. The products were produced on March 17, March 24, May 5, June 2, June 30, July 15, July 29, Aug. 26 and Sept. 8. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

Sept. 12

Jerky By Art, an Albuquerque, N.M., establishment, recalled an undetermined amount of beef jerky products because they were produced without the benefit of inspection. The products also contain wheat and anchovies, known allergens that were not declared on the product label. All products produced prior to Sept. 12 were recalled. The products were sold primarily over the internet. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

Sept. 23

Monogram Comfort Foods, a Bristol, Ind., establishment, recalled approximately 607 pounds of uncured beef corn dogs because they may have experienced temperature abuse in the distribution chain. The products were produced on April 21 and distributed in Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating this product.

Sept. 25

Foster Farms, a Farmerville, La., establishment, recalled approximately 39,747 pounds of frozen pre-cooked chicken due to possible contamination with *Listeria monocytogenes*. The product was produced on Aug. 5 and shipped to retail warehouse locations in California, Texas, Utah and Washington. No reports of illnesses associated with eating this products.

Sept. 25

Caviness Beef Packers, a Hereford, Texas, establishment, recalled approximately 23,100 pounds of beef trimmings products that may be contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7. The products were produced on Aug. 14 and Aug. 20 and shipped to fast food restaurants and retail distribution locations in Texas. No reports of illnesses associated with eating these product.

Sept. 27

Delicious Beef Jerky, LLC, an Albuquerque, N.M., establishment, recalled 8 pounds of beef jerky products because they were marked and shipped without the benefit of inspection when they were produced under a retail exemption. The product was sold in small retail stores in the Albuquerque, N.M., area. No reports of illnesses associated with eating this product.

Sept. 29

Sam Kane Beef Processors, LLC, a Corpus Christi, Texas establishment, recalled approximately 2,633 pounds of ground beef chub product that may be contaminated with foreign materials. The product was produced and packaged on Sept. 11 and sent to retail establishments in Texas for further processing. No injuries reported due to eating this product.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Volume
18

Number
10

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

October 2014

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

You can tell the stories of FSIS better than anyone! Send us your articles, photos and feedback. It's simple. Just prepare an article and include: who, what, when, where, why and how. Clear your article through your program area. Then send your article to Beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Candid photos preferred. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



FACES OF FOOD SAFETY

In this month's Faces of Food Safety, FSIS spotlights CSI Michael Rivera from OFO. To read about Rivera and his 50 years in protecting public health, go to page 3.

Photo contributed by Linda Heckler, OFO

Your Voice, Your Choice: FSIS is Listening

By Arriell Garner and Cecilia Matthews, OM, and Edward Stoker, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-4086, (202) 720-2384 and (202) 720-9113

Earlier this year, you probably received several emails, read *Beacon* articles or participated in town hall meetings to discuss the 2014 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). Now, employees are wondering "What's the latest buzz about the 2014 FEVS?" Well, according to Deputy Administrator Phil Derfler, "FSIS is listening to what its employees are saying through the FEVS," and we are excited to provide employees with an update and share some of the things we are doing to show our employees that we are listening.

While the 2014 results will be announced later this year, on May 30, 2014, Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza shared the 2014 FSIS Employee Engagement Plan with employees in response to concerns expressed through the 2013 FEVS. Led by FSIS Transformation Officer Ron Banegas, the Cultural Transformation Workgroup comprised of members from throughout the

agency, both at headquarters and in the field, developed the action plan. The areas identified for improvement were placed into 5 categories, including: onboarding/mission comprehension; employee recognition; career development; leadership training; and leadership accountability.

Although the 2013 survey results showed some areas that need improvement, we are proud to note that FSIS ranked in the top third both within USDA and among all other small federal agencies. We hope to increase our ranking in the upcoming years and will use the 2014 FEVS results to gauge the impact of the action items identified in the Employee Engagement Plan.

Beginning with the 2014 survey, FSIS particularly wants to capture the responses of in-plant personnel, so the agency increased the number

Continued on page 11 ...

CFC Kicks Off

FSIS kicked off this year's Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) with the hope of making a positive impact in the lives of families and organizations through employees' charitable donations. This year's theme, "Make it Possible," embodies the spirit that each person's personal contribution can provide limitless possibilities. There are over 24,000 CFC charities that federal employees can choose to support. The campaign runs through Dec. 15. Each program area has assigned keyworkers who can provide information, help with pledges and answer questions. To learn more about CFC, visit www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=USDA_CFC.

The Beacon is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Office for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

Nov. issue – due October 1
Dec. issue – due November 1
Jan. issue – due December 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to e-mail.

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN



Al Almanza

The new fiscal year presents a good opportunity to renew our commitment to innovation and success in service to our public health mission. For the agency to move forward on the path of innovation and success, we must continue to focus on being consistent and uniform—from headquarters, to the districts, to the establishments and everywhere in between.

We need to also focus on our goals. To achieve those goals, the entire team should follow our shared values.

Our values are reflected in how we do our job, how we present ourselves, how we support one another and in everything we do. Values like commitment ... competency ... integrity ... accountability ... and respect for self and others. Michael Rivera, featured in this issue's *Faces of Food Safety* column, certainly represents these kinds of values. His 50 years of service to the federal government, 47 of which are with our agency, and his belief in mentoring and coaching others, speak volumes.

I encourage you to think about ways we can be more consistent and uniform in our approach to achieving the FSIS mission. If you have thoughts on things that will help you be more effective and efficient in your job, please share them.

The Federal Employment Viewpoint Survey mentioned in our feature article is just one way of sharing your views, but there are others – both formal and informal. Another way is through a simple email – any employee should feel free to send suggestions about innovation or agency improvements to employeefeedback@fsis.usda.gov.

I appreciate the dialogue I have had with you all this past fiscal year – most recently at the inspection and audit officers' (EIAO) conferences held in Dallas – and I would like it to continue, as I do find it helpful. In an environment that recognizes and celebrates our differences, it is important that we share our perspectives.

Each of you has contributed to FSIS' success in the past, and I know you will continue to contribute to FSIS' success in the future. We all bring to the table our experiences and skills to make this agency better. Collectively, that is powerful.

As we implement new initiatives, my respect for each of you and what you do remains constant. Even though I am now the Deputy Under Secretary, my commitment to support each of you has not changed.

As always, I encourage each of you to remain innovative and to stand together; committed to shared values that will move each of us and our agency forward.

Read and Join in a Discussion with Al Almanza



To check out the Deputy Under Secretary's Blog, go to *InsideFSIS* at <https://connections.usda.gov/blogs/FSIS/>.

Michael Rivera, 50 Years of Federal Service

By Felicia Thompson, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2012 report, the average American worker stays at his or her job for 4.6 years. I guess that means Michael Rivera is anything but average. Rivera has been protecting public health as a civil servant for 50 years and has no plans to stop.



Inspectors Are Like the Police

"I came to FSIS in 1967—that's 47 years for those who do not have a calculator handy—and I feel strongly about the role that I and FSIS have played in keeping people safe," said Rivera, an OFO consumer safety inspector in the Dallas district. "I know that my presence in processing establishments is needed in order for plants to comply with FSIS' food safety regulations. I tell people that I feel like a policeman because the police are out in the public to make sure people who are driving vehicles have their driver's licenses and follow traffic laws. If an officer sees someone committing a violation or is not in compliance, he issues a ticket. I say that inspectors are doing the same thing. We are observing and reviewing records for compliance or, in other words, making sure that companies are doing the right things to ensure a safe food product. We take action and issue noncompliance reports when we see violations that could or do cause foodborne illness," he continues.

Protecting Public Health for a Half Century

Prior to joining FSIS, Rivera served in the U.S. Army where he trained as a food inspector. He recalls that time very proudly and thinks of what it meant to him and to those he indirectly touched through his service. "I was a 19-year-old kid stationed in Puerto Rico for 2 1/2 half years, responsible for soldiers and their families," Rivera recalled. "In retrospect, I was responsible for safeguarding our nation. Sick soldiers can't fight!"

Rivera said he learned about FSIS and its job opportunities from a sergeant who worked with FSIS' meat inspectors

back on the U.S. mainland. "He would tell every young soldier going back home to apply with FSIS for employment," he said. "Five years later, Rivera was reading a magazine and noticed an ad for U.S. government employment. One of the jobs listed was for a meat inspector. "I took the Civil Service Exam (a test required at the time to obtain federal employment) and had to take and pass courses in the proper and safe handling of red meats. The rest is history," he said.

Receiving the right type of training has always been essential for Rivera's high job performance. "I've been a successful inspector because of all the training that FSIS has provided me over the years," he said. "When I first came into the agency, I received training on slaughtering and processing of red meats. But over the years as regulations changed, I had training in SSOPs, HACCP, food processing and even on how to use a computer," he said.

Each One, Teach One

Rivera believes being mentored early in his career by a more seasoned inspector led to his job success and longevity. "When I first started at FSIS, I was told that I wasn't progressing fast enough and was going to be let go if I didn't improve," he explained. "I was partnered with an experienced inspector who took me under his wing. He taught me the art of keeping a sharp knife and understanding and documenting FSIS' food safety regulations."

Rivera has been mentor and coach to many new field employees. "I train the new employees in the best practices I've learned over the years because this job has been extremely rewarding to me," he added. "I want them to have a long, successful career in FSIS as well," he said.

"I have gotten and still get a lot of satisfaction knowing that in performing my duties, I am protecting consumers' health," Rivera concluded. "The consumer relies on FSIS for food safety, and I am proud to be a part of those efforts."

The Houston native has been married to his wife Stella for 49 years and has 4 children.

A Q&A SERIES:

Carol Blake on OPACE



How does your program area support the agency's mission?

The Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education (OPACE) supports FSIS' mission by ensuring that all internal and external stakeholders receive timely, relevant and accurate information related to the agency's work. On a day-to-day basis, one of our greatest contributions to the mission is highlighting and defending the hard work of our field staff as they work to protect the public. We convey these messages through a wide range of channels to Congress, the media, industry, consumer advocacy groups, consumers and FSIS employees. We oversee such things as the FSIS website and Twitter feed, as well as promote safe food handling through the Food Safety Discovery Zone, Meat and Poultry Hotline and online chats.

What is the most exciting (or significant) initiative or effort that your program area is working on right now?

The American public is very interested in talking about food right now – where it comes from, how it is made and the men and women who work to make that food supply safe. This makes FSIS and the work we do part of a dynamic public conversation. On any given day, we can be simultaneously responding to a congressional inquiry regarding catfish, preparing and distributing a recall release, pitching a blog about humane handling to media, responding to calls from constituents regarding labeling, educating kids at a county fair on safe food handling practices, responding to FOIA requests from investigative reporters, preparing executive correspondence in response to inquiries from a stakeholder organization, making adjustments to ensure our website functions properly, writing articles for *The Beacon* to help keep staff informed and more!

What is the greatest challenge your program area faces right now?

Spreading the word. Ten years ago, we didn't have the extensive use of Twitter, Facebook and new media that we see today. The American public has changed the way that they consume and digest information. This is a big challenge because it means that OPACE has to keep modernizing, adapting and evolving to effectively communicate. Just as our inspectors work to ensure that food safety inspection aligns with existing and emerging trends, our communicators are working to ensure that we embrace existing and emerging trends in the way people communicate.

What is your future vision for your program area?

Since prior planning prevents poor performance, we continually plan so we are prepared for the future. In OPACE, our future vision includes: new and improved systems for broadcasting news; increased use of social media to reach more mobile consumers; increased services to diverse segments of the population; improved systems and procedures for tracking all outreach and services; increased interagency collaboration when communicating with the public regarding recalls; and a talented and hard-working staff like the one in place now which is making our future vision a reality.

What are some ways in your program area that staff can provide suggestions or raise questions or concerns with you?

It is essential that employees be able to approach their supervisors and management team with suggestions, questions or concerns. Alternatively, I encourage staff to express their suggestions, questions or concerns through other channels as well. OPACE will continue to conduct its own town hall meetings and surveys. My door is always open should any employee have a concern that they feel needs to be shared directly with me.



Photo contributed by Dr. Angela McIntyre, OFO

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Family and members of the Cumming and Carrollton circuits gathered on Sept. 27 at a local restaurant in Alpharetta, Ga., to congratulate FLS Michael Phillips on his recent retirement. Phillips worked 38 years for FSIS. Seated, from left: Robert Daniel, Dr. Angela McIntyre and Dr. Dava Rossom. Middle row: Ann Dee, Lucille Baliles-Carrier, Ellen Phillips, Michael Phillips, Dr. Anitra Famber and Steve Swanson. Back row: Dr. Ross Cowart, Linda Wehunt, Dr. Eddy Carter, Dr. Mehdi Abedi, Dawn Reyna, Moynul Chowdry and Steve Wehunt.

New Poultry Inspection System

NPIS Notes

FSIS Notices 50-14 and 51-14

Have you seen the recent publication of FSIS Notices 50-14 and 51-14 for Modernization of Poultry Slaughter? Both issuances were implemented starting Oct. 20, 2014. They provide instructions to inspection program personnel (IPP) on how to verify compliance with new provisions in the poultry modernization rule. Follow the links provided to take you to the new policy notices.

- **Notice 50-14 – Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection: Verification of Online Reprocessing (OLR) and Offline Reprocessing (OFLR) Antimicrobial Intervention Systems:** Discusses changes under the final rule allowing establishments to reprocess accidentally contaminated poultry using OLR and OFLR if FSIS has approved the parameters for use of the antimicrobial intervention system, and the establishment incorporates procedures for OLR or OFLR into its Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) plan or Sanitation standard operating procedures (Sanitation SOP) or other prerequisite program. To view the notice, go to <http://go.usa.gov/fr75>.
- **Notice 51-14 – Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection: Change in Chilling Requirements for Ready-to-Cook Poultry:** Discusses changes to the chilling regulations affecting all establishments that slaughter poultry other than ratites. These changes include the removal from the regulations of specific time and temperature requirements for the chilling of ready-to-cook (RTC) poultry and the requirement that poultry establishments develop, implement and maintain written procedures to prevent the outgrowth of pathogens on carcasses immediately after slaughter operations. To read the notice, go to <http://go.usa.gov/frAG>.

NPIS Q&A

Where can I go to find out what the New Poultry Inspection System is?

Thank you for your interest in the New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS). Information on NPIS and the final rule (Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection) can be found on the FSIS website at www.fsis.usda.gov/poultryinspection. In addition, the August 2014 issue of *The Beacon*, which can be found at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/beacon>, has a section that explains the new process in detail. Information about NPIS is included in the *Wednesday Newslines*, the agency's weekly informational newsletter.

NPIS Mailbox

FSIS has set up a mailbox for any employee inquiries about NPIS. The NPIS mailbox is a one-stop shop to find answers to questions regarding the new poultry inspection system. Whether there is a policy, procedure or system question regarding NPIS, you will get feedback to your question here.

All questions will be collected and triaged among four senior management officials, who will review them and provide responses in the shortest amount of time possible. All questions and responses will be tracked and used to assess the need to develop FAQs for posting on the web. If you have questions about NPIS, send them to askNPIS@fsis.usda.gov.

Voluntary Resume Writing and USAJobs Workshops

By Erasmo Nieves, OOEET
Phone: 1-800-336-3747

FSIS is committed to empowering employees with the training and tools needed to excel in their careers and encourage career development. Often the biggest hurdle in career advancement is figuring out how to write a good resume and apply for a job. OOEET recently offered voluntary workshops to help employees overcome those hurdles.

In September, 118 employees participated in voluntary workshops in Center, Texas; Gainesville, Ga.; and Fayetteville, N.C.; that provided guidance on how to write a resume and apply for a job through USAJobs. The day was divided into two sessions:

- **Resume Writing Workshop** (a.m. session): Trainees learned how to build a resume, identify their accomplishments and use a position description to develop or modify their resume.
- **USAJobs Search and Application Workshop** (p.m. session): Trainees worked on classroom computers to set up USAJobs accounts and build resumes with the assistance of an instructor, Human Resources and the Center for Learning.

Evaluations and feedback from the sessions was outstanding and the need for additional training was evident. Stay tuned for future workshops in your area.



Food inspectors attend a resume writing workshop in Center, Texas. Photo contributed by Dr. Rebecca Hairgrove, OFO.

FSIS Retirees: Sept. 15 - Oct. 15, 2014

*Thank you for your service and dedication
to public health.*

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Anwar, Muhammad, SVMO	Wyoming, MI	32
Blunt, Richard C., FI	Waterloo, IA	34
Chlarson, Thomas D., CSI	Pocatello, ID	32
Cleary, Junior W., FI	Wilkesboro, NC	15
Gates, Forrest L., CSI	Madison, NE	35
Hill, Joseph E., Scien. Advisor-Lab	Athens, GA	20
Hurlburt, Mark J., FI	Yankton, SD	28
Johnson, Lynda I., Prog. Anal.	Athens, GA	41
Jones, Willie J., FI	Nashville, AR	34
Kinleyside Jr., David A., SVMO	St. Henry, OH	26
Lapp, Denis C., CSI	Gallatin, TN	45
Mitchell, David F., SVMO	Girard, PA	13
Pence, Jimmy R., SVMO	Albertville, AL	36
Preul, Richard A., FI-S	Denison, IA	9
Preuss, Roxanne M., RMS	Lakewood, CO	30
Sprague, Claressa C., RMS	Dallas, TX	26
Stolts, Yvonne M., Civilian Pay Tech.	Minneapolis, MN	23
Waples Johnson, Judy F., HR Spec.	Houston, TX	36
Widdifield, Steven R., FI	Eastport, ID	34

KUDOS

ODIFP's Food Defense Assessment Staff (FDAS) would like to send kudos to the Alameda district office, specifically Dr. Yudhbir Sharma and his staff, for ongoing support of FSIS' food defense mission. District personnel helped coordinate and facilitate three site visits by an FDAS member on Sept. 9. Inspection program personnel from the Oakland and San Francisco circuits also provided valuable feedback to FDAS on the current status of the food defense program and recommendations for making future improvements. This feedback will help inform the future direction of food defense programs at FSIS. A special thank you goes to Dr. Sheryl Beckett for taking time out of her busy schedule to facilitate site visits and discussions with personnel. Thank you for your wonderful hospitality!

If you would like to thank, congratulate or give a shout out to someone in FSIS, send your kudo to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. You can also place a kudo on *InsideFSIS*. Just email it to intranet.manager@fsis.usda.gov. Keep your kudo to a few sentences.

FSIS Pilots Supervisor Refresher Training Program

By Thomas Walsh, OOEET
Phone: (202) 205-1258

The 3-month Supervisor Refresher Training Pilot concluded on Aug 15. The graduates, who had from 3 to more than 20 years of supervisor experience, were persistent, engaged and up for the challenges of the blended learning pilot that offered a mix of virtual and face-to-face training.

FSIS piloted the program targeting experienced supervisors with more than 3 years in their supervisory positions. FSIS will soon be expected to facilitate meaningful training opportunities for its 1,200 supervisors to meet the pending USDA requirement of delivering supervisor training once every 3 years. Future trainings will be announced in *Wednesday Newsline*.

For questions about the program, email thomas.walsh@fsis.usda.gov.



Photo contributed by Gordon Wilson, OOEET

Front row, from left: Program Manager Thomas Walsh, OOEET; Ty Whitener, OFO; Joseph Priore, OIEA; Joe Howell, OIEA; Carolyn Pearson, OFO; Alana Harkleroad, OFO; Sabrina Wiggins, OFO; Jana Bittner, OFO; Vicki Rubac, OFO; Jenna Sing, OFO; Beth Lehman, OFO; Michael Erickson, OCFO; and Calvin Rittenhouse, OFO. Middle row: Ronnie Dunn, OA; Adjunct Instructor Robin Amadei; Rita Kishore, OPPD; and Michelle Garner, OCFO. Back row: Johnny Henderson, OFO; Adjunct Instructor Dr. Michael Laibe; Karen Groff, OFO; William Cray Jr., OPHS; Samuel Peabody, OFO; Jennifer Kennedy, OFO; and Paulo Almeida, OA.

FSIS Supports NDEAM

By Mark Benedict, OPPD
Phone: (202) 205-7913

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) and this year's theme is "Employ-Expect-Empower." This year, FSIS held a nationwide empowerment activity on Oct. 21 that was attended by more than 150 FSIS employees nationwide.

A distinguished panel of FSIS and USDA employees with a variety of disabilities and in various stages of their careers presented to an audience in the Patriot Plaza III auditorium in Washington, D.C. The panel included: Nelson Clinch, ODIFP; Linda Kendrick, OFO; David Plumlee, USDA/OCIO; Michelle Clark, USDA/NRCS; Linda Whitmore, USDA/FAS; Tammie Ballard, OPPD; Tom Valluzzi, OM; and Suzette Rhodes, OPPD; with Mark Benedict, OPPD, serving as moderator.

The panel focused on the reality that disabilities can touch anyone, anywhere and at any time. The panel and the audience discussed best practices and strategies to **advance** and **retain** persons with disabilities after they are hired. The consensus reached was that hiring employees with disabilities is not enough. The agency must also **inspire** employees through opportunities, recognition and advancement if they are to be **retained**.

FSIS and USDA disability hiring goals for all new hires in 2014 and 2015 are 2 percent and 4 percent for persons

with "targeted" disabilities respectively. In 2015, 10 percent of all new hires must be persons with a "reportable" disability. While USDA and FSIS are hiring persons with disabilities, they leave at an even faster rate. If USDA and FSIS are to meet the very ambitious disability hiring goals set, a true team effort will be required – not just in October, but every day of the year.

The FSIS NDEAM activity team includes Jan Kunz, Linda Kendrick, Nelson Clinch and Mark Benedict. For more information and to share your ideas, contact Mark Benedict, FSIS DEPM, at (202) 205-7913 or mark.benedict@fsis.usda.gov or DisabilitySEPM@fsis.usda.gov.



Photo contributed by Jan Kunz, OA

From left: Mark Benedict, Tom Valluzzi and Nelson Clinch.

SNAPSHOTS



Denver District

At a career fair at Colorado State University, recruiters Dr. Angela McIntyre (left), OFO, Atlanta district, and HR Specialist Cecelia Matthews (right), OM, Washington, D.C., talked to attendees about careers in FSIS and handed out materials about the agency and various positions offered. Photo contributed by Dr. Angela McIntyre, OFO.

Denver District

CSIs Clayton Tanner (left) and Steven Elmer (right) represented FSIS at the Box Elder County Fair in Tremonton, Utah. They talked to visitors about their work, answered food safety questions and provided information about safe cooking temperatures, pathogens, preventing cross contamination and using a food thermometer. Photo contributed by Clayton Tanner OFO.



Alameda District

At the 40th Annual Meals on Wheels Convention and Expo in Scottsdale, Ariz., EIAO Randy Reece (left) and OIEA Investigator Michael Dunn (right) met with and provided food safety information to over 500 senior nutrition leaders from across North America. Photo contributed by Michael Dunn, OIEA.

FROM THE **FIELD**

Philadelphia District

The 2014 Feds Feed Families food drive in the New York City area wrapped up at the FSIS offices in Jamaica Queens on Sept. 22. Circuit employees collected over 500 pounds of food. Overall, the Philadelphia district donated 18,566 pounds.

Seated, from left: William Lawler, Marilu Ramirez-Suarez, Salah Ibrahim and Dr. Muhammad Qureshi. Back row: Bun Ma,

Tammy Dulude, Shirley Smith, Latricia Calhoun, Domenic Pavone, Dr. Lynn Craine, Darain Hazlet, Karina Hazim and Michael Holly. Photo contributed by Tammy Dulude, OFO.



Raleigh District

Dr. Ahmad Jilani (left) recently recruited at a job fair at the Technical and Community College in Wilmington, Del. Over 800 students attended the fair. While there, Dr. Jilani had the opportunity to meet Senator Chris Coons of Delaware (right). Photo contributed by Dr. Ahmad Jilani, OFO.

Springdale District

For Feds Feed Families, the FSIS inspection staff at Est. 13456P in Pine Bluff, Ark., collected and donated 100 pounds of food to the Neighbor to Neighbor organization. From left: Lynette Moore, Lisa Robinson, Tameka Banks, Phyllis Walker, Hakeem Hassanpour and Carolyn Grant.

Not pictured: Pat Walls, Daphne Thompson, John Willis and Rogers Grant. Photo contributed by Alicia Hickman, OFO.



Field Service Laboratory Customer Survey Results

By Kay Stapleton, OPHS
Phone: (706) 546-2379

The results from the 2014 Customer Survey are in!

- The survey response rate was 59 percent.
- The majority of responses came from OFO.
- Overall, the majority of respondents were satisfied with the various services each lab provides.
- For most questions in the survey, the majority of respondents were "Very Satisfied" (the highest rating) with lab services.

However, there is room for improvement. A workgroup, with representatives from the Laboratory Quality Assurance Staff (LQAS) and laboratory staff, was formed to review the survey results/comments and provide suggestions for improvement. The workgroup looked first at LIMS-Direct (Laboratory Information Management System-Direct), which is maintained by FSIS personnel. Here are some examples of things being researched to assist inspectors:

- How can LIMS-Direct be improved to provide needed information for inspectors, such as mailbox addresses for laboratory supplies and addresses for laboratory inquiries?

- How can it be made more user friendly?
- What, if any, laboratory documents, such as discard codes and sample supply charts, can be posted to assist inspectors?

LIMS-Direct personnel were also asked to provide wording for "Frequently Ask Questions" rather than a FAQ icon on the LIMS-Direct site. This has been done and, hopefully, it will assist inspectors.

One frequent comment on the survey was how to ship back unnecessary supplies. The committee has asked LIMS-Direct to post this information on the site under "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)."

Laboratory personnel realize how much time, effort and money it takes to submit a sample for testing. While it is important that the sample be analyzed, if the condition of the sample when it is received affects the credibility of the analytical result, the sample must be discarded. The committee has proposed that there be an article on sample receipts and discards in a future issue of *The Beacon*.

LQAS and Field Service Laboratories would like to thank everyone who completed the survey. The survey lets us know in what areas we are providing good service, where improvement is needed and areas of concern.

FSIS Pilots Escalade Leadership Development Program

By Anthony L. Thompson, OOEET
Phone: (202) 720-6238

On Sept. 12, 26 highly motivated FSIS employees graduated from the FSIS Escalade Leadership Development Program. The agency piloted the competitive program for GS-9 through GS-13 employees in support of the USDA's cultural transformation initiative and the "one team, one purpose" concept. FSIS Escalade was designed in alignment with OPM Executive Core Competencies (Leading Change, Leading People and Results Driven); the FSIS Strategic Plan's Goal 7 – to empower employees with the training, resources and tools to enable success in protecting public health; and the Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework. It focuses on designing, identifying and developing plans to ensure the agency has highly qualified employees capable of filling key or critical organizational positions in the future. For information about the FY 2015 program, email anthony.thompson2@fsis.usda.gov.



Photo contributed by Duane Robinson, OOEET

Seated, from left: Susan Isberg, EIAO; Dr. Jessica Forshee, OFO; Dr. Kinsey Naylor, OFO; Escalade Program Manager Anthony L. Thompson, OOEET; Margaret O'Keefe, OPHS; Sabrina King, OFO; Geneva Dennis, OFO; and Lisa Wesner, OFO. Standing: Stephanie Calkins, OFO; Luis Delgadillo, OPACE; Dr. Jennifer Sinatra, OFO; Louis Tate, OFO; Dr. Michelle Kleppek, OFO; Joseph Woltz III, OFO; Teresa Yenovkian, OIEA; Shaun Smith, OIEA; Dr. Danah Vetter, OFO; Joseph Ndungu, OFO; Sharon Thomas, OPHS; Dr. Stanley Blackwell, OFO; Robert Witte, OFO; Angelina Schile, OFO; Corey Lyons, OCFO; Kimberley Smith, OFO; Andrew Pugliese, OPPD; Mindy Orr, OA; and Ugonta Abengowe, OFO.

Connect to Network for Security Updates and Patches

By Leigh Ann Acree, OCIO
Phone: (202) 418-8816

Cyber criminals are always on the search for security holes to exploit and gain entry to your personal data. To prevent this, you need to allow updates and patches to be installed.

Updates

An update is a widely released and frequent software that contains additions to a product's definition database. Definition databases are often used to detect objects that have specific attributes, such as malicious codes, phishing websites or junk mail.

Software updates, whether big or small, are important. Like

medical checkups for our health or maintenance for cars, software updates are necessary to keep our computer systems safe and operating at peak performance. Updates fix security loopholes, remove old and unprotected features, update drivers to increase software efficiency and protect against a variety of online threats.

Patches

A patch is a piece of software designed to update a computer program or supporting data to fix or improve it. This includes fixing security vulnerabilities and other bugs and improving usability or performance. Its purpose is to push out fixes to security vulnerabilities that may occur to create

a safe computer environment.

FSIS Directive 1306.6, System and Information Integrity, states that system users must be connected to the FSIS network **at least one time per week for approximately 60 minutes** to install security patches and updates. So, the next time you receive an email notification of a deployment of a security patch or update, please remember to keep your laptop and desktop computers connected to the FSIS network for at least 1 hour to allow it to install.

If you have questions, email the FSIS Security Operation Center at OCIOSecurityOperationsCenter@fsis.usda.gov or call (202) 708-8755.

FEVS

... Continued from page 1

of in-plant personnel who received the survey and provided them with paper versions of the survey. Increasing involvement of in-plant employees will help make survey results representative of the entire FSIS workforce.

Additionally, Deputy Under Secretary Almanza stated that the 2014 FSIS Employee Engagement Plan, formerly known as the FEVS Action Plan, was developed to identify ways to improve employee engagement and satisfaction through deliberate and effective organizational communications. As Almanza pointed out, the plan features key deliverables for the agency in general, as well as specific action items to be accomplished at the program level through fiscal year 2015.

"FSIS is committed to engaging all staff with the goal of improving the FSIS workplace, be it in a plant or in an

office," noted Banegas. The 2014 Employee Engagement Plan is bearing fruit. Following the plan, FSIS is increasing employee engagement opportunities, such as town hall meetings, encouraging the use of different vehicles through which supervisors can recognize the work of people who report to them and peers can recognize each other for a job well done. The Employee Engagement Plans calls for the development of non-monetary and quarterly awards programs; a new orientation guide; a customizable onboarding experience; an agency-wide mentoring program; and new accountability measures for managers and supervisors, such as 360 degree assessments.

So, if you get a FEVS survey, please be sure to respond. Take advantage of the opportunity the survey presents for you to voice your opinions and have your voice heard.

"OUR MISSION IN ACTION" Photos Needed

Do you have a good photo of our mission in action? The agency is looking to build its FSIS image library and needs photos that show what we do as a public health agency to ensure that the nation's meat, poultry and egg products are safe, wholesome and correctly labeled and packaged. Send your images to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

- Photos must be high quality resolution—300 ppi or higher. Size: 5x7 or 8x10.
- Provide a caption explaining what is being done in the photo.
- If there are people in the photo, provide a signed USDA Consent/Release Form, available on *InsideFSIS* at <http://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/DocumentViewerServlet?filename=FSISIntranet/News/Documents/fsisprdb20130730023735.doc>, from each person.



Federal Benefits Open Season

Health Dental/Vision Flexible Spending Accounts

Enroll ► Make Changes ► Cancel ► Renew FSA

www.opm.gov/openseason



November 10 - December 8

www.opm.gov/openseason

Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB)

Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP)

Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS)

This year's Federal Benefits Open Season for health benefits, dental and vision insurance and flexible spending accounts runs from **Nov. 10 to Dec. 8, 2014**. Open Season gives federal employees and retirees the opportunity to review their plan choices and make changes for the following year. It also allows eligible employees to enroll for coverage.

You have until **Dec. 8** to make changes to the following programs participating in Open Season:

- **FEHB:** You can enroll in, change or cancel an existing enrollment in a health plan. If you don't do anything, your enrollment will automatically continue. For premium rates, go to www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/plan-information/premiums/#url=Premiums. FEHB health insurance brochures are available at www.opm.gov/FEHBbrochures. For form SF-2809, Health Benefits Election Form, go to www.opm.gov/forms or contact FSIS' Employee Service Section at 1-800-370-3747 (option 3).
- **FEDVIP:** You can enroll in, change or cancel an existing enrollment in a dental plan or vision plan. If you don't do anything, your enrollment will automatically continue. For premium rates, go to www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/dental-vision/plan-information/#url=Premiums. To make a FEDVIP change, go to www.benefeds.com or call BENEFEDS at 1-877-888-3337 (TTY: 1-877-889-5680).
- **FSAFEDS:** You can enroll in a flexible spending account (a health care and/or dependent care account). Employees **MUST** re-enroll in FSAFEDS each year to participate. Enrollments **DO NOT** carry over from year to year. To enroll, go to www.FSAFEDS.com or call 1-877-372-3337 (TTY: 1-800-952-0450).

FEDVIP and FSA Open Season changes will be effective Jan. 11, 2015.

For additional assistance, contact FSIS' Employee Service Section at 1-800-370-3747 (option 3).

In Memoriam

We are sad to announce the recent passing of a member of our FSIS family.

Gary Arel White, a Consumer Safety Inspector in OFO's Atlanta district, passed away on August 5, 2014. White, age 59, had been with FSIS for 20 years and was a beloved co-worker and a dear friend. He is survived by one daughter and four grandchildren.

Stay up to date ...



The *Wednesday Newsline* is e-mailed to headquarter and field employees every Wednesday with important information about the agency.

Be sure to read this valuable resource every week to stay up to date with agency happenings. To submit an item to the Wednesday Newsline, please send it to wednesdaynewsline@fsis.usda.gov.

Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

Below is the list of leave recipients, as of Oct. 30, 2014, who are in need of annual leave. If you have annual leave that you don't need, you can help by donating to them through the Leave Transfer Program (LTP). For information about donating leave, forms, rules, eligibility and requirements, go to *InsideFSIS*. In the "I Want To" box, select "Access Public Folders." Click on the "Personnel" folder and select "Leave Transfer Program."

For more information, contact Robbie Terry in OM's Employment, Classification and Compensation Branch at (202) 720-8971.

Recipient	Case Number	Program Area	State	Situation
(b) (6)	OFO-14-0025	OFO	KS	Surgery
	OFO-14-0015	OFO	CA	Family Illness
	OFO-14-0049	OFO	MI	Surgery
	OFO-13-0044	OFO	CA	Serious Illness/Surgery
	OFO-14-0008	OFO		Serious Illness
	OCIO-14-0001	OCIO	VA	Family Illness
	OFO-14-0037	OFO	CA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0039	OFO	AR	Serious Illness
	OA-14-0001	OA	MD	Maternity
	OFO-13-0054	OFO	WA	Family Illness/Surgery
	OA-14-0002	OA	MD	Accidental Injury
	OFO-13-0059	OFO	NC	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0017	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0043	OFO	OR	Surgery
	OFO-13-0032	OFO	CA	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0016	OFO	PA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0040	OFO	OK	Surgery
	OFO-14-0037	OFO	DE	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0020	OFO	NY	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0026	OFO	AR	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0021	OFO	CA	Surgery
	OM-14-0001	OM	DC	Family Illness
	OOEET-13-0001	OOEET	MD	Surgery
	OM-14-0002	OM	WI	Maternity
	OFO-13-0045	OFO	TN	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0013	OFO	PA	Maternity
	OFO-13-0037	OFO	AR	Maternity
	OFO-13-0003	OFO	CO	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0063	OFO	CO	Surgery
	OFO-14-0042	OFO	PA	Accidental Injury
	OPHS-14-0002	OPHS	GA	Surgery
	OPHS-14-0004	OPHS	GA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0030	OFO	TX	Family Illness
	OFO-13-0065	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0031	OFO	WA	Serious Illness

(b) (6)

	OFO-14-0038	OFO	CA	Maternity
	OFO-14-0036	OFO	MS	Accidental Injury
	OM-13-0004	OM	MD	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0007	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0029	OFO	CA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0016	OFO	NY	Surgery
	OFO-14-0050	OFO	TX	Surgery
	OFO-12-0064	OFO	KS	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0014	OFO	NH	Maternity
	OFO-14-0026	OFO	DE	Surgery
	OPPD-14-0001	OPPD	DC	Surgery
	OFO-14-0006	OFO	OK	Surgery
	OCIO-13-0002	OCIO	DC	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0022	OFO	IN	Surgery
	OPPD-13-0002	OPPD	DC	Family Illness
	OFO-14-0045	OFO	MN	Maternity
	OFO-14-0018	OFO	AZ	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0027	OFO	WA	Surgery
	OFO-14-0032	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0010	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0024	OFO	NC	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0066	OFO	PA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0001	OFO	OK	Surgery
	OFO-14-0004	OFO	MS	Family Illness
	OPHS-14-0003	OPHS	GA	Serious Illness
*OFO-12-0055		OFO		
*OFO-13-0010		OFO		
*OFO-13-0026		OFO		
*OFO-13-0057		OFO		Serious Illness
*OFO-13-0058		OFO		Serious Illness
*OM-13-0002		OM	MD	
*OM-14-0003				
*OFO-14-0024				
*OFO-14-0028				
*OFO-14-0033				
*OFO-14-0034				
*OFO-14-0035				
*OFO-14-0041				
*OFO-14-0044				Serious Illness
*OIEA-14-0002				

* These LTP recipients, while not consenting to publish their names, have been assigned a number to give co-workers so donated leave may be transferred to their accounts.

Oct. 2	Olson Meat, an Orland, Calif., establishment, recalled approximately 160 pounds of pork blood product because it was produced without the benefit of federal inspection and outside of regular inspection hours. The product was produced on Sept. 9 and shipped to a single retailer in Hawaii. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating this product.
Oct. 3	Vigil Beef Jerky Co., an Albuquerque, N.M., establishment, recalled approximately 48 pounds of beef jerky products because they were shipped with the mark of inspection when they were produced under a retail exemption. The products were sold in retail establishments in New Mexico. No reports of illness due to eating these products.
Oct. 4	Sam Kane Beef Processors, a Corpus Christi, Texas, establishment, recalled approximately 90,987 pounds of ground beef products that may be contaminated with extraneous materials (metal). The products were produced on Sept. 9, Sept. 12, Sept. 15 and Sept. 18 and shipped to retail outlets in Texas. Four consumer complaints were received, with one consumer reporting a chipped tooth.
Oct. 6	Galant Food Company, a San Leandro, Calif., establishment, recalled approximately 410 pounds of beef products because the meat filling used in the products did not meet its cooking critical limit. The products were produced Sept. 22–24 and shipped to a retailer in the San Francisco Bay area and a distributor in Northern California. On Oct. 13, an additional 130 pounds of product was recalled. The products were produced Sept. 22–23 and shipped to a distributor in the San Francisco Bay area. No reports of illnesses due to eating these products.
Oct. 8	Buddy's Kitchen, a Burnsville, Minn. establishment, recalled approximately 62,488 pounds of meat and poultry products due to possible contamination with <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> . The products were produced on various dates from July 16 through Sept. 25 and shipped to distributors, retail locations and airlines nationwide. No reports of illnesses due to eating these products.
Oct. 14	Fresh Food Manufacturing, a Freedom, Pa., establishment, recalled approximately 1,008 pounds of Italian Style Wedding Soup due to misbranding and undeclared allergens (soy and egg). The product was produced on Oct. 9 and shipped to retail stores in Ohio and Pennsylvania. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating this product.
Oct. 16	Shop Packaging LLC, a New Bedford, Mass. establishment, recalled approximately 115,505 pounds of chicken wings due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen (soy lecithin). The product was produced on various dates between Aug. 8 and Oct. 10 and shipped to a distribution location in New York. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating this product.
Oct. 17	E.&B.'s Natural Way, a Frederick, Md., establishment, recalled approximately 27,948 pounds of raw lamb products from Iceland because they were not presented at the border for FSIS import inspection. The products were packaged on Oct. 21, 2013, and Sept. 2, 20, 21 and 22, 2014, and shipped to retail establishments in Oregon and Washington. No reports of illnesses due to eating these products.
Oct. 24	Taylor Farms, a Swedesboro, NJ, establishment, recalled approximately 377 pounds of Signature Café Broccoli Kale Salad with Chicken product because of misbranding and an undeclared allergen, walnuts. The walnuts are packaged in a cupped packet inside the salad container. The salads were produced on Oct. 17, Oct. 19 and Oct. 21 and distributed to retail stores in Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating this product.
Oct. 24	Aspen Foods Division of Koch Meats, a Chicago, Ill., based establishment, recalled 28,980 pounds of chicken products that may be contaminated with a particular strain of <i>Salmonella</i> Enteritidis. The product was produced on July 2 and July 8 and shipped to retail stores and distribution centers in Minnesota. This product is known to be associated with a specific illness cluster. Six case-patients were identified in Minnesota with illness onset dates ranging from Aug. 17 to Sept. 27.

Continued on page 16

Oct. 25

Murry's Inc., a Lebanon, Pa. establishment, recalled approximately 31,689 pounds of gluten free breaded chicken products that may be contaminated with Staphylococcal enterotoxin. The products have a best-by date of Aug. 9, 2015, and were shipped to retail locations nationwide. No reports of illnesses due to eating these products.

Oct. 30

Carlton Foods, a New Braunfels, Texas, establishment, recalled approximately 25,764 pounds of fresh Boudin products, which were produced with pre-cooked rice that may have experienced temperature abuse and may contain an emetic toxin produced by *Bacillus cereus*. The Boudin (sausage-like) products were produced from Aug. 22 through Oct. 17 and shipped to retail locations in Louisiana and Texas. No reports of illnesses due to eating these products.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

>>> POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **Directive 6300.1, Manufacture of Animal Food or Uninspected Articles at Official Establishments**
- **Directive 7120.1, Rev. 21, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry and Egg Products**
- **Notice 50-14, Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection: Verification of Online Reprocessing (OLR) and Offline Reprocessing (OFLR) Antimicrobial Intervention Systems**
- **Notice 51-14, Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection: Change in Chilling Requirements for Ready-to-Cook Poultry**
- **Notice 55-14, Review of Egg Products Plants Drawings and Specifications**
- **Notice 56-14, Control of Agency Tested Products for Adulterants**
- **Notice 57-14, Control of Products Offered for Import That Are Tested by FSIS for Adulterants**

Administrative issuances were also published. They are at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=policy>.

- **Directive 3720.1, Federal Tort Claims**
- **Directive 4410.3, Individual Development Plans**
- **Notice 52-14, Special Provisions for the End of the Leave Year**
- **Notice 54-14, Restoration of Forfeited Annual Leave**
- **Notice 58-14, Requesting Sign Language Interpreter Services**

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

Protocols to Address Emergencies or Imminent Danger in Your Workplace

- ☒ Stay calm
- ☒ Find a safe place (protect yourself)
- ☒ Call 911
- ☒ Call private or local security personnel
- ☒ Call your supervisor
- ☒ Call OIG at 1-800-424-9121 if there is criminal activity

**Workplace Violence Prevention & Response
Program Hotline:**
1-877-987-3747

Employee Assistance Program (EAP):
1-800-222-0364
(TTY: 888-262-7848)

E-mail:
workplaceviolenceprevention@fsis.usda.gov

www.FOH4you.com

Document all incidents of assault, harassment, interference, intimidation or threat per Directive 4735.4.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Volume
18

Number
11

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

November 2014

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

You can tell the stories of FSIS better than anyone! Send us your articles, photos and feedback. It's simple. Just prepare an article and include: who, what, when, where, why and how. Clear your article through your program area. Then send your article to Beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Candid photos preferred. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



FACES OF FOOD SAFETY

Mark Wheeler in OPPD's Labeling and Program Delivery Staff researches an issue in the Regulations and Policy Book. To read about this month's Faces of Food Safety and his role in protecting public health, go to page 3.

Photo contributed by Beth McKew, OPPD

FSIS FY 2015 Annual Performance Plan: Resolutions for the New Fiscal Year

*By Elizabeth Dann, OCFO, and Edward Stoker, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-0586 and (202) 720-9113*

At the beginning of each calendar year, individuals often make resolutions to achieve a particular outcome. It all starts with a vision such as being healthier and perhaps weighing 25 pounds less. Some set goals, plan the work to reach their goal, commit their resolution to writing and monitor their progress. A few go one step further and share their plans with others to increase accountability. Despite all this effort, very few succeed. Only those with a steadfast commitment to routine and repetitive action reach their goal. The same holds true for organizations when they prepare and execute their plans for the year.

FSIS, however, must succeed. People's health and well-being depend on us protecting them from foodborne illness. But how do we know if we are successful? At the beginning of each fiscal year, FSIS develops an Annual Performance Plan (APP) that sets out the agency's strategy and, ultimately, its vision. We set goals and measure progress just as you would if you were serious about a New Year's resolution.

The multiyear Strategic Plan and the APPs are at the front end of a comprehensive performance management process to help ensure that the agency produces desirable results in an effective

and efficient manner as good stewards of taxpayer money. The process begins with the agency's vision and mission, which drive everything we do as an agency. All activity, including our Strategic Plan and APP, flow from our vision and mission to protect public health and prevent foodborne illness. Then there is the FSIS Strategic Plan, which has eight goals and many supporting measures to indicate how we well we are achieving those goals. Our APP provides specific results to be achieved and actions that will help reach each result. The APP further indicates which program areas are responsible for achieving each result and the specific actions they will take to achieve the result. Finally, the APP guides the development of individual performance standards for all staff that, individually and collectively, are responsible for completing the actions. These documents are all intrinsically linked; every person should be able to see how their individual performance plan maps to their program area's APP, which impacts specifically one of the Strategic Plan goals.

In FY 2015, FSIS is pursuing an ambitious plan with several core themes that program areas support and contribute to, sometimes simultaneously. Several key programs are designed to drive down the incidence of *Salmonella*,

Continued on page 12 ...

The Beacon is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Office for FSIS employees.

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Dec. issue – due November 1
Jan. issue – due December 1
Feb. issue – due January 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to e-mail.

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN



Al Almanza

For any organization to be successful, it's necessary to have a clear vision or roadmap. That is how I view the FSIS Annual Performance Plan (APP).

I'm sure you have heard about the APP before, but I want you to know why we do it. At the beginning of each fiscal year, FSIS develops an APP to fulfill the agency's and the department's long-term strategic plan. The multi-year Strategic Plan and the APPs are a component of a performance management process mandated by Congress that helps ensure that federal agencies produce results in an effective and efficient manner and are good stewards of taxpayer money.

At the end of each year, there are performance reports with measurable outcomes that show just how well agencies performed.

The APP includes specific results and actions to reach each of the eight FSIS Strategic Plan goals. The APP identifies which program areas are responsible for achieving each result and the specific actions they will take to do so. Finally, the APP guides the development of individual performance standards for all staff who are individually and collectively responsible for completing those actions. Thus, the APP does provide that roadmap for us to succeed.

I encourage each of you to become more familiar with the APP by reviewing the accompanying article found in this edition of *The Beacon*.

Hopefully, with a better understanding, you can see how your work connects with others and ties in to the overall mission of this agency.

On a personal level, knowing the APP can also help you build your individual development plan. And it assists managers by making sure tasks are assigned with the agency's goals in mind.

The fiscal year 2015 APP is in its final development stages. I will share some key points from it in coming editions of *The Beacon*. In the meantime, additional APP resources and the FSIS Strategic Plan can be found online at www.fsis.usda.gov/strategic-planning. Once final, the fiscal year 2015 APP will be posted on this site as well.

Please, if you have suggestions for further innovations or agency improvements, send them through your normal employee suggestion process or to employeefeedback@fsis.usda.gov.

As always, I encourage each of you to remain innovative and work together; committed to shared values that will move each of us and our agency forward.

2014 FSIS FEVS Results

By Eddie Stoker, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

On Nov. 20, Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza sent a memo to all FSIS employees announcing the 2014 FSIS Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results.

According to Almanza, "FSIS is committed to improving employee engagement and satisfaction in the workplace. We recognize that this is a journey—not a "quick fix"—and that we all need to stay focused together on [identified] critical goals."

To view the 2014 FEVS summary and trend analysis for FSIS, go to *InsideFSIS* at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=CurrentAffairsinFSIS2181>.

If you do not have access to *InsideFSIS*, you may also visit www.bestplacetowork.org and/or ask your supervisor to provide you with copies of the memo and the overall agency results.

Mark Wheeler, From Bug Larvae to Labels



By Felicia Thompson, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

Thirty-seven years ago, Mark Wheeler, a biological scientist, worked in a very obscure field in an FSIS laboratory looking for extraneous materials in food. And what he often found was very interesting, if not alarming.

"I found a mouse in a burrito; little, white insect larvae floating around in a steam tray of chili con carne; and buckshot in corned beef," he recalled. "It was like I was playing detective because I had to figure out why and how these things wound up in the food and if the establishments that produced these products were out of compliance."

Wheeler has seen positive changes over the years when it comes to industry being in compliance. He stated that in the '60s and '70s, the raw materials that the agency received for testing at the lab weren't as clean as they are now, so it was sometimes difficult to know if the problem occurred inside or outside the establishment. However, because of FSIS' tenacity to make sure establishments followed FSIS' policies and regulations, "the industry cleaned up its act and improved their manufacturing processes," he said. In essence, FSIS improved its regulatory program and the industry improved its processes, which all served to benefit the consumer.

Fast Forward 19 Years

In 1996, when the agency closed the lab in which Wheeler worked, he found a position that could benefit from his entomological and food science background and from his interest in nutrition and organic foods. The position was in OPD's Food Labeling Division.

"I like what I do because I not only see, first hand, the formulation of meat and poultry products every day, I enforce and interpret regulations and policies through the label-review process," he said. "I know that what I do is important and helps keep consumers safe," he said.

Wheeler also knows that his work is far reaching and valuable. "When the agency wants to institute a new

regulation or policy, I reach out to the agency's economists, and we do a cost-benefit analysis to see how the policy change will affect the agency, the industry and the consumer. The agency doesn't want the consumer to absorb the cost of a policy change, such as more industry testing for *Listeria monocytogenes* (*Lm*). But if the agency feels that more testing for *Lm* will benefit the consumer by fewer people getting sick with listeriosis, then the benefits outweigh the costs."

Labeling Department

A large part of Wheeler's job consists of ensuring that establishments are listing their products' ingredients on their labels correctly. "The consumer expects accurate labels on products that FSIS regulates," he said. "It empowers the consumer if they know what they are reading on the labels is correct so they can make an informed choice."

Wheeler says he's been fortunate to have worked on several high-profile regulations. "Over the past year, I've participated in some team projects that have advanced the agency's generic labeling rule, the final rule on mechanically tenderized beef and a directive on label verification targeting the Big 8 allergens," he said proudly. "All of these rules will help the consumer by providing clear and important labeling on meat and poultry products, and that's an important goal for the agency."

Bee-ing Bug-free

The Wilmington, Del., native has been married for 22 years to his wife Patricia. They have an adult daughter.

A retired apiarist (or beekeeper), Wheeler used to raise four colonies of bees at any given time and sold or gave away the honey they produced. But keeping bees meant more to Wheeler than the sweet, syrupy product. He states, "Keeping bees was very therapeutic. I would put on my protective gear, go out to the colonies, then sit and listen to the bees buzzing."

From working in an agency laboratory, to working to develop labeling policy, it is no exaggeration to say that the American consumer has truly benefited from Wheeler's talents and commitment to the agency's public health mission.

A Q&A SERIES:

Jacqueline Myers on OM



How does your program area support the agency's mission?

The Office of Management (OM) is responsible for coordinating, marketing, resourcing and evaluating the full range of administrative and support services provided to FSIS. In addition, OM administers specific safety, health and employee wellness functions and the agency's greening initiatives.

What is the most exciting (or significant) initiative or effort that your program area is working on right now?

The implementation of the agency's headquarters reorganization that focused on positioning the agency to be more efficient and effective in its program delivery. OM believes that these changes position OM to be an overall administrative service provider of choice, as the most effective and cost efficient option, for those seeking operational services.

What is the greatest challenge your program area faces right now?

The greatest challenge for the program area is organizational transformation and change management. Recently, OM oversaw the implementation of the agency's headquarters reorganization that focused on positioning the agency to be more efficient and effective in its program delivery.

What is your future vision for your program area?

The vision is to provide an effective and innovative support structure to help make FSIS as effective a public health regulatory agency as possible.

What are some ways in your program area that staff can provide suggestions or raise questions or concerns with you?

OM Managers promote an open door policy and encourage employees to reach out. The following venues are provided:

- Employee Advisory Committee (EAC) – This committee works to improve communication and employee engagement in the program area. The committee is used to evaluate and recommend improvements while creating partnerships and strengthening relationships. <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=OMAdvisoryCommittee9664>
- OM Survey – OM is committed to our employees. To that end, OM has established a way for employees to submit anonymous suggestions and feedback via a survey. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/OMEmployeeSuggestionsFeedback>
- OM Intranet Webpage – OM has a host of information on the intranet. The webpage ensures that OM pertinent information is easily accessible. <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=officeOfManagement>

Read and Join in a Discussion with Al Almanza



To check out the Deputy Under Secretary's Blog, go to *InsideFSIS* at

<https://connections.usda.gov/blogs/FSIS/>.



PHOTO OF THE MONTH

The inspection team at Est. P-243 in Cumming, Ga., got together last month to congratulate SCSI Dennis Trotter (in blue shirt) for 38 years of service. Trotter, who retired on Nov. 14, will be truly missed. Seated, from left: Gail Goss, Dr. Raafat Megalla and Beau Mason. Middle row: Debra Branch, Mattie Catlett, Deborah Rudd and Ravvi Jenkins. Back row: Robert Ferrell, Meka Johnson, Dennis Trotter, Muriel Watkins, Dr. Mark Dunbar and Jonathan Holder.

Photo contributed by Dr. Angela McIntyre, OFO

New Poultry Inspection System

NPIS Notes

Question of the Month

What are some examples of things your inspectors will now be doing under the New Poultry Inspection System that they were not doing before?

Under the NPIS final rule, an offline inspector will be assigned to each evisceration line (previously, one inspector covered multiple evisceration lines). These inspectors will be able to complete a higher number of offline inspection tasks. The rule does not create new tasks for offline inspectors to perform, but will facilitate inspectors being able to complete more of these tasks. Examples of offline activities include:

- Taking samples of product that our labs can analyze for *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*;
- Every hour, pulling 10 birds off the line to check for visible fecal material, as well as other defects missed by the company's sorters. Detection of these defects may result in a Non-Compliance Report (NR) and possible production stoppage. Under other inspection programs, only 20 birds are checked this way per 8-hour shift;
- Verifying compliance with sanitation standard operating procedures;
- Verifying compliance with sanitation performance standards;
- Verifying compliance with HACCP regulatory requirements;
- Observing the steps in the process to ensure that they are under control;
- Ensuring that poultry are slaughtered in accordance with good commercial practices (compliance with these requirements ensures that poultry are handled humanely prior to FSIS online inspection);
- Reviewing records;
- Ensuring the establishment is meeting all regulatory requirements, including the zero tolerance for visible fecal material; and
- Ensuring an establishment is effectively preventing contamination by enteric pathogens and fecal material throughout the entire slaughter and dressing process.

Additional questions and answers about NPIS can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/poultryinspection.

NPIS Mailbox

FSIS has set up a mailbox for any employee inquiries about NPIS. The NPIS mailbox is a one-stop shop to find answers to questions regarding the new poultry inspection system. Whether there is a policy, procedure or system question regarding NPIS, you will get feedback to your question here.

All questions will be collected and triaged among four senior management officials, who will review them and provide responses in the shortest amount of time possible. All questions and responses will be tracked and used to develop FAQs for posting on *InsideFSIS* in the near future.

If you have questions about NPIS, send them to askNPIS@fsis.usda.gov.

SNAPSHOTS

Chicago District

On Sept. 8-9, the Minneapolis Business Center (MBC) EEOAC presented Strengths Finder Training, a profile assessment seminar for building relationships. They also extended an invitation to employees in other FSIS offices to attend. From left: MBC-EEOAC Chairperson MaryKay Acker; Laura Kranitz; HROD Director Kevin Upham; Todd Sazdoff, facilitator; Shirley Saxton; and Merri Stellburg. Not pictured: Sue Robillard, Tom Reimler and Tamara Baker.



Des Moines District

Congratulations to CSI John Rottmann, whose painting, *Dance at Sunrise*, was selected by his USDA peers as a first round winner in the 2014 Art in Agriculture competition. It is currently on display in the Whitten Building in Washington, D.C. If you're in the area, check it out. Photo contributed by John Rottman, OFO.



Springdale District

Springdale Deputy District Manager Eric Thompson (right) participated in the Tour de Cure, an annual fundraising event for the American Diabetes Association. He and his daughter Julie (left) ride each year and go a little farther each time. This year, they went 55 miles in just under 4 hours. In the end, they were tired, but excited to have participated in such a great event for such a great cause. Photo contributed by Eric Thompson, OFO.



FROM THE **FIELD**

Chicago District

Seven OFO employees traveled to Fort Wayne, Ind., on Oct. 11 to participate in the Walk to Defeat ALS. Stephanie Titus' father passed away from this terrible disease. Together, they raised \$600. Kneeling, from left: Caroline Howard, Stephanie Titus and Rick Birnell. Standing: Ben Duvall, Rich Cool, Dr. Jennifer May and Chuck Porter.



Atlanta District

In October, the FSIS inspection team at Est. P-1257 in Murrayville, Ga., wore pink, purple and burgundy in recognition of breast cancer, domestic violence and disability awareness. They also researched each topic and displayed the information in the USDA office. Seated, from left: Patricia Wilson, Geraldine Collins, Lida Rubio, Wanda Edmondson and Sharon Douglas. Second row: Lucy Baliles-Carrier; Roberto Mota, Shirley Howell and Donna Jones. Back row: Subrina Walker, Tamiko Holcomb, George Brady, Joseph Thompson, Nick Darwood and Teddy Walker. Photo contributed by Lucy Baliles-Carrier, OFO.



Atlanta District

Night shift employees at Est. P-00B55 and P-00B55D in Athens, Ga., collected coats, blankets, warm clothes, hats and gloves in October for People Living in Recovery and Sparrows Nest, local organizations that deal with the homeless and people who are down on their luck. From left: Kristian Lewis, Lorraine Rhoden, LaKenya Bullard, Idella Redd, Lillie Oglesby, Atasha Atkins, Sebrina Thomas, Junita Mack and Susan Kelley. Not pictured: Paulette Buice, Sandra Mitchell, Tammy Jackson, Todd Hunt, Patrick Knights and Dorothy Fowler. Photo contributed by Susan Kelley, OFO.



FSDZ Wraps Up Its 2014 Tour



Local volunteers James Reed, Conny Byler and Marcia Lucas played the food safety wheel game with fairgoers at the Arkansas State Fair. Photo contributed by Linda Kendrick, OFO.

By Kristina Beaugh, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-2821

The USDA Food Safety Discovery Zone (FSDZ) recently wrapped up its 2014 season this month at the State Fair of Louisiana in Shreveport, La. The FSDZ, a mobile food safety education exhibit that travels around the country to state and county fairs, festivals and other public events, gives consumers an inside look into FSIS' main food safety messages—*Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill*. FSIS staff distributes educational materials, answers food safety questions and invites families to play the food safety wheel game and win prizes. This year, it traveled more than 4,500 miles, visited three districts across eight states and provided food safety education to more than 2 million people.

The FSDZ staff and OPACE would like to extend a special thank you to the 102 volunteers listed below and their supervisors for their support this season.

Whether you volunteered your time and energy at the

fairs, recruited volunteers or simply allowed members of your staff to attend, your efforts are what made this season's tour the most successful tour to date. Without you, none of this would have been possible. Together, we are truly making a difference in the lives of Americans. Thank you for your continued support and for your dedication to the FSIS mission!

- **USA Science and Engineering Festival, Washington, D.C.:** Eliot Markman and Melissa Hammar
- **Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst Air Show, McGuire AFB, N.J.:** Cliff Lockett, Evelyn Baez-Colon, Denise Hodge, Marilu Ramierz Suarez, William Smith and Mia Isaac.
- **Lowell Folk Festival, Lowell, Mass.:** Michael Partridge, Tom Collaro, Robert Engdahl, Susan Isberg, Nick Stuhr, Sharon Thomas, Patty Bennett, Connie Pond, Linda Tanner, Cynthia Marchand and Joseph Palmisano.
- **Erie County Fair, Hamburg, N.Y.:** Richard Flegal, Deborah Lutz, Melissa Fernandes, Tom Calzone, James Brautlacht, Deborah Mitchum, Kari Skiver, Nick Papapietro, Jason Orlando, Dave Custozzo, Tim Sacilowski, Karen Groff, Bradley Koenigsknecht, Kevin Ingram, Mark Underberg, Mark Woltz, Robert Kozlowski, John Clayson, Rodney Smith, Carey Ann Bostwick, Deborah Pohl, Francis Mest, Audra Smith and Wanda Fuentes.
- **Allentown Fair, Allentown, Pa.:** Mohamed Mahdally, Michael Piotrowski and Marcel Kouassi.
- **Great Frederick Fair, Frederick, Md.:** Patti Jennings, Teresa Taylor, Denise Rattie, Rosemary Earley, Jerry Elliot, Beth McKew, Denise Amann, Pam Ogasawara and Kerrie Tao.
- **Durham Agricultural Fair, Durham, Conn.:** Leo Caffrey, Fred Barbieri, Stephen Bigger, Daniel Lee, Jeffrey Coma, Marianne Erdos, William Moscatelli, Robert Ackert, Brian Strawinski, Gary Kociszewski, Dr. Chaudhry Saleem and Jamie Woodside.
- **Arkansas State Fair, Little Rock, Ark.:** Diana Persing, James Reed, Marcia Lucas, John Lucas, Shelley Myers, Conny Byler, Paula Henson, Felicia Holman, Randy Myers, Davis Williams, Alicia Hickman, Pat Walls, Tom Ellasted, Lawannda Lever, Vicki Duncan, Larry Felton, Kimberly Smith and Duran Stovall.
- **State Fair of Louisiana, Shreveport, La.:** Janie Martin, Mayo Prudhomme, April Prillaman, Kim Smith, Brianna Flaagan, William Hewitt, Velva Cole, Jerod Broussard, Anthony Lee, Shawn Hobbs, Samario Wolfe, Shannon Ridgedell, Shunekia McAuley-Spears, Kari Johnstone, Pete Rodriquez, Clint Broome and Nicia White.



CSI Alicia Hickman got the opportunity to work with Thermy and BAC at the Arkansas State Fair. Photo contributed by Alicia Hickman, OFO.

Preventing Workplace Bullying

By Joe Anne Kennedy, OM
Phone: 1-877-987-3747

Bullying is a pattern of actions meant to intimidate, offend or humiliate a person or group of people. It can be verbal or non-verbal; both obvious and subtle; and usually ongoing, rather than one act. Workplace bullying is when an employee is being bullied by a co-worker or subordinate. Examples include: spreading malicious rumors or gossip; excluding or isolating someone; undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work; physically abusing or threatening abuse; establishing impossible deadlines that will set up the person to fail; withholding information or purposefully giving the wrong information; intruding on a person's privacy by pestering, spying or stalking; yelling or using profanity; criticizing a person persistently or constantly; and tampering with a person's personal belongings or work equipment. (It is important to note that this list is not complete.)

If you are being bullied, here are some things to do:

- Firmly tell the person that his or her behavior is not acceptable. Ask the person to stop. You may want to ask a supervisor or HR person to be with you when you approach the person.
- Keep a journal of daily events. Record the date, time and details of what occurred; names of witnesses; and the outcome of the event.
- Keep copies of any letters, memos, emails or faxes received from the person.

- Report the harassment to your supervisor and/or the person outlined in your workplace policy. If your concerns are brushed off, proceed to the next level of management.
- **Do not retaliate.** You may end up looking like a bully, too. This will only cause confusion for those evaluating and responding to the situation.

Tips for preventing workplace bullying:

- Encourage everyone to act in a respectful and professional manner.
- Educate everyone that bullying is a serious matter.
- Do not ignore problems.
- Do not delay if there is a problem. Act as soon as possible.

Employees and their families may contact the Employee Assistance Program **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**, for confidential help with work, family, personal matters, legal or financial issues at **1-800-222-0364** (TTY: **1-888-262-7848**) or online at www.FOH4you.com.

The FSIS Employee Safety, Health and Wellness Staff's Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Program can be reached on the toll-free, 24-hour Workplace Violence Prevention Helpline at **1-877-987-3747** or by email at WorkplaceViolencePrevention@fsis.usda.gov.

FSIS Retirees: Oct. 15 - Nov. 15, 2014

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Alcazar, Joe, Complnc. Invstgr.	Dallas, TX	6	Jozefowski, David J., FI	Milwaukee, WI	37
Barnett, Rose Marie, FI	Laurel, MS	11	Lindsey, Katherine, FI	Jack, AL	7
Burks, Kathy D., FI	Washington, IN	8	Lockman, Richard F., CSO	Beardstown, IL	24
Collins, Lottie J., CSI	Salisbury, MD	32	McClendon, Shirley A., CSI	Carthage, MS	20
Cooper, Randall D., CSI	Homer, AK	30	Merritt, Gerald R., FI	Union City, TN	6
Ferguson, Joseph E., CSI	Austin, MN	25	Martinez, Richard, FI	Friona, TX	30
Gilbert, Sandra M., FI	Springdale, AR	18	Mitchell, Kelly D., IT Spec.	Washington, DC	37
Griffiths, Paul S., VMO	Hyrum, UT	9	Perry, Jarrel B., SVMO	Garland, TX	14
Gunby, Amy W., Lead EQ Emplmt. Spec.	Minneapolis, MN	23	Pettengill, Dwayne, CSI	Cassville, MO	26
Henry, Victor L., SVMO	Century, FL	13	Plaisance, Robert J., Invstgr.	New Orleans, LA	40
Johnson, Alan J., CSO	Indianapolis, IN	28	Salts, Jeannette A., FI	Bloomfield, NE	14
			Underdown, Carolyn J., FI	Springdale, AR	23

Leave Buy Back Process

By Pat Turner, OM
Phone: 1-800-370-3747

Leave buy back is a program that enables FSIS employees to recover sick and annual leave they have used for on-the-job injuries. It is called leave buy back because the employee will actually owe money to the agency. When an injured employee uses sick or annual leave, the employee is paid at 100 percent of their normal salary – just as if they were working. When an injured employee is paid lost time compensation by the Department of Labor, they are paid 66 2/3 percent or 75 percent of their normal wage (based upon their dependents).

All FSIS employees with accepted workers' compensation claims are eligible to request a leave buy back as long as they have used a minimum of 10 hours of leave (sick or annual) and there is sufficient medical documentation to support all hours claimed. (The employee must have reached maximum medical improvement, and the treating physician must provide written documentation either releasing the employee to return to full pre-injury duties or providing permanent restrictions.) The request for leave buy back must be submitted in writing to the Workers' Compensation Branch (WCB) within 1 year of when the leave was used or 1 year from the date the claim was accepted by the Department of Labor. Since the employee will owe money back to the agency, it is best for the employee to have returned to work with the agency so that payroll deductions can be made if necessary.

It is important to note that the leave buy back process has several stages. It can take 6 months to a year for completion, and any leave repurchased will not be restored to the employee until all monies due to the agency have been repaid. The number of hours eligible for leave buy back

is determined by the Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Workers' Compensation Program (OWCP), not FSIS.

When an injured employee is compensated by DOL for an accepted workers' compensation claim, they are placed in a leave-without-pay status and do not accrue leave.

- Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) contributions and TSP loan repayments are not deducted from workers' compensation payments.
- Health insurance premium deductions are taken from the compensation paid by OWCP. Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) and Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) enrollment may terminate after 365 days in non-pay status unless OWCP requests the FEHB enrollment be transferred. Coverage continues at no cost to the employee for non-pay time. When a deduction is missed, the employee may be directly billed by BENEFEDS. Unpaid direct bills may result in termination of coverage.
- Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAFEDS) and Federal Long Term Care Insurance premiums are not deducted from workers' compensation payments. Life insurance premiums deductions are taken from the compensation paid by OWCP. Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) coverage will be terminated at 12 months of non-pay status.

Remember that annual leave is capped at 240-hour ceiling at the end of the calendar year, and any excess cannot be repurchased.

If you have questions, call the WCB at 1-800-370-3747.

Managing Holiday Stress

By Jodi Hallstrom, OM
Phone: 1-800-370-3747 (ext. 8597)

Many people experience increased stress around the holidays, so here are some tips to manage the stress.

- Changing your schedule can be stressful, so stick to your regular family routine as much as possible.
- Choose only activities that you really want to do.
- Talk with your family about finances and gifts. If money is a stressor, get creative and make presents.
- Plan some downtime. Read a book or sit and listen to holiday songs.

- Go for a walk to see holiday displays. Fresh air and exercise can lift your spirits.
- Relax with your family. Pull out favorite holiday stories and read them aloud.
- Be adaptable and flexible. Don't let unexpected events ruin the holidays.
- Families aren't perfect, so don't expect them to be.

If you need help, call the FOH EAP/Worklife4You Hotline at 1-800-222-0364 (TTY: 1-888-262-7848) or visit www.foh4you.com or www.worklife4you.com for free confidential services, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Nov. 6

CS Best Food Inc., a Panorama City, Calif., establishment, recalled approximately 6,560 pounds of pork products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens (wheat and soy). The blood sausage link products were produced between Aug. 28 and Oct. 17 and shipped to retail locations in California and Washington. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

Nov. 9

Kulana Foods Ltd., a Hilo, Hawaii, establishment recalled approximately 4,465 pounds of frozen, fully cooked pork products because of misbranding and an undeclared allergen (wheat). The products were produced on various dates between Feb. 6, 2013 and Oct. 8, 2014 and shipped to retail locations and for foodservice use on the islands of Hawaii and Oahu. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

Nov. 14

Kasia's Deli Inc., a Chicago, Ill., establishment, recalled approximately 2,059 pounds of pierogi products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens (wheat, soy, eggs and milk). The products were produced on various dates prior to Sept. 19 and were shipped to a distributor for national online sales. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

Nov. 15

City Line Foods Manufacturing Co., a Lancaster, Pa., establishment, recalled approximately 1,196,669 pounds of frozen pretzel hot dog products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen (soy lecithin). The products were produced on various dates from Feb. 14, 2014 to Nov. 14, 2014. The products were shipped nationwide for retail distribution and fundraising and were included in the National School Lunch Program. On Nov. 18, the recall was expanded to include an additional 12,282 pounds of product that was produced from Nov. 14, 2013 to Nov. 14, 2014. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

Nov. 19

K. Heeps, Inc., an Allentown, Pa., establishment, recalled approximately 2,902 pounds of Bratwurst and Bangers sausage products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen (soy lecithin). The products were packaged on various dates from May 21 through Nov. 5 and sold to a single vendor, who distributed the products to restaurants and retailers in Pennsylvania. The products were distributed to the School Lunch Program. No reports of illness due to eating these products.

Nov. 19

Sapar USA, Inc. (DBA Fabrique Delices), a Hayward, Calif., establishment, recalled approximately 12 pounds of a sausage product because of misbranding and an undeclared allergen (nonfat dry milk). The product was produced on Nov. 6 and sold through distribution centers in California, Pennsylvania and Texas to institutional and retail outlets. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating this product.

Nov. 22

Ranchers Legacy Meat Co., of Vadnais Heights, Minn., recalled 1,200 pounds of ground beef products that may be contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7. The products were produced on Nov. 19 and shipped to distributors for sales nationwide. No reports of illnesses associated with eating these products.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

DONATE TO THE LEAVE TRANSFER PROGRAM

There are a number of your fellow employees who are in need of annual leave for a variety of reasons. If you have annual leave that you don't need, you can help them by donating it through the Leave Transfer Program.

The Beacon will print the current list of leave recipients at various times. You can also view it on *InsideFSIS*. In the "I Want To" box, select "Access Public Folders." Then click on the "Personnel" folder and select "Leave Transfer Program." You will find more information about donating leave, forms, rules, eligibility and requirements.

For more information, contact Robbie Terry in OM's Employment, Classification and Compensation Branch at (202) 720-8971.

>>> POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- Directive 7120.1, Rev. 22, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry and Egg Products
- Directive 9770.1, Determining the Initial Equivalence of Foreign Food Safety Systems
- Notice 59-14, Sample Questions for the RTEPROD Sampling Project
- Notice 60-14, FSIS Sampling Data Reporting Through LIMS-Direct
- Notice 61-14, Clarification of Re-Inspection Procedures for Product Presented for Export at Official Establishments
- Notice 63-14, Verifying Donation of Misbranded and Economically Adulterates Meat and Poultry Products

- Notice 64-14, Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection: Verifying an Establishment's Procedures for Preventing Contamination by Enteric Pathogens and Fecal Material

Administrative issues were also published.

- Directive 2450.1, Rev. 6, Assignment and Use of Motor Vehicles for Official FSIS Business
- Directive 4315.2, Rev. 1, Probationary Period for Newly Appointed Employees
- Notice 62-14, Telework and Office Coverage
- Notice 65-14, Attachment Update for Submission of Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 Renewal Orders (ROs)

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

APP

... Continued from page 1

including the New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS), which we will start implementing this year. We will also continue to execute our *Salmonella* Action Plan, strengthen our *Salmonella* performance standards and expand sampling activities. With respect to *E. coli*, we will implement lessons learned and best practices on sanitary dressing to decrease the instances of *E. coli*. Finally, new on our list of regulatory responsibilities is suriliform (catfish) inspection, which we are now planning.

Results of these and other priorities are tracked through measurable outcomes and are reported throughout the year in monthly APP reports and at year end in the Year-in-Review. These reports show just how well the agency is performing. And when it's over, we begin again, so that we can continually monitor our progress toward meeting our critical goals, such as the measure for all illnesses, which tracks how well we are doing to minimize foodborne illness caused by *Salmonella*, *E. coli* and *Listeria*.

Our performance management process is well supported throughout FSIS leadership. According to Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza, "Strategic planning provides us the ability to set a course, act on it and learn from it, so we

can continually do better." He quotes Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, "An organization's ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage." Almanza goes on, "As the foodborne threat evolves over time, FSIS will continue to modernize its approach to food safety, and it is this mentality that will keep us ahead of the threat and keep Americans safe."

According to FSIS' CFO Steven Fisher, "Our Annual Performance Plan is an operational roadmap for each program area and their staff to act on and fulfill actions to achieve specific results. Along with our Strategic Plan and individual performance standards, it is a plan of action for achieving goals that serve the American public."

The FSIS FY15 Annual Performance Plan is available at www.fsis.usda.gov/APP2015. The FSIS FY 2011-2016 Strategic Plan and the FY 2013 Performance Report can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/strategic-planning.

"While our Strategic Plan gives us a destination and our APP gives us direction," states Almanza, "FSIS employees, whose roles and responsibilities are reflected in individual performance standards, get us to our destination. I am proud to be a part of an agency whose employees are achieving planned results that protect public health and prevent foodborne illness."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Volume
18

Number
12

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

December 2014

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

You can tell the stories of FSIS better than anyone! Send us your articles, photos and feedback. It's simple. Just prepare an article and include: who, what, when, where, why and how. Clear your article through your program area. Then send your article to Beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Candid photos preferred. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

FACES OF FOOD SAFETY

In this month's Faces of Food Safety, FSIS spotlights Dr. Courtney P. Baldwin of OFO. To read about Dr. Baldwin and how she combined her passions into an FSIS career, go to page 3.

Photo contributed by Steve Collier, OFO



The Combined Federal Campaign's Rich History

*By Gabrielle Johnston, OPACE
Phone: (202) 617-6100*

Every fall, the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) gets underway for Federal employees all over the country and around the world. While most FSIS employees understand and appreciate the philanthropic mission of CFC, many do not know the rich history behind its establishment.

60 Years of History

Prior to the 1950s charitable fundraising campaigns targeted at Federal employees were not well regulated. The free-for-all approach towards soliciting Federal employees for donations presented obvious workplace challenges. In June 1956, President Eisenhower formally charged the President's Advisor on Personnel Management with the task of developing a uniform program for Federal fundraising. On September 6, 1957, President Eisenhower signed Executive Order 10728 which formalized the President's Committee on Fundraising within the Federal service. It identified charitable organizations eligible for on-the-job fundraising solicitations and designated three specific times of the year when solicitations were permissible.

Despite these improvements there continued to be dissatisfaction with the expense and disruption caused by three separate fundraising campaigns. In 1961, President Kennedy signed Executive

Order 10927. This abolished the prior Committee and assigned the program to John W. Macy Jr., Chairman of the Civil Service Commission. In 1964, Mr. Macy and the Civil Service Commission introduced the first "combined" Federal fundraising campaign. The single campaign saw high employee participation rates and in some places a 125 percent increase in donations. By March 3, 1971, President Nixon announced that the CFC would be the uniform fundraising method for the Federal service. With a system in place that was effective and easy for employees, contributions grew to \$82.8 million in 1979. Contributions have continued to grow ever since with the latest totals reaching \$209.7 million in 2013.

Make it Possible!

This year's CFC theme is "Make it Possible!" There are thousands of great charitable interests that an FSIS employee can consider supporting. Whether you are passionate about children, education, environmental issues, or international development there is a CFC charity that aligns with your values. The Office of Personnel Management is responsible for ensuring that all donations made through CFC are honored and distributed to the charitable organizations of the employee's choice.

Continued on page 2 ...

The Beacon is prepared by the Congressional and Public Affairs Office for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

Jan. issue – due December 1
Feb. issue – due January 1
March issue – due February 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to e-mail.

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN



Al Almanza

In recent columns, I have mentioned the importance of shared values at FSIS. The end of the year is an appropriate time to reflect on all the ways our employees make a difference—not only in the important job they do in protecting public health, but also in the diverse ways that they choose to help fellow employees and members of their local communities.

One of the more collective efforts currently in full swing is the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). CFC is the world's largest and most successful annual workplace charity campaign, with almost 200 CFC campaigns throughout the country and overseas raising millions of dollars each year. Pledges made by Federal civilian, postal, and military employees each season support some 20,000 eligible non-profit organizations providing services around the world.

CFC annual contributions have risen steadily over the years totaling nearly \$5 billion since 1964. Federal workforce giving has continually reached over \$200 million annually in the last decade. We hope to sustain those positive trends as we close out 2014.

FSIS' participation in the *Feds Feeds Families* (FFF) food donation drive has been exceptional. During the 2014 campaign, USDA employees donated a record 6.2 million pounds of food, surpassing all Federal departments and agencies. FSIS' portion was 113,836 pounds, up proudly from 62,320 in 2013. Special kudos go out to our folks in the Philadelphia district who donated 18,566 pounds alone. Since 2009, FFF has collected more than 39 million pounds of food and other non-perishable items to support families across America.

Throughout the year we have attempted to chronicle some of the many ways that FSIS employees serve their local communities by mentioning them in the "Snapshots from the Field" section of *The Beacon*.

For example, FSIS employees at Est. 13456P in Pine Bluff, Ark., donated 100 pounds of food toward their local Neighbor to Neighbor charity.

The night shift employees at establishments P-00855 and P-00855D in Athens, Ga., helped a local non-profit organization by gathering truckloads of used furniture, food, and other items to address the needs and long-term recovery of residents in the area.

Albany circuit inspectors competed to see who could donate the most box fans to help keep elderly residents cool during the hot weather in support of a local charitable campaign called "Operation Beat the Heat."

In the last year, FSIS employees in the Washington, D.C., area donated of their time to sort food at the Capital Area Food Bank, while colleagues in Mississippi served meals at the Gateway Mission Rescue and donated toys and gift cards to the Blair E. Baston Hospital for Children.

I couldn't possibly cover all the examples of FSIS employees doing good deeds in their local communities in this short article, but it is efforts like these that speak loud and clear about our values at FSIS—our shared values!

I wish each of you peace, joy, and personal fulfillment in the New Year and beyond. As always, I encourage each of you to stand together, committed to shared values that will move each of us and our Agency forward.

CFC

... Continued from page 1

How to Give

The CFC is going on now and has been extended through the end of December. There

are many ways to give ranging from payroll a deduction to E-Giving. If you would like more information about how to participate in the CFC closest to you please visit <http://www.opm.gov/combined-federal-campaign/find-local-campaigns/locator/>.

Dr. Courtney Baldwin, Keeping Humans Safe through Veterinary Medicine

By Felicia Thompson, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-0084

It may seem counterintuitive to think that someone would pursue a veterinary medicine degree with the goal of keeping *humans* from getting sick. Well, that's exactly what motivated Dr. Courtney Baldwin.

Baldwin is a supervisory public health veterinarian (SPHV) at a poultry plant in Ashland, Ala. She understands that animal health can affect human health, and she explains why here.

"In veterinary medicine you learn about the diseases and parasites that animals can contract, and how they can affect humans," Baldwin said. "One example is BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] which is commonly known as mad cow disease. This disease directly affects cows, but it often manifests in humans as Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease."

Baldwin's Work

On December 1, 2014, Baldwin celebrated her one-year anniversary with FSIS and took the opportunity to reflect on how her job as an SPHV benefits the American people.

"I ensure FSIS regulations are upheld, and that the nation's meat, poultry, and processed egg products are safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged," Baldwin said proudly.

While all of Baldwin's duties contribute to protecting public health, there is one role in particular that stands out. Baldwin supervises pre-operation checks which consist of making sure that the equipment is clean and sanitary before slaughter operations begin. "We perform random checks on different parts of the plants' machinery," she said. "These checks are one way that FSIS ensures that products coming off the processing line are safe."

A self-described "social nerd," Baldwin states that she is an ardent learner and relationship builder. "I spend time



digesting the regulations, so I can make sure that everyone on this team is following the rules," she said.

As for relationships, Baldwin believes that positive interaction is essential to making sure that everyone on the team is performing at their best. "I build trust and foster communication with everyone on the team because it helps me to deliver constructive feedback on issues of concern more easily, especially if everyone knows that it comes from an honest place," she continued. "When communicating difficult news, I've learned that it's better received if a good relationship is in place beforehand."

Future Food Safety Goals

Five years from now, Baldwin sees herself taking a greater role in educating people about the FSIS mission. "I would love to be a part of mentoring new SPHVs and reaching out to kids on food safety issues because it has always been my passion to teach, share, problem solve, and help others," she said. "Currently, I'm putting together a package of FSIS educational materials, such as the FSIS Food Safety Coloring Book, for my young nephews and niece." Baldwin also said that she has been encouraging her mother, Deborah Smith Ford, a published author of children books, to collaborate with her on writing a series of books for kids focused on food safety.

Road to FSIS

The Fort Myers, Fla., native ended up following in her father's footsteps when she decided to become a veterinarian. Baldwin's father is Dr. Alton Ford.

"I earned a degree in biomedical engineering from Mercer University in Georgia, and then did graduate work at Mississippi State University in tissue engineering

Continued on page 11 ...

A Q&A SERIES:

Dr. David Goldman, OPHS



How does your program area support the Agency's mission?

The Office of Public Health Science (OPHS) provides the Food Safety and Inspection Service the scientific input to identify research priorities, set food safety policies, and develop outreach in response to public health issues. The office maintains three regulatory field services laboratories strategically located across the country to analyze samples daily. Our employees apply their scientific knowledge and expertise to provide in-depth analyses and advice on all matters of science and public health. The office also works with agricultural and animal health officials in other Federal, tribal, State and local public health agencies to investigate foodborne outbreaks and prevent foodborne disease.

What is the most exciting (or significant) initiative or effort that your program area is working on right now?

Salmonella is one of the most challenging issues FSIS faces in keeping America's food supply safe. As such, the agency developed a strategic plan in 2011 that listed *Salmonella* as one of its top priorities. OPHS is providing the scientific basis for the *Salmonella* Action Plan, the agency's initiative to reduce the occurrence and level of *Salmonella* in meat and poultry products as a way to reduce the occurrence of illnesses from this pathogen. Specifically, OPHS will modify its sampling programs to ensure that sampling is in line with current and emerging trends in foodborne illness prevention.

What is the greatest challenge your program area faces right now?

OPHS manages a variety of scientific programs to identify, manage, and prevent exposure to foodborne pathogens

and chemical residues in meat, poultry, and processed egg products. This is a huge task for a small office. To stay abreast of the latest information and techniques, our staff meets with representatives from Federal and State public health agencies, as well as talks to representatives from academia and industry to ensure a wise allocation of resources to advance public health.

What is your future vision for your program area?

Our staff looks for ways to incorporate the latest research and technologies, like Whole Genome Sequencing and multi-residue methods, to address big questions that face public health. This approach allows our staff at the labs to obtain streams of information from a single sample in just one analysis. Wrapping this approach into agency initiatives, like the *Salmonella* Action Plan, provides a path forward for our office and the agency to protect public health.

What are some ways in your program area that staff can provide suggestions or raise questions or concerns with you?

Our staff is dispersed across the country but we offer a variety of mechanisms for them to provide feedback to management. I gather with staff several times a year during All Hands meetings to share the latest information about the agency and address questions, comments, and concerns from staff. In addition, our Internal Communications Board, which consists of employees at headquarters and the labs, facilitates discussion with our staff through an annual survey and monthly newsletter. Finally, our employees work with their management to ensure concerns and questions are addressed and information is shared in a timely manner.



Read and Join in a Discussion with Al Almanza

To check out the Deputy Under Secretary's Blog, go to *InsideFSIS* at <https://connections.usda.gov/blogs/FSIS/>.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Nov. 6 is a day Inspector Kristi Diego will never forget. While covering her export patrol on the East Side patrol assignment in Miami, Fla., she noticed a pregnant woman at a bus stop who was in distress. Her water had broken and her baby was coming. Diego immediately provided assistance, and by the time rescue personnel arrived, Diego had delivered a healthy 7.2-pound baby girl. Congratulations to Diego on her quick and collected response.



New Poultry Inspection System

NPIS Notes

Question of the Month

What happens to plants that are under the HIMP pilot now?

The New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS) will end the HACCP-Based Inspection Models Project (HIMP) for all plants. NPIS is a voluntary process. Young chicken slaughter establishments currently operating under HIMP have the option to opt-in to NPIS with a modified *Salmonella* Initiative Program (SIP) waiver for an increased line speed or choose another approved system of poultry inspection. FSIS will allow 20 young chicken establishments to run at line speeds of up to 175 bpm. FSIS will also update the SIP waivers to remove aspects of HIMP that are inconsistent with NPIS, such as the Other Consumer Protection (OCP) performance standards. To ensure that the updated SIP waivers are consistent with NPIS, the Agency will also require that establishments operating under the updated waivers submit the annual attestation regarding worker safety specified in the final rule. The maximum line speeds for non-HIMP young chicken establishments operating under NPIS is 140 bpm per line and for turkey establishments 55 bpm. Turkey slaughter establishments currently operating under HIMP also have the option to either opt-in to NPIS or identify and revert to one of the pre-existing inspection systems.

Additional questions and answers about NPIS can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/poultryinspection.

NPIS Mailbox

FSIS has set up a mailbox for any employee inquiries about NPIS. The NPIS mailbox is a one-stop shop to find answers to questions regarding the new poultry inspection system.

All questions will be collected and triaged among four senior management officials, who will review them and provide responses in the shortest amount of time possible. All questions and responses will be tracked and used to develop FAQs for posting on *InsideFSIS* in the near future.

If you have questions about NPIS, send them to askNPIS@fsis.usda.gov.

SNAPSHOTS

Alameda District

OIEA/CID Western Region, based in Alameda, Calif., participated in the 2014 Alameda Hospital Health Fair. Compliance investigators Stacy Tyralla and Damion Hart [pictured] represented FSIS/OIEA, educating the public on food safety as well as on how FSIS plays an important role in protecting the nation's food supply through various activities. Overall, the fair created a platform for various wellness exams as well as provided information and awareness for medical-related issues, including various options for seniors. Photo contributed by Damion Hart, OIEA.



Springdale District

FSIS inspection personnel attended The College of the Ozarks career fair Oct. 23 in Point Lookout, Mo.

The event drew more than 100 companies. Approximately 100 plus students visited the career fair to receive information on job opportunities once they graduate. The Springdale District inspectors spoke with approximately 25-30 students who were very interested and excited to learn about USAJOBS.gov, meat inspector, veterinarian, scientific, administrative and other positions and internships that fall under USDA agencies.

Photo contributed by Linda Kendrick, OFO.



Springdale District

Springdale District EIAOs Diana Persing and Loretta Vote along with Corrine E. Calhoun, an FSIS Management and Program Analyst/Recruiter based at headquarters, staffed the FSIS booth at the Arkansas State University's Job Fair held Oct. 30 in Jonesboro, Ark. Students visited the booth and asked questions about FSIS jobs and benefits. USAJobs flyers, website links and other materials were provided to students interested in FSIS careers. Photo contributed by Linda Kendrick, OFO.



FROM THE **FIELD**



Philadelphia District

FSIS recruiters Lauren Behar and Paul J. Calafiore along with APHIS recruiter Jim Chihak met returning Peace Corps volunteers who attended a career fair designed especially for those volunteers at the New School in New York City. The career fair attracted upwards of 100 returning Peace Corpsmen, all of whom were interested in obtaining information about part-time, paid internships and full time career opportunities within USDA. Pictured from left: Supervisory Investigator Lauren Behar, USDA-APHIS Human Resource Specialist Jim Chihak, and Investigator Paul J. Calafiore. Photo contributed by Paul J. Calafiore, OIEA.

Atlanta District

During November, employees from the Douglas, Ga. circuit celebrated a Certificate of Appreciation earned by Export Inspector Glenda Suits for her exemplary work on the front lines of public health during the performance of her duties. Suits was recognized by RMTAS Director Dr. Regina Tan. Employees also enjoyed coffee and donuts and the opportunity to meet two employees newly assigned to the circuit during that time. Pictured: CSI Sherry Lindsey, CSI Russell Beasley, FI Exports Glenda Suits, FLS Donna Savage, FI Exports Mary Schmitz. Photo contributed by Donna Savage, OFO.



Atlanta District

Supervisory Public Health Veterinarians in the Atlanta District Drs. Dava Rossom and Angela McIntyre represented FSIS at the Georgia Veterinarian Medical Association (GVMA) Fall Conference in Atlanta, Ga. They had a table set up with literature about FSIS and job opportunities within the Agency. Dr. Ghias Mughal, DDM in the Atlanta District attended the conference and visited the FSIS table. Picture includes from left to right: Dr. Dava Rossom, SPHV; Dr. Angela McIntyre, Relief SPHV; and Dr. Ghias Mughal, DDM. Photo contributed by Angela McIntyre, OFO.



Information Security Awareness Training Now Available

By Leigh Ann Acree, OCIO
Phone: (202) 418-8816

The Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) require that all USDA employees, contractors, partners, and volunteers complete annual Computer Security Awareness and Rules of Behavior training. By taking this course, you are meeting the legal requirement for all users of Federal information systems to take annual computer security awareness training. It will identify potential risks and vulnerabilities associated with Federal information systems, review your role in protecting these systems, and provide guidelines to follow while working to protect against attacks on information systems.

The FY15 Information Security Awareness (ISA) training was made available online through *AgLearn* starting October 1, 2014, and **is available now for completion. The training must be completed by March 31, 2015.** Employees who will be out of the office for 120 consecutive days or more must contact their agency *AgLearn* Administrator to have their account deactivated. Immediately upon return the accounts must be reactivated for training completion.

Network access will be removed for any employee, contractor, partner, or volunteer who has not completed the

required training by March 31, 2015. Paper-based training was also made available beginning on October 1 for those without computer access or who require an alternative to online training.

Help/Contact Information:

FSIS AgLearn: *FSISAgLearn@fsis.usda.gov* or call: 1-800-336-3747. (General reference)

Customers who need support with the ISA course should contact the *AgLearn* Help Desk at *AgLearnHelp@genphysics.com* or via phone at 866-633-9394. Contact information can also be found on the *AgLearn's* "Contact Us" page.

E-Authentication Account Assistance: Contact USDA's eAuthentication Help Desk at 1-800-457-3642 or *eAuthHelpDesk@ftc.usda.gov*.

Computer Problems: Enter a Footprints ticket at <http://service/footprints> or call 1-800-473-9135 (field employees), or 202-720-4016 (headquarters employees).

General questions: *SAT@fsis.usda.gov*.

"It's just a small cut ... should I report it?" YES!

By Caroline Howard, OM
Phone: (202) 260-9216

It is critical that all Federal employees know when and how to submit a claim for a workplace-related injury. This awareness is particularly true when thinking about what many employees might consider only a minor injury. Some Federal employees might consider cutting their finger, slipping on a wet floor, or tripping over an electrical cord to be only a minor incident that does not need to be reported. Some Federal employees might decide that if the injury can be self-treated they do not need to make an official report. The Workers' Compensation group wants to remind Federal employees to report all work-related injuries, however minor, as soon as they happen. What some employees consider to be only a minor incident at the time of the injury can quickly and unexpectedly become a much more serious condition.

In addition to a minor injury becoming aggravated over time, there are other important reasons that Federal employees should promptly report workplace injury. Consider the following:

- No injury-related benefits can be paid unless an injury is reported;

- By always filing a claim at the time of injury, employees preserve a future benefit that may or may not be needed in the future;
- By reporting an accident or injury to a supervisor, employees ensure the supervisor is aware of workplace hazards and can take actions to reduce further risk of injury.

So remember, no matter how minor you consider any injury at work to be, please take a few minutes to protect yourself and potentially others by reporting the injury to your supervisor and completing Form CA-1 which is entitled, *Federal Employee's Notice of Traumatic Injury and Claim for Continuation of Pay/Compensation*. You can get Form CA-1 from your supervisor or online from the Department of Labor's (DOL) website at www.dol.gov/dol/findit.htm. From this DOL weblink select the "DOL Forms" hyperlink, then select the "Forms by Form Number" hyperlink and scroll down in alphabetical order until you see the "CA-1" hyperlink which takes you to the form. Also, don't forget, if you believe that a potential hazard exists in the workplace, please report it promptly in accordance with FSIS Directive 4791.12, Reporting and Correcting Occupational Hazards. If you have any questions on this topic, please give the Workers' Compensation Branch a call at 1-800-370-3747.

Consumer Complaint Monitoring System

By Wanda Wilson, OPHS
Phone: (202) 690-1039

FSIS' mission is to ensure that the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly packaged and labeled as required by law. To that end, it is critical to rapidly identify adverse consumer health events associated with FSIS-regulated products. The Consumer Complaint Monitoring System (CCMS) helps achieve this goal.

What is the CCMS?

The CCMS is a consumer-based food safety surveillance application. FSIS analysts use this application to document, track, and coordinate consumer complaint investigations associated with FSIS-regulated meat, poultry, and egg products (e.g., liquid eggs).

A team of epidemiologists manages the CCMS database. Epidemiologists on the team are trained to evaluate, analyze, and investigate the causes of disease, allergic reactions and injuries, as well as sources of foreign objects associated with the consumption of FSIS-regulated products.

How does CCMS support FSIS' mission?

- It assists the Agency in identifying meat, poultry, and egg products that may need to be removed from commerce;
- It indicates that hazardous product(s) may be in commerce and should be recalled;
- It identifies system failures at an establishment that need to be corrected;
- It verifies that internal systems and processes at establishments are functioning as intended; and
- It provides insight into human health outcomes associated with hazardous meat, poultry, and egg products.

What is a consumer complaint?

FSIS classifies a "consumer complaint" as any report initiated by a consumer, of illness, injury, foreign object, contamination, allergic reaction, or improper labeling that is directly related to an FSIS-regulated product. These complaints include imported products that are re-inspected by FSIS at the port-of-entry. FSIS recognizes that other types

of complaints may be associated with its products, but these reports may not be appropriate for follow-up through CCMS.

What happens after a complaint is filed?

Once a complaint has been reported, the CCMS team evaluates the complaint to determine the appropriate response. During the evaluation process, CCMS team members review various resources to identify whether or not the complaint was isolated or related to larger trends observed by the Agency. The CCMS team uses the evaluation process to assess whether the source of the incident can be linked to an FSIS-regulated establishment.

If further investigation is needed, FSIS may collect evidence of the complaint from the consumer, conduct laboratory analyses, or coordinate an additional review at the establishment where the product was produced. A record of all complaints is kept in CCMS and may be reopened or referenced as needed.

Every case evaluated through CCMS is assigned a unique case number. FSIS maintains the integrity of privacy-related information and complies with statutory requirements to protect the information it gathers.

What happens after a case is closed?

At the closure of a case, CCMS sends a letter to the consumer with the case number and a brief description of the outcome.

Consumers who would like to receive a complete copy of their case record should contact the FSIS Freedom of Information Office at the link - <http://www.foia.gov/how-to.html>. Document requests along with the case number should be mailed to U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Room 1140-South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC 20250.

How can a consumer complaint be filed?

Consumers can report a complaint to their local USDA Field Office, contact the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MP Hotline (1-888-674-6854), or report the complaint on the electronic consumer complaint form (eCCF). If FSIS employees want to access the eCCF from inside the network they should go to: <http://ccmsweb13>. Please note that this link will not work inside the FSIS network.

Supervisor Training and Development

By Dr. Greg Brookhouser, OOEET-CFL-OEDB
Phone: (301) 504-3370

Effective supervisors and managers are a critical component of good Government and ensuring that policy is carried out effectively. For this reason, the supervisor's ability in both technical and leadership skills is important for success. Effective supervisors increase employee motivation, communicate expectations, and ultimately increase organizational performance.

Agencies within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are responsible for training new supervisors and staying compliant with Federal regulations. On July 25, 2014, USDA issued Departmental Regulation (DR) 4040-412-002.

This regulation describes how USDA will meet supervisory training requirements and ensure that supervisor training is consistent throughout the Department by using a common training standard for all agencies. DR 4040-412-002 does all of the following:

- 1. It creates a uniform USDA training standard.** Agency personnel developed the USDA standards, and the standards align with the OPM guidelines and framework.
- 2. It provides great flexibility for agencies and also ensures minimum standards.** Agencies with their own programs can use whatever methods they choose. Agencies can also add additional training to their programs based on their specific needs.
- 3. It ensures that all employees can access training.** Agencies without established programs can use the "Zero Cost Option" (ZCO) a preloaded curriculum available through *AgLearn*. Agencies with their own programs may also use the ZCO to pick and choose elements if their programs are missing content required by the standard.

- 4. It improves accountability.** All new supervisors need to take and complete an "Approved Training Course" within one year of their appointment. If they are on probation, supervisors will remain on probation until they have completed their required training. To receive training credit all new supervisors must take and pass a knowledge test after completing their coursework.
- 5. It standardizes training measurement.** The policy requires that agencies measure and report on training. The Virtual University (VU) will provide the metrics annually.

As outlined in DR4040-412-002, all new supervisors in the Department are required to successfully complete training within the first probationary year following the appointment as a supervisor. The training standards are applicable to all new supervisors in the Department regardless of grade levels and occupational codes. New supervisors who fail to complete their probation because of failure to complete the required training and standard assessment are subject to be reassigned to another position.

DR4040-412-002 permits agencies to better ensure that they are training their supervisors on the topics most important for the success of the new supervisors. The quality of new supervisor training is seen as an important factor of supervisor success as the Department strives to be among the top Federal departments in increasing the quality of its supervisors. Providing quality training to all new supervisors will ensure that supervisor training in the Department is consistent with best practices across the Federal government. Departmental Regulation 4040-412-002 can be found at the following link: <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/departamental-regulation-4040-412-002>

TSP: Maximize Your Retirement Savings

By Kristi Carrier, OM
Phone: (800) 370-3747, Option 3

Are you a Federal employee enrolled in the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) who is contributing less than 5 percent of your basic pay to your Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)? Did you know that by not taking advantage of the full government 5 percent match, it is like throwing away free money? If you contribute to the traditional TSP (pre-tax), Roth TSP (post-tax), or a combination of both at a total of 5 percent you will be doubling your investment instantly by receiving the full government match. In this uncertain economic environment, a guaranteed 100 percent return on your investment is something you cannot beat!

For individuals able to contribute substantially more to their TSP, the new maximum contribution limit for 2015

has been raised to **\$18,000**. Whether you are a Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or FERS employee, you may contribute any amount per pay period up to the IRS limit on regular contributions.

To reach the maximum contribution limit for 2015 your TSP change will need to be effective by pay period 25 of 2014. You can make this change to your regular TSP contributions by visiting the Employee Personal Page (EPP) or by completing a TSP-1 form and forwarding it to the Human Resources Office. By setting your bi-weekly contributions at \$693 for 26 pay periods it will ensure you are on track to reach the \$18,000 limitation for regular TSP contributions. Unless you change or stop them, regular contributions will continue at your current rate year-to-year. Please remember

Continued on page 11 ...

Dec. 4

Quality Meats, located in Omaha, NE, recalled approximately 44,372 pounds of frozen pork belly product because they were not presented at the border for USDA-FSIS Import Inspection. The frozen pork single ribbed bellies were packaged from March 18 to April 10, 2014. The product was shipped to retail establishments and distributors in GA, IL, and WA where they would have been repackaged. The problem was discovered during a routine review using the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) database. ACE is a web-based portal for the collection and use of international trade data maintained by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. A failure-to-present (FTP) occurs when importers fail to present a shipment to FSIS for import inspection prior to the product entering U.S. commerce. FTP will result in the recall of the product. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

Dec. 10

Real Foods LLC, located in Kent, Wash., recalled approximately 308 pounds of Chef Salad with Ham and Turkey due to misbranding and undeclared allergens. The product contained fish (anchovies), a known allergen which is not declared on the product label. The problem was discovered by a customer, who notified the company. The product is labeled for Ranch dressing, but contains a Caesar salad dressing pouch. The Caesar salad dressing contains anchovies. No reports of adverse reactions due to eating these products.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

Baldwin

... Continued from page 3

before transitioning to veterinary medicine," she recalled. "Going to veterinary school was the next logical step in continuing my education in medicine. Needless to say, my dad was happily shocked. I chose to come to FSIS because it combined my passions for learning about medicine and making a difference in keeping our nation's consumers safe. It was a natural fit."

Adding to her work experience is the fact that Baldwin's family farmed their own meat. "When my sister and I were in diapers, our dad would take us hog hunting. To this day, my dad and I still go," she said fondly. "It was my dad who first taught me about food safety. Food safety has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. I am proud to be able to make my passion into a career."

TSP

... Continued from page 10

once you reach the maximum \$18,000 allowed for the tax year, you can no longer contribute to TSP. If you are a FERS employee, matching funds for the remainder of the tax year will cease, so it is beneficial to stretch those contributions out over 26 pay periods.

If you are age 50 or older, or will turn 50 in 2015, you may contribute up to an additional \$6,000 in TSP "Catch-Up contributions" on top of the \$18,000 regular TSP limitation. Because **Catch-Up contributions must be re-elected each tax year**, your 2014 Catch-Up contributions will automatically stop at the end of pay period 24. To have Catch-Up

contributions for 2015 spread over 26 pay periods, you must re-elect them through the EPP or complete a TSP-1-C form. This re-election has to be effective pay period 25 of 2014 and in the amount of \$231 to reach the maximum \$6,000. Keep in mind that you must first be on track to reach the maximum regular TSP contributions for 2015 before you can elect Catch-Up contributions.

You may start, change, or stop your TSP contributions at any time using the EPP or by completing forms TSP-1 or TSP-1-C. Forms are available on the TSP website at www.tsp.gov under Forms and Publications, or from your Human Resources Office. For questions, email Ask.Benefits@fsis.usda.gov.

>>> POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **Directive 7120.1 Revision 23, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products**
- **Notice 66-14, Discontinued Use of Export Certificates for FDA Regulated Food Products That Contain Egg or Egg Products as an Ingredient**
- **Notice 67-14, Unsplit Sternum of Livestock Carcasses in Slaughter Establishments**

- **Notice 69-14, Prior Notification and Failure to Present**
- **Notice 70-14, FSIS Form 9540-1, Import Inspection Application**

Administrative issues were also published.

- **Directive 1510.3, Resolving Officials Cadre**
- **Notice 68-14, Holidays in 2015**
- **Notice 71-14, Cutoff Dates for Yearend Purchases**

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

FSIS Retirees: Nov. 15 - Dec. 15, 2014

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Babb, Easter L., CSI	Logansport, IN	9
Bailey, Kenneth W., CSI	Rochelle, IL	35
Byrd, Mary E., HR Spclst Empl Rel	Beltsville, MD	40
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FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

You can tell the stories of FSIS better than anyone! Send us your articles, photos and feedback. It's simple. Just prepare an article and include: who, what, when, where, why and how. Clear your article through your program area. Then send your article to Beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Candid photos preferred. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



Photo by Katherine Schiedt, OPACE

Pictured from left: Dr. Gregory Parham, Al Almanza, Paul Kiecker, Liz Simmons, Wendy Sonabend, and Malcolm Shorter, (Not pictured: Sue Nelsen and Dr. Evan Sumner)

A Journey of Cultural Transformation

By Edward Stoker, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

On December 15, 2014, Secretary Vilsack awarded 20 teams from across USDA, including three from FSIS, the Department's Cultural Transformer Awards. The inaugural awards program recognized teams of employees whose achievements are making the Department a premier organization and model employer.

Cultural transformation promotes diversity and inclusion to help ensure that the Department is a place where each employee is empowered to reach his or her full potential. As a part of the Department's overall cultural transformation strategy, USDA identified five award categories that employees at all grade levels, along with contractors, could compete to showcase their achievements in cultural transformation: leadership, recruitment and retention, talent management, employee development; and customer focus and community outreach. FSIS

teams won awards in three of the five possible categories:

- The Springdale District Recruitment Team, Springdale District Office, Office of Field Operations in the category of Recruitment and Retention;
- The Center for Learning Team, Office of Outreach and Employee Education and Training in the category of Employee Development; and
- The Food Safety Education Staff (FSES), Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education in the category of Customer Focus and Community Outreach.

These and other improvements are transforming the culture of FSIS in positive ways.

Dedication and commitment to a diverse and inclusive workplace improves our workplace culture not only by increasing diversity and

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Feb. issue – due January 1
March issue – due February 1
April issue – due March 1

Submit contributions to
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We reserve the right to edit
all submissions for content,
clarity and length.

Supervisors

*The Beacon is mailed
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and post The Beacon
for employees without
access to e-mail.*

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN



Al Almanza

Happy New Year! I hope everyone enjoyed the holidays. Having recently celebrated the Dr. Martin Luther King holiday, I am mindful of his call to embrace diversity, be inclusive, and serve one another. I am proud of the Agency's efforts and accomplishments in this area and look forward to continued progress throughout the year and into the future.

Last month, three FSIS teams were recognized by Secretary Vilsack for cultural transformation efforts that are in keeping with the Agency's commitment to improve employee engagement and increase job satisfaction.

Like the Secretary, I want to ensure that FSIS is a place where there is equal opportunity for everyone and that all employees are empowered to reach their full potential. This is why we developed the Employee Engagement Plan.

Diversity is about respect, embracing differences, recognizing similarities, and working together to achieve common goals. In many ways, FSIS is already creating an inclusive environment that incorporates all of these characteristics. The FSIS Employee Engagement Plan is just one way through which we are achieving this.

Other ways we are promoting diversity include incorporating Equal Employment Opportunity, civil rights and diversity training goals into our strategic plans. We also issue annual diversity and inclusion policy statements that highlight our commitment to diversity and encourage employees to support our efforts. Through performance standards, supervisors and managers, including myself, are held accountable for ensuring equal opportunity and promoting diversity in all aspects of employment.

An inclusive workforce sparks innovation, promotes productivity, broadens customer service, fosters teamwork and increases morale. These are all benefits that contribute to making FSIS a better place to work.

I am encouraged by our progress in these areas and inspired by all of your efforts. I appreciate all of your help to make our workplace a better place for all.

FSIS Leadership Competency Model

*By Dean Norman, OOEET
Phone: (301) 504-4828*

The Office of Outreach, Employee Education and Training (OOEET) has developed an FSIS Leadership Competency Model which fosters professional development and empowers FSIS employees to succeed in a rapidly changing environment. The career development guide, which supports both our Agency's Performance Plan as well as our Employee Engagement Plan, is one of the many resources available to

help transform our Agency. The easy-to-apply competency model provides detailed information on critical knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors and highlights activities employees may undertake in order to reach their individual and organizational goals. OOEET constructed and validated the FSIS Leadership Competency Model and complementary Resource Guide for all FSIS employees. For more information, please visit: <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/empl/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=training>.

Core Values and the FSIS Mission

By Felicia Thompson, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

Susan Scarcia embodies FSIS' core value of *One Team, One Purpose*. She understands that there are many different people who work together to accomplish the FSIS mission.

Susan has been working with FSIS for 16 years. As DM she oversees more than 600 Agency employees and more than 1,000 federally-inspected establishments. "I provide leadership in promoting and implementing FSIS' rules and regulations in 21 circuits throughout Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine," Scarcia said, "I said 'promote FSIS' rules and regulations' because these laws are designed to ensure a safe meat supply and I am proud of that—they shouldn't just be enforced—they should be promoted."



Photo by Wanda Fuentes, EIAO

One Team, One Purpose

Scarcia shared what *One Team, One Purpose* means to her. "As part of my vision I've been visiting circuits throughout the District and emphasizing my expectations that Front Line Supervisors, Consumer Safety Inspectors (CSI), and Enforcement, Investigations, and Analysis Officers (EIAO) need to work together as one team rather than separately because we can leverage our resources better and achieve our goals much easier. I emphasize the value in the team concept every chance I get—whether it's during staff meetings, conference calls, or during one-on-one discussions."

"This is a farewell to SEIAO Tom DiBruno retiring after 34 years of service with FSIS. Tom has been a valuable employee, colleague and a good friend," said Scarcia. First row: Saied Iskandar, Agnes Endres, Thomas DiBruno, Marcel Kouassi, Susan Scarcia, and Wanda Fuentes. Second row: Joel Bachert, George Slobodjian, Scott Benek, William Stewart, and Randy Reece.

Photo by Yvonne Maldonado, OFO

A Cultural Transformer

Scarcia is also a proud member of the Agency's Cultural Transformation Working Group. "I am committed to helping make the Philadelphia District, and FSIS as a whole, a better place to work," she said, "The efforts of the working group directly affect FSIS employees, and if people can be happier at work, then they will be more productive, and FSIS will be more successful in achieving its goals. I am proud to be a part of such an important team."

Road to FSIS

Susan is originally from the very district she manages, Philadelphia. Currently, she resides in Margate, New Jersey, with her husband, Jim Smith. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Penn State University in Applied Nutrition Science with an emphasis in Medical Dietetics. She has worked as a public health nutritionist, dietetic technician, and assistant program coordinator for the USDA's Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program.

In 1998, she joined FSIS as a food inspector in Vineland, N.J., and has also worked as a CSI, EIAO, district analyst, staff officer with the Export Program Staff in the Office of International Affairs in Washington, D.C., and deputy district manager in Philadelphia. "All of my positions over the past 32 years in and outside of FSIS have been public health related and have helped me accomplish the mission of protecting public health," she said.

"I love my job and what the Agency stands for. I feel dedicated to the people and the Agency and that makes me feel really good. I also know that no matter what job I hold, one of my main goals is to truly support and publicly recognize the success of our inspectors. There are so many dedicated people in the field and I want them to know how valuable the work they do is in protecting the public's health. I am part of a great team!"



A Q&A SERIES:

Janet Stevens on OCIO



How does your program area support the Agency's mission?

Much of what the Agency does has transformed from paper to automated processes and reporting. OCIO helps protect public health by providing effective and secure business technology resources like connectivity, Public Health Information System (PHIS), and mobile apps. We directly support the field, headquarters employees, as well as our state partners, consumers, and other Agency stakeholders.

What is the most significant initiative that your program area is working on right now?

We have three top priority projects: (1) Improving hard-wire and broadband connectivity to our field employees; (2) enhancing PHIS to support new and emerging needs for mission-critical business functions in domestic inspection, import re-inspection, export activities; and inspection data analysis; and (3) developing apps and devices for the next generation of mobile technology, such as smartphones and tablets. I'm excited to lead strategic Goal 8, the Agency's innovation goal. We're seeing some great results this year in improving processes and engaging employees and the public.

What is the greatest challenge your program area faces right now?

Our greatest challenge is the digital divide. While some parts of the country enjoy envious levels of high-speed

connectivity, others are still being left behind. It can be challenging and costly to provide the best connectivity and new technologies to our field customers. However, it is important so that they can be more efficient and effective in protecting public health.

What is your future vision for your program area?

My vision for the future is to modernize our systems and technologies so that we have more data available across the Agency for analysis. Also, I want to provide newer tools and better connectivity and technology options for our field and mobile workforce. In everything we do I want to provide high-quality and cost-effective customer service.

What are some ways in your program area that staff can provide suggestions or raise questions or concerns with you?

Each quarter, we have an 'All-Hands' meeting for all OCIO headquarters and field staff that includes a Q&A session where employees can ask questions and make suggestions or voice their concerns directly to OCIO leadership. We also have a blog and a crowd sourcing site where employees can discuss, submit, share, and vote on ideas to improve internal processes and better support our customers.

DONATE TO THE LEAVE TRANSFER PROGRAM

There are a number of your fellow employees who are in need of annual leave for a variety of reasons. If you have annual leave that you don't need, you can help them by donating it through the Leave Transfer Program.

The Beacon will print the current list of leave recipients at various times. You can also view it on *InsideFSIS*. In the "I Want To" box, select "Access Public Folders." Then click on the "Personnel" folder and select "Leave Transfer Program." You will find more information about donating leave, forms, rules, eligibility and requirements.

For more information, contact Robbie Terry in OM's Employment, Classification and Compensation Branch at (202) 720-8971.



PHOTO OF THE MONTH

LaWanda Lever, a Food Inspector at Est. 13456P, in Pine Bluff, Ark., embarked on a personal health challenge to get physically fit. LaWanda received the initial inspiration during a fast at her church and she was supported closely on her journey by her spouse, sister, and brother-in-law. She made better food choices, cut out deep fried foods, drank lots of water, and ate smaller meals throughout the day. She also began walking and exercising during breaks and at lunch. With the added help of a smart phone app called "fat secret," Lawannda has shed 70 pounds and gone from a size 20 to a size 12! Moreover, LaWanda has been able to stop taking cholesterol medications and is now aiming to rid herself of high blood pressure medications by eating low sodium foods. Congratulations to LaWanda on her weight loss success!

Photo contributed by Alicia Hickman, OFO

New Poultry Inspection System

NPIS Notes

Question of the Month

In large plants operating under NPIS, will there be a Consumer Safety Inspector (CSI) to inspect carcass parts at the offline reprocessing?

Yes, inspecting carcass parts at the end of reprocessing is an expected verification inspection task under NPIS. FSIS offline verification inspectors will inspect the parts and conduct process control checks on reprocessed birds, as well as require all reprocessed whole birds to be hung back on the line for the FSIS carcass inspector.

Additional questions and answers about NPIS can be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/poultryinspection.

NPIS Mailbox

FSIS has set up a mailbox for any employee inquiries about NPIS. The NPIS mailbox is a one-stop shop to find answers to questions regarding the new poultry inspection system.

All questions will be collected and triaged among four senior management officials, who will review them and provide responses in the shortest amount of time possible. Questions and responses are being tracked and posted on *InsideFSIS*.

If you have questions about NPIS, send them to askNPIS@fsis.usda.gov.

Information Security Awareness: Protecting Yourself from Social Engineering

By Leigh Ann Acree, OCIO
Phone: (202) 418-8816

What Is Social Engineering?

Social engineering in the information security context is defined as the psychological manipulation of people into performing actions or divulging confidential information. Social engineering techniques include:

- **Pretexting:** Pretexting is the act of creating an invented scenario to engage a victim in a manner that increases the chance the victim will divulge information;
- **Phishing:** Phishing is the technique of fraudulently obtaining private information. Typically, the phisher sends an email that appears to come from a legitimate business requesting "verification" of information and warning of some dire consequence if the information is not provided;
- **Phone Phishing:** Phone phishing or voice phishing (sometimes referred to as 'vishing') uses a rogue interactive voice response (IVR) system to recreate a legitimate-sounding copy of a bank or other institution's IVR system. The victim is prompted to call what they believe to be a legitimate bank for the purpose of "verifying" information;
- **Baiting:** During a baiting scheme, the attacker leaves a malware-infected external drive (like a CD-ROM or USB flash drive) with a legitimate looking label and simply waits for someone to use the device;

- **Tailgating:** Here an attacker who is seeking entry into a restricted area simply walks in behind a person who has legitimate access. Sometimes the individual with authorized access might even hold the door open for the attacker believing that she or he might have forgotten the appropriate identity token.

What Makes Someone Susceptible to Social Engineering?

- Lack of knowledge about social engineering and the tactics used by attackers,
- Failing to request proper identification when divulging sensitive information or permitting access to restricted areas,
- Giving out sensitive information over the web that is not password protected or delivered in a secure form,
- Setting passwords that are easy to guess, and
- Clicking on unfamiliar links from an unfamiliar sender.

What Safeguards Can I Take To Avoid These Scams?

- Know what your organization considers to be sensitive information and only share it in a secure way.
- Know your organization's security protocols, policies, and procedures for handling sensitive information and follow them diligently.
- Use proper procedures when discarding property and documents that contain sensitive information.

KUDOS

Would you like to thank, congratulate, or give a shout out to someone in FSIS? Here's your chance. Send your kudo to beacon@fsis.usda.gov and we'll publish one or more each month. Please keep your kudos to a few sentences.

If you didn't know, there's a place on *InsideFSIS* where you can submit kudos as well. To find out who's done just that, go to <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/employee/balance/kudos/kudos.jsp>.

If you would like to place a kudo on *InsideFSIS*, click on the "Submit Kudos" link at the top of the box. You may also send your kudo to intranet.manager@fsis.usda.gov.

Medical Providers Must be Registered with the Department of Labor

By Samilya Zurawski, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8571

Is the medical provider who is treating you for an on-the-job injury registered with the Department of Labor (DOL)'s contractor, ACS? Since March 31, 2004, DOL has required that medical providers who treat federal employees covered by the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) be registered with ACS in order to get paid for the services they render. If you aren't sure about your provider, you can check his or her status at DOL's ACS Provider Search.

The ACS website can be found at <https://owcp.dol.acs-inc.com/portal/main.do>. From the ACS homepage, look at the list of available features and click on the 'provider search' hyperlink. You will need to click "accept the user agreement" to continue with the search. On the next screen, use the pull down tab and select the 'FECA' option. You will automatically be taken to the next screen to begin your actual search. You will need to enter as much information as possible in the next section; last name or name of the practice, city, state, and zip code or you may also select a specialty. The list that appears contains the contact information for all physicians in the selected area who have agreed to have their practice information available to users. If you need assistance, you can contact the ACS-DOL Web Portal Helpdesk at 1-800-461-7485, Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Eastern Time.

If you have any trouble locating a registered medical provider, please remember that we are here to assist you. Just call us in Minneapolis, Minn., at 1-800-370-3747.

Protocols to Address Emergencies or Imminent Danger in Your Workplace

- ☑ Stay calm
- ☑ Find a safe place (protect yourself)
- ☑ Call 911
- ☑ Call private or local security personnel
- ☑ Call your supervisor
- ☑ Call OIG at 1-800-424-9121 if there is criminal activity

Workplace Violence Prevention & Response

Program Hotline:

1-877-987-3747

Employee Assistance Program (EAP):

1-800-222-0364

(TTY: 888-262-7848)

E-mail:

workplaceviolenceprevention@fsis.usda.gov

www.FOH4you.com

Document all incidents of assault, harassment, interference, intimidation or threat per Directive 4735.4.

GET ANSWERS

AT **AskFSIS**

AskFSIS is a web-based technology and policy question-and-answer forum on topics such as exporting, labeling, inspection, programs and procedures.

In addition, askFSIS offers Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds that link back to the Q&As. Visit <http://askfsis.custhelp.com/> to view recently posted topics.

SNAPSHOTS

Alameda District

At Est. 34741 M, in Chino, Ca., FI Ignacio Solis delivered a presentation on the Mexican tradition of celebrating El Dia de Muerto. His comprehensive overview of the subject matter covered the history of the holiday, beliefs about the tradition, and different ways it is celebrated.

He included photographs and other visual aids to tell the story and promote understanding of this tradition. Pictured: FI Solis. Story and Photo contributed by Dr. Rafique Tahir, DVM, OFO.



Chicago District

From left, Front Line Supervisor Greg Gillum, Consumer Safety Inspector (CSI) William Imler, Compliance Investigator Lisa Swallow (center) and CSI Angelina Schile visited a local grocery store in Columbus, Ind., to hand out food safety material to shoppers. The materials handed out were in English and Spanish. Approximately 300 people visited the information table to ask questions and pick up handouts. Photo contributed by Angelina Schile, OFO.

Chicago District

FSIS Inspectors in Rantoul, Ill., held a charitable event they called "Falls for our Fallen." Bradley Frankenfield, Patrick Paquette, and John Campbell (pictured from left to right) all went skydiving at their local airfield. Their skydiving event benefited "This Able Veteran," which rescues dogs from humane societies and trains them to be service animals for wounded veterans. Dr. Kimberly Burrell (pictured) agreed to document the event from the safety of the ground. The team raised over \$200 and increased awareness of the charity from high in the sky. Photo contributed by Dr. Burrell, D.V.M., OFO.



FROM THE **FIELD**

Philadelphia District

Bronx Front Line Supervisor, Marilu Ramirez-Suarez, led a donation drive for Safe Horizon, a domestic abuse charity located in Brooklyn, N.Y. Several FSIS circuits across the Philadelphia District gathered needed supplies for the charity. Safe Horizon provides support and resources to individuals and families that are experiencing domestic violence or abuse. Pictured: (left to right) Back row standing: CSI Nicole Corker, Director of Safe Horizon Ms. Kimmi Herring, Front row standing: A staff member of Safe Horizon, FLS Ramirez-Suarez, SPHV Dr. Lynne Craine; (Seated) CSI Roland Ebegbe. Photo contributed by CSI Karina Hazim, OFO. Story contributed by CSI Joseph Ndungu, OFO.



Raleigh District

Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza and Office of the Inspector General officials visited Establishment P-7927, Amick Farms, in Hurlock, Md. They observed the HIMP inspection system and discussed the new inspection system with plant employees. The team observed firsthand how USDA inspection is working to protect public health. Pictured: Dr. Ahmad Jilani, CSI Elizabeth Bishop, DUS Almanza, CSI Raynetta Jackson, CSI Rita Hurst, and CSI Kimberly Showell. Dr. Trina Ward is sitting in the front. Photo contributed by Dr. Jelani, OFO.



Atlanta District

The night shift at Est. P-00855 and P-00855D in Athens, Ga., collected coats, blankets, warm clothes, hats, and gloves for two local charities—People Living in Recovery (PLR) and the Sparrows Nest—that assist the homeless plus others in need.

The night shift also donated Thanksgiving food and Christmas gifts for children at PLR. Pictured (from left to right, back row) Patrick Knights, Todd Hunt, and Robert Byrom; (middle row) Lillie Oglesby, Juanita Mack, Betty Rakestraw, Sandra Mitchell, Lorraine Rhoden, Sebrina Thomas, LaKenya Bullard and Susan Kelley; (front row) Paulette Buice. Photo contributed by Kelley Susan, OFO.



Meat Composting at the Western Laboratory

By Megan Kennedy, OPHS
Phone: (510) 814-3038

Have you ever wondered what happens to all of the excess meat that is collected for chemical and microbiological testing? Here at FSIS' Western Laboratory (WL) in Alameda, Ca., we are recycling it!

On June 3, 2013, USDA and Environmental Protection Agency jointly launched the U.S. Food Waste Challenge. This campaign has the goal of raising awareness about wasted food and provides resources that help private organizations, government agencies, and individuals:

- Recover food waste by connecting potential food donors to hunger relief organizations like food banks and pantries;
- Recycle food waste to feed animals or to create compost, bioenergy, and natural fertilizers;
- Reduce food waste by improving product development, storage, shopping/ordering, marketing, labeling, and cooking methods.

As part of the Office of Public Health Science's (OPHS) contribution to this important goal, the WL began a pilot program for composting negative meat samples with an initial goal of composting approximately 5,000 pounds of meat per year. WL started its compost program in May of 2013.

Composting can be a messy process, especially when initially trying to figure out the best way to run an efficient program. All of the samples to be composted are stored in several layers of plastic bags and all of those plastic bags have to be removed before the samples can be composted. The process of removing the plastic often causes blood to splatter, making cleanup a challenge. With the plastic removed, the meat samples are placed in compostable bags. By their nature, compostable bags are flimsy. WL figured out double-bagging helps.

In the beginning, cleaning up after the composting was an ordeal. There was blood and melted ice from the samples on the counters and on the floors. After much trial and error (and a lot of mopping the floor and scrubbing the counters), WL figured out that by putting cardboard on the floors around the counters and covering the counters with absorbent paper a lot of the mess was alleviated. Once WL had a workable process for

composting, additional sample types were added to the composting program.

Since the program started in May of 2013, WL has composted over 27,000 pounds of meat! The work done at the WL laid the groundwork for FSIS' Midwestern Laboratory, in St. Louis, Mo., and Eastern Laboratory, in Athens, Ga., to start their own composting programs.

All of the samples to be composted are stored in several layers of plastic bags. All of those plastic bags have to be removed before the samples can be composted.

Photos by Daysena Pelham, OPHS



Laboratory employees prepare negative meat samples for composting. The goal is to compost approximately 5,000 pounds of meat per year.



New Travel System Coming Soon

By Michelle Garner and Jeremy Roper, OCFO
Phone: (301) 344-0750 and (301) 344-0721

On February 23, 2015, FSIS will transition from our current electronic travel system, GovTrip, to a new travel system - Concur® Government Edition (Concur). Concur will work much the same as GovTrip, so the impact resulting from the new system is expected to be minimal.

Self-registration training classes became available to both travelers and Travel Approvers this month and will continue through February. Access to GovTrip will be suspended after February 20, 2015.

Training on Concur is not a prerequisite to using the system. However, employees who travel, especially those who do so regularly, are encouraged to utilize available training options:

- **Live Webinar for Bargaining Unit Employees** (2.5 hours), with an interactive question session and content geared towards bargaining unit employees. It is hosted by an instructor, who broadcasts step-by-step instructions; you view the presentation with opportunities to ask questions. Pre-registration is required.
- **Live Webinar for Federal Travelers - Non-Bargaining Unit Employees** (2 hours), with interactive question session and content geared towards individual (non-bargaining unit) travelers and travel arrangers. It is hosted by an instructor, who broadcasts step-by-step instructions; you view the presentation and ask questions at the conclusion of the demonstration. Pre-registration is required.
- **Live Webinar for Travel Approvers** (1 hour), with interactive question session. It is hosted by an instructor, who broadcasts step-by-step instructions; you view the

presentation and ask questions at the conclusion of the demonstration. This course is only for those who authorize travel, and *does not* cover travel arrangement. Pre-registration is required.

- **"Concur for New Users" AgLearn Course** (1.5 hours). USDA offers a recorded webinar, available to anyone with an AgLearn account, at any time. To access the content, follow this link: https://aglearn.usda.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=ITEM_DETAILS&componentID=USDA-Concur-GE-User&componentTypeID=Web+Based&revisionDate=1409331240000; or log in to AgLearn at www.aglearn.usda.gov and enter the course title 'Concur for new Users' in the "Search Catalog" field.
- **Training CD.** A training CD is available for self-paced learning or reference. The CD contains selected simulations on accomplishing common system activities, a copy of the user manual, and a recorded Bargaining Unit training webinar. You can obtain the CD through the Center for Learning, at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=CDDVDRequest9757>.

Updated information about training classes is available on the Chief Financial Officer's (OCFO) Travel Resources Website <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=Travel/9970> (requires eAuth login), and is published weekly in the *Wednesday Newsline*. If you have additional questions, you may contact your program or district area Federal Agency Travel Administrator (FATA), the Financial Services Center (FSC) Customer Contact Center at 1-800-949-3964 (option 5), or the OCFO/FMD/FAOB Travel Section at (301) 344-0721.

"OUR MISSION IN ACTION" Photos Needed

Do you have a good photo of our mission in action? The Agency is looking to build its FSIS image library and needs photos that show what we do as a public health agency to ensure that the nation's meat, poultry, and egg products are safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged. Send your images to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

- Photos must be high quality resolution—300 ppi or higher. Size: 5"x7" or 8"x10".
- Provide a caption explaining what is being done in the photo.
- If there are people in the photo, provide a signed USDA Consent/Release Form, available on *InsideFSIS* at <http://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/DocumentViewerServlet?filename=FSISIntranet/News/Documents/fsisprdb20130730023735.doc>, from each person.

Take Action Against Addiction

By Jodi Hallstrom, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8597

Addiction can have tremendous power over an individual's life. Compulsive use of drugs or alcohol can damage every part of an individual's family and work life. The problem can ripple outward and impact many lives.

Within a family, the impact of an individual's addiction can cause destructive levels of stress, financial troubles, legal problems, and instability. In the workplace, addiction can lead to absenteeism, loss of productivity, job-related accidents, and strained relationship with coworkers.

By the time a person's substance use escalates into an addiction, it has likely become a chronic, relapsing illness characterized by increased usage and cravings. Fortunately, through intervention and treatment, recovery is possible.

Common Warning Signs of Addiction

Family, friends, and coworkers all can play a role in identifying substance abuse in others. Common warning signs of addiction include:

- Problems at work;
- An increase in the amount and frequency of alcohol or drug use;

- Annoyance when others comment on an individual's alcohol or drug use;
- Ignoring personal responsibilities (not properly caring for children and pets, not paying household bills);
- Poor physical appearance or hygiene;
- Forgetting things and misplacing items;
- Difficulty concentrating;
- Legal problems related to alcohol and drug use, such as driving while intoxicated; and
- Inability to sleep or being sleepy all the time.

Where To Get Help

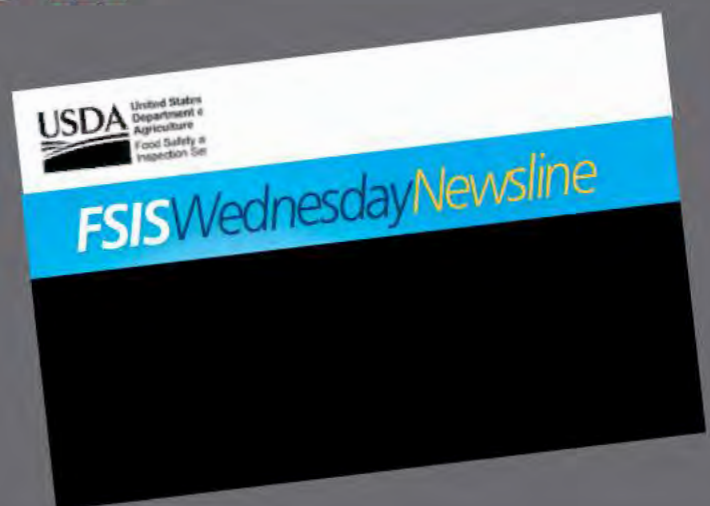
To learn more about the damaging impact of addictions and find resources that can help begin the process of recovery, go to the Library's Community Resources pages or keyword search under "addiction" at www.FOH4YOU.com.

The Employee Assistance Program & WorkLife4You programs offer supportive resources and confidential counseling for anyone struggling with an addiction. Call them at 1-800-222-0364 (TTY 1-888-262-7848) or go online at www.foh4you.com and www.worklife4you.com for free and confidential services, **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**.

Stay up to date ...

The *Wednesday Newsline* is emailed to headquarter and field employees every Wednesday with important information about the Agency.

Be sure to read this valuable resource every week to stay up to date with Agency happenings. To submit an item to the Wednesday Newsline, please send it to wednesdaynewsline@fsis.usda.gov.



FSIS Retirees: Dec. 15, 2014 - Jan. 15, 2015

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Abbott, Roger L., CSI	Collinsville, AL	16
Bailey, Vanessa M., FI-S	Selbyville, DE	12
Benson, Lillie Ann, FI	Montgomery, AL	16
Chacko, Jacob, SVMO	Memphis, TN	31
Choudry, Dr. Muhammad A., VMO/Staff Ofcr	Philadelphia, PA	32
Cruz, Luciano M., CSI	Jacksonville, FL	41
Davis, Lula M., FI	Center, TX	15
DiBruno, Thomas A., Spvy CSO	Philadelphia, PA	33
Eno, James J., Complnc Investigator	Lombard, IL	32
Forgnoni, Lauren, Prop. Mgmt. Spec.	Millsboro, DE	13
Gomez, Frank R., CSI	Fresno, CA	27
Grangier Jr., Clement R., CSO	Washington, DC	35
Gushard, Louis A., CSI	Union City, TN	20
Herzberg, Donna, CSI	Cold Spring, MN	17
Jackson, Kenneth Dale, CSI	Sedalia, MO	37
Jackson, Robert L., Financial Tech	Urbandale, IA	17
Johnson, Arthur L., CSI	Farmerville, LA	32
Jones, Vanessa A., Secretary-OA	Washington, DC	35
Kazi, Vilayathusen S., SVMO	Detroit, MI	32
Killion, Jerry L., CSI	Monett, MO	39
Knighten, Joan A., FI	Jack, AL	22
Lee, Cheh Yu, CSI	San Francisco, CA	38
Leifert, Robert D., Complnc Invstgr	Bothell, WA	42
Lindenberger, Joan M., Pub Affairs Splst	Washington, DC	34

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
McCage, Lula L., Lead Consmr Safety Insp	Heavener, OK	37
McDougal, Thomas D., VMO	Dallas, TX	32
Munoz, Benny P., FI-S	Seguin, TX	28
Magee, John I., CSI	Summit, MS	21
McCluskey, Henry K., SVMO	College Grove, TN	37
Nyarko, Owusu, CSI	Orangeburg, NY	7
Poggi, Louis R., SVMO	Eureka, CA	10
Poulton, Bryan N., CSI	Chicago, IL	26
Richards, Aubrey Wayne, SCSi	Hickory, KY	32
Rist, James A., CSI	Macon, MO	34
Rose, JoAnn, IT Splst	Washington, DC	36
Sauer, Charles J., Complnc Invstgr	Lexington, KY	26
Seeley, Denise, SCSi	Waterloo, IA	21
Skrade, Douglas, SVMO	Curtiss, WI	14
Strong, Kenneth G., SVMO	Forest, MS	27
Swinson, Juandy S., Prog Analyst Officer	Beltsville, MD	33
Titus, Roland L., CSI	Fresno, CA	40
Turgeau, Clifford N., CSI	Nacogdoches, TX	38
Tyson, Katie Mae, FI-S	Montgomery, AL	26
Vick, Retha H., FI-S	Lewiston, NC	21
Wallace, Barry J., CSI	West Chester, PA	36
Weisberg, James A., CSI	Tucson, AZ	43
White, Dean V., FI-Procspd Prod	Harpster, OH	16
Winters, Bonnie D., Secretary	Washington, DC	12
Wolsleben, Linda, CSI	Denver, CO	30



Read and Join in a Discussion with Al Almanza

To check out the Deputy Under Secretary's Blog, go to *InsideFSIS* at <https:connections.usda.gov/blogs/FSIS/>.

inclusion but also by improving performance and customer service.

Representatives from the FSIS award-winning teams shared some thoughts about being recognized for their various achievements.

Paul Kiecker, the District Manager from the Springdale Office stated, "To me cultural transformation means that everyone has the chance to be successful, whatever that means to them, and that supervisors and managers encourage and mentor personnel so that personal, Agency and Department goals are attained."

Sylvia Bourn, Chief of the Organization and Employee Development Branch said, "The award recognizes our team's commitment to facilitating cultural transformation with a focus on services that nurture organizational and

employee development, inspire creative solutions and enable desired outcomes."

Maria Malagon, Director of FSES said, "Yes, we are a regulatory agency but we are also charged with educating consumers about the risks of foodborne illnesses. I am proud to say that my staff is committed to preventing foodborne illnesses in all sectors of society."

In 2014, the Partnership for Public Service ranked USDA third among the nineteen large federal agencies in terms of support for diversity. The Partnership for Public Service uses data from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey to create "Best Places to Work" rankings. Still, according to Secretary Vilsack, all USDA agencies should remain focused on diversity. USDA represents all of America, and to do that effectively, we must continually seek to reflect, reach and serve all Americans.

Pictured from left:
Dr. Gregory Parham,
Maria Malagon,
Luis Delgadillo, Chris
Bernstein, Malcolm
Shorter, Luis Rivera,
Tracy Legall, Bridgette
Keefe, Tina Hanes,
Marianne Gravely,
Kristina Beaug, Amelia
Kermis, and
Al Almanza.



Photos by
Katherine Schiedt, OPACE



Pictured from left: Dr. Gregory Parham, Sylvia Bourn, James Alexander, Kimberly Morren, Michael Watts, Salina Nájera, Anthony L. Thompson, Stephanie Wilkins, Thomas Walsh, Malcolm Shorter, and Al Almanza. (Recipient not pictured: Dr. Gregory Brookhouser)

>>> POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- Directive 7120.1 Revision 23, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in The Production of Meat, Poultry and Egg Products
- Directive 10010.3, Traceback Methodology for *Escherichia coli* (E. coli) O157:H7 in Raw Ground Beef Products and Bench Trim
- Notice 72-14, Holiday Sample Collection And Shipment
- Notice 73-14, Import Residue Sampling
- Notice 05-15, Interpreting Results of FSIS Verification Sampling of Domestic Beef Product Derived From Advanced Meat Recovery Systems (AMR01/FAMR01)
- Notice 06-15, Inspection Responsibilities and Authorities for Reducing Slaughter or Evisceration Line Speed
- Notice 09-15, Specified Risk Material (SRM) Control Verification Task

Administrative issues were also published.

- Directive 1307.1, Systems Development Life Cycle (SDLC)
- Directive 1050.1, Requesting Participation at Non-FSIS Sponsored Meetings and Events
- Notice 01-15, Interim FSIS Standard Operating Procedures For Sign Language Interpreting (SLI) Services
- Notice 02-15, Public Health Regulations for Use in Scheduling Food Safety Assessments
- Notice 03-15, Sampling Project Codes for the Fiscal Year 2015 National Residue Program
- Notice 04-15, Actions to Facilitate Industry Access to the Public Health Information System (PHIS)
- Notice 07-15, Instructions for Writing Poultry Good Commercial Practices Noncompliance Records and Memorandum of Interview Letters for Poultry Mistreatment
- Notice 08-15, Verification Procedures For Instructional Statements on Raw Poultry Products

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

RECALLS <<<

Dec. 22, 2014	Canadian Firm Recalls Pork Products Produced Without Benefit of Inspection
Dec. 23, 2014	Illinois Firm Recalls Bacon Products Due to Misbranding
Dec. 29, 2014	Texas Firm Recalls Pork Products Due to Misbranding and Undeclared Allergens
Dec. 30, 2014	Texas Firm Recalls Chicken and Beef Products Due to Misbranding and Undeclared Allergens
Dec. 30, 2014	Tennessee Firm Recalls Chicken Products Due to Misbranding and Undeclared Allergens
Jan. 2, 2015	Texas Firm Recalls Lamb Products Imported Without Benefit of Inspection
Jan. 7, 2015	California Firm Recalls Boneless Beef Products Imported Without Benefit of Inspection
Jan. 7, 2015	Pennsylvania Firm Recalls Chili Product Due to Misbranding and an Undeclared Allergen
Jan. 8, 2015	California Firm Recalls Beef And Pork Products Due to Foreign Matter Contamination

Continued on page 16 ...

>>> **RECALLS**

Jan. 8, 2015	Pennsylvania Firm Recalls Beef Products Due to Misbranding and an Undeclared Allergen
Jan. 9, 2015	New York Firm Recalls Pork Sausage Products Due to Misbranding and an Undeclared Allergen
Jan. 12, 2015	New York Firm Recalls Beef Product Due to Misbranding and Undeclared Allergens
Jan. 14, 2015	Massachusetts Firm Recalls Ground Beef Products Due to Possible Foreign Matter Contamination
Jan. 14, 2015	Iowa Firm Recalls Beef Products Due to Misbranding and Undeclared Allergens
Jan. 16, 2015	Georgia Firm Recalls Pork Products Due to Misbranding and Undeclared Allergens
Jan. 16, 2015	New York Firm Recalls Chorizo Products Due to Misbranding and an Undeclared Allergen
Jan. 16, 2015	Illinois Firm Recalls Pork Products Produced Without Benefit of Inspection
Jan. 16, 2015	California Firm Recalls Pork Products Produced Without Benefit of Inspection
Jan. 16, 2015	Illinois Firm Recalls Chicken Products Produced Without Adequate Ready-to-Eat HACCP Plan and a <i>Listeria Monocytogenes</i> Program
Jan. 21, 2015	Pennsylvania Firm Recalls Pork Products Imported Without Benefit of Inspection
Jan. 26, 2015	New York Firm Recalls Sausage Products Due to Misbranding and an Undeclared Allergen
Jan. 28, 2015	Washington Firm Recalls Boneless Beef Trim Product Due to Possible <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 Contamination
Jan 29, 2015	California Firm Recalls Chicken Stew Products Produced Without Benefit of Import Inspection
Jan 30, 2015	Ohio Firm Recalls Salami Products Due To Possible Temperature Abuse
Jan 30, 2015	Minnesota Firm Recalls Pork Products Produced Without Benefit of Inspection
Jan 30, 2015	Pennsylvania Firm Recalls Pork Rib Products Due to Misbranding and Undeclared Allergen
Jan 30, 2015	Florida Firm Recalls Cooked Pork Products Due to Misbranding and An Undeclared Allergen

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

February 2015

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

You can tell the stories of FSIS better than anyone! Send us your articles, photos and feedback. It's simple. Just prepare an article and include: who, what, when, where, why and how. Clear your article through your program area. Then send your article to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Candid photos preferred. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

FACES OF FOOD SAFETY

In this month's Faces of Food Safety, FSIS spotlights Sue Nelsen, a resource manager in the District Office in Springdale, Ark. To read about Sue and how she supports field employees, go to page 3.

Photo submitted by Cyndi Unruh



Funding FSIS: Appropriations

By Josh Stull, OPACE
Phone: (202) 690-3112

The appropriations process can seem complicated or confusing; however, it can easily be broken down in a few simple steps. Since Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza testified on February 26 regarding the proposed fiscal year 2016 budget, this synopsis may help as you see follow-up activities. Simply put, the appropriations process is how our Agency receives funding.

Within FSIS, the appropriations process starts with the Agency's budget request. Thus, in the spring of each year, the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) begins to develop a budget. This spring, OCFO will meet to discuss funding for fiscal year 2017. OCFO gathers information directly from each program area on what funding they need. Once that is done, OCFO takes proposals to the Management Council, which boils down the issues and determines what FSIS should focus on. The draft budget proposal still has to go through the Department's Office of Budget and Program Analysis, as well as the Office of Management and Budget, which provide guidance and direction on the final budget request. Once it has been approved by all, the President submits the overall budget proposal to Congress, typically by the first Monday of February.

The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defense and general Welfare of the United States ...

- Art. 1, Sec. 8 of the U.S. Constitution

No money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in consequence of Appropriations made by law ...

- Art. 1, Sec. 9 of the U.S. Constitution

The Main Players in the Appropriations Process

- The President
- Department Leadership
- Two Chambers of Congress (House and Senate)
- Appropriations Committees
- Appropriations Subcommittees

For the House and Senate, the first legislative step in the appropriations process is for each chamber to approve a budget resolution

Continued on page 6 ...

The Beacon is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

March issue – due February 1
April issue – due March 1
May issue – due April 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to email.

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN

Over the past few months, I have held several town hall and stakeholder meetings to highlight the many things we accomplished in 2014. You may have heard me say that 2014 was a busy year for FSIS. I really think "busy" is an understatement. You all have been working tirelessly, day in and day out, to keep food safe for the American public.

As a result of your hard work and dedication, we have made important progress. As you know, we have been focusing on tackling pathogens, particularly *Salmonella*. With the adoption of the final poultry slaughter modernization rule, we are now in the process of implementing the New Poultry Inspection System. We estimate that implementation of this rule will prevent more than 5,000 illnesses a year. That represents a big step in the right direction. We have made great strides in areas of food defense, with more plants than ever before implementing food defense practices. We have also made progress in humane slaughter, with more plants establishing a systematic approach to humane handling.

These are just a few of the things we achieved in the last year. This month's entire *Beacon* newsletter could be all about our achievements, and there still wouldn't be enough room to list them all. Luckily, there is a report on the FSIS website that highlights our accomplishments in a comprehensive way. Everything in that report is because of you and what you do. You can find it here: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/strategic-planning>. You should take pride in these results.

I know that we post a lot of plans and reports, and that I often encourage you to read them. I want you to see the results of what you do and how you impact the success of our Agency. It is important that we hold ourselves accountable, and to do so, we track our performance, review our actions, and continue to look for resolutions and for areas where we can improve. This report shows your commitment and dedication to our food safety mission. I thank you for the role that you play in making our food supply the safest in the world. What you do matters and makes a difference. The numbers in this report directly reflect that fact.

This year we are off to another strong start, and I look forward to continuing our efforts to improve food safety and prevent foodborne illness. People should not get sick from the food they eat. That can be prevented, and together we can bring about this result.



Al Almanza

Read and Join in a Discussion with Al Almanza



To check out the Deputy Under Secretary's Blog, go to *InsideFSIS* at <https://connections.usda.gov/blogs/FSIS/>.

Sue Nelsen – Supporting Field Employees

By Felicia Thompson, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

Human resources and managing a budget can be an overlooked piece of the food safety puzzle. While less visible to the public than other things that the Agency does, it is no less valuable. For more than 26 years, Suzanne Nelsen has been supporting FSIS employees in this function. Sue, as many call her, is a resource manager in the District Office in Springdale, Ark.

Her task list is a varied one. "I am responsible for all aspects of personnel matters, to include daily staffing needs in plants, recruiting potential employees, budget planning, procurement, the workers compensation program, merit promotions, reassignments, Web T&A issues, and work measurements for assignments," Nelsen said. "I feel that I am a jack of all trades." She acknowledged that by taking care of these tasks, she allows inspectors to focus on their duties. "The inspectors are the ones on the front line doing the important work, and they depend on me, which is why I don't leave projects that I'm working on for them unfinished," she said.

Knowing Her People

In Nelsen's District, there are 987 field inspectors including food inspectors, consumer safety inspectors, and veterinary medical officers. She takes the time to get to know the large staff she serves. "One of the most important things I do on a daily basis is to make sure staffing levels in the plants are at the required levels," Nelsen said. "This requires being an effective communicator, knowing each employee's skill level, and also knowing the required expertise needed to properly inspect a particular plant. So when an inspector is needed to cover for another inspector, I have to know that the relief



inspector has the abilities needed to perform the duties that the plant requires."

Securing the Agency's Future Workforce

To meet future personnel demands, Nelsen was part of a team that made sure that announcements of job openings in the District received the widest dissemination possible. The team placed advertisements for food inspector positions in local

newspapers, sent out flyers, and attended job fairs. "We knew we had to do something to get qualified applicants into the system. We held a weeklong event in three cities in Kansas—two days in Dodge City, two in Garden City, and one in Liberal. The turnout at each location was absolutely amazing. We wanted to make these events all-encompassing. We brought computers for applicants to use, we helped them with their resumes, and [we] even helped applicants set up accounts in USAJobs."

The team's efforts directly resulted in the Agency hiring for hard-to-fill positions in Western Kansas, a region that has been especially short-staffed as a result of its remote geography. "Western Kansas has been a hard-to-fill area for years, and now we have been able to fill all the open positions and still have plenty of applicants waiting to come on board as vacancies occur. I love this part of my job—I'll do whatever it takes to accomplish the mission and provide support for inspectors. We're here for them!"

The Groton, Massachusetts native now calls Lowell, Arkansas home. Nelsen has been married to her husband, Henry, for 29 years. They have two adult sons, James and Jason. Nelsen's 8-year-old cocker spaniel, Molly, is also part of the family. For fun, Nelsen loves to hunt and camp and would love to one day travel to Alaska and live off the land for 3 months.

A Q&A SERIES

Steven Fisher, OCFO

Phone: (202) 720-8700



How does your program area support the Agency's mission?

The mission of the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) is to maximize food safety with each dollar of taxpayer resources through continuous improvement via strategic planning and performance management relative to the Government Performance and Results Act, budget formulation and execution, and managing the travel program other financial services for FSIS.

What is the most exciting (or significant) initiative or effort that your program area is working on right now?

One of the most significant initiatives that OCFO is working on is Actual Time Automation (ATA), which will automate and streamline the employee time keeping and billing systems for over 8,000 FSIS In-Plant Personnel (IPP). ATA is one of the Secretary's Signature Process Improvement projects, the progress of which is reviewed monthly by the Secretary.

FSIS currently utilizes two paper forms each pay period for IPP to record their time. The first is a time and attendance (T&A) form for hours worked and the second is the form 5110 for reimbursable hours worked in each plant. Under the new process, IPP will record T&A and reimbursable hours simultaneously. When fully implemented, the new process should help IPP reduce the amount of time they spend performing administrative tasks and will thereby provide additional time to perform food safety related tasks.

Upon implementation (February 2016), FSIS will deliver an automated billable-time capture solution to over 3,000 IPP and reduce the paper 5110 by approximately 60%. An "e-Device" pilot portion of ATA is planned with the goal of maximizing the electronic submission of a one source T&A and 5110 for approximately 5,000 IPP without computer access.

Our strategic planning staff has just begun the process of revising the Agency's Strategic Plan for 2017-2021. We are working with FSIS leadership to review the existing Plan's mission, vision, values, and goals. Further in the process, we will look at goal work groups, strategies (objectives), specific performance measures, and activity and resource alignment. Development of the plan will require much effort on the part of all program areas and Agency leaders over the coming months.

Additionally, we just transitioned from our former electronic travel system, GovTrip, to a new travel system - Concur®

Government Edition (Concur).

Concur works much the same as GovTrip, so the expected impact resulting from the new system should be minimal. However, the new system offers improvements that will benefit FSIS travelers including the use of eReceipts from airlines, car rentals, hotels, and other participating vendors.

What is the greatest challenge your program area faces right now?

One of the greatest challenges for OCFO is to be an effective advocate for FSIS in terms of securing the resources the Agency needs to fulfill its mission and continue to make progress in achieving its strategic goals, and to ensure sound fiscal stewardship and accountability of the resources that we have been provided. In this era of austere budgets and as all Federal agencies come under increased scrutiny by Congress and the public, OCFO must help lead the way with an emphasis on accountability and to ensure that we are spending those resources in the most efficient and effective manner to meet our mission and challenges.

What is your future vision for your program area?

The emphasis for OCFO will be customer-centric, focusing on performance and results to become best in class for services. The goal is for OCFO to be recognized as a leader and trusted business partner both inside and outside of FSIS.

What are some ways in your program area that staff can provide suggestions or raise questions or concerns with you?

OCFO has quarterly all-hands meetings, weekly senior management staff meetings (expanded to all branch chiefs once per month), one-on-one meetings with senior managers on a weekly basis, and an aggressive effort to address the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results. Focus groups were held with staff from all organizational units during July 2014 to address OCFO-specific areas in which FEVS results indicate attention is warranted. OCFO senior management will be implementing an action plan to address issues. In addition, OCFO-initiated team building exercises for all OCFO staff started last year will be continued with a focus on ways to address the FEVS action plan.

PHOTO ^{OF} THE MONTH



Team members, left to right: Investigator (INV) Jeffery Griess; INV Joseph Wolfgram; Regional Director Luis Zamora; U.S. Attorney Debora Gilg; Assistant U.S. Attorney Russell Mayer; OIG Special Agent Brett Dickerson; Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge Anthony Mohatt; Criminal Chief Jan Sharp; and Supervisory INV Gregory Harstick. Not Pictured: Supervisory INV Joel Willnerd and INV Tamara Dey.

Photo contributed by Luis Zamora, OIEA

TEAM RECEIVES INSPECTOR GENERAL'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

*By Luis Zamora, OIEA
Phone: (214) 767-2783*

An FSIS investigative team based out of the Office of Investigation, Enforcement, and Audit Southwest Region received the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) Integrity and Efficiency Award for Excellence. The investigators received information from Office of Field Operations inspection personnel that a company had

certified that certain meat was federally inspected when in fact it was not. The 2,650 pounds of ground beef product was headed for the lunch trays of children in the Omaha Public School system in Nebraska. The FSIS team intercepted the product before it was served to the students. FSIS' quick action not only protected public health but also resulted in the successful prosecution of the owners. Congratulations on a job well done!

New Poultry Inspection System

NPIS Notes

Question of the Month

What resume development assistance will the Agency give to those wanting to apply for promotions to the GS-8 under the New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS)?

Promotions within NPIS will be a competitive process, and all factors in the announcement and the application process will be considered. The Agency has developed a voluntary resume writing training seminar. This seminar was piloted in September 2014. Additional seminars will be available to those interested. The Office of Outreach, Employee Education and Training (OOEET) will offer this one-day seminar to help employees with resume writing basics and navigating and using the USAJobs application website. Participants will have the option of writing a resume – either paper-based or electronically. The sessions will provide insight on how to use USAJobs as a search and application tool. Computers will be made available for hands-on training, and one-on-one assistance will be provided as needed. Additional locations for training will be announced soon. Since this training is voluntary, the Agency will not pay for travel or overtime. FSIS has scheduled more than 70 resume writing workshops. Training dates and locations will be announced in the *Wednesday Newsline*.

FSIS Retirees: Jan. 15 - Feb. 15, 2015

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Arshad, Abdul H., SVMO	Millsboro, DE	35	Loucks, Robert C.,	Abbeville, AL	36
Ballard, Carlton, FI-S	Dudley, NC	33	FI-Proscd Products		
Bohac, Mary A., SVMO	Ames, IA	22	Maker, Linda, CSI	Harbeson, DE	38
Bolyard, Mack C.,	Omaha, NE	31	Marien, Charles D., FI-S	Green Bay, WI	15
Consmr Safety Offrc			Matney, Glenda A.,	Springdale, AR	30
Botros, Farouk M., VMO	Lombard, IL	10	Supvy CSI		
Brown, Else C., Prog Spclst	Athens, GA	15	Matsuo, Stanley T., CSI	Honolulu, HI	18
Carr, Eveylene, Lead CSI	Clarksville, AR	34	Palang, Alejandro B.,	Alamed, CA	36
Coonce, Dayna M., CSI	Columbia, MO	31	Microbiol		
Davis, Cheryl M., Prog Anal	Washington, DC	34	Patel, Arun P., SVMO	Live Oak, FL	31
Drury, Paul R., FI-S	Greeley, CO	13	Pelaez, Juan A., CSI	Gonzales, TX	34
Hilberg, Steven R., CSI	Pendleton, OR	38	Ridenoure, Alice I., CSI	Ft. Smith, AR	35
Hutchins, Janet R.,	Athens, GA	38	Shah, Mohammad S.,	Pine Bluff, AR	29
Biolcl Sci Lab Tec			SVMO		
Kennedy, Joe Anne A.,	Washington, DC	27	Shinn, Natasha T., VMO	Washington, DC	28
HR Spec			Woods, Geraldine W., VMO	Dallas, TX	22
			Zaki, Ezzat H., VMO	Omaha, NE	30

Funding

... Continued from page 1

early in each calendar year, which gives respective appropriations committees their top-line numbers on how much to appropriate. Each appropriations committee has subcommittees that have their own jurisdiction over Federal departments, agencies, and topics.

For FSIS' Congressional and Public Affairs staff, drafting testimony and preparing Agency leadership is the focus during this time. As the liaison between the Agency and Congress, FSIS' congressional team ensures that Agency leadership knows what is important to Representatives and Senators, especially those on committees that have jurisdiction over FSIS.

The testimony of Department and Agency leadership is crucial, since it's the official record of what is important to FSIS. It also focuses on policy and accomplishments, not necessarily just on specific numbers that were included in the budget request.

After the budget request is sent to Congress, top leadership of departments and agencies, including FSIS, are asked to testify before appropriations subcommittees at hearings to discuss respective funding requests. Additionally, the hearings provide an opportunity for members to ask questions about department and agency policies, as well as issues important to their individual State or congressional district, including USDA offices or FSIS-regulated establishments.

When the budget hearings have concluded and testimony has been examined, each subcommittee staff drafts funding legislation for the departments/agencies under their jurisdiction, which is then brought to the entire subcommittee for consideration. This step is referred to as a mark-up. Throughout the committee process, members have the opportunity to offer and ask for votes on amendments. Once the full committees agree on a funding bill by passing it, the respective leadership of the House and Senate schedule the legislation for more debate and consideration in each respective chamber. This is when the bills are actually brought to each floor to be debated and voted on.

A conference committee reconciles the differences between House and Senate appropriations bills. A final funding bill is then sent to the House and Senate for final passage. At that point, no amendments can be offered, as it would require the whole process to start over. If the conference appropriations legislation passes both chambers, then the President can either sign the bill into law or veto it. If it's vetoed, then Congress must re-approve and re-send another funding bill for approval.

FSIS' Office of the Chief Financial Officer and the Congressional team play a key role during the appropriations process. Their work enables the Agency to continue the food safety mission every day.

Hazard Identification Team: How You Can Help Catch (and Stop) Emerging Food Safety Threats

By Alexander Domesle, OPHS
Phone: (202) 690-6468

Do you know how to properly report emerging food safety concerns? The Office of Public Health Science (OPHS) has re-launched the Hazard Identification Team (HIT) with the purpose of creating a centralized, Agency-wide point of contact for identifying and addressing emerging problems. The scope of the program is broad. It includes chemical, microbial, or physical hazards anywhere along the food supply chain. It includes domestic and imported product. The team's focus is on new and emerging threats that have not been previously addressed by FSIS or threats that involve new susceptibilities or routes of exposure. OPHS uses the HIT process to systematically track issues, triage threats, flag high-priority concerns, and follow up on solutions.

Between the launch of the new HIT in February 2014 and the end of January 2015, HIT followed up on 19 emerging food safety issues submitted by employees from across the Agency.

When HIT coordinators receive a notification through the system, they gather relevant data and begin to develop a plan of attack. The HIT steering committee assigns dedicated task forces to high-priority issues. While the steering committee officially consists of OPHS management, participation from all other program areas is encouraged. Issues that are not considered "high-priority" in the HIT context are nonetheless tracked and recorded on the HIT

SharePoint site, which is available to all FSIS employees and provides a foundation for similar cases in the future. HIT can also refer an issue to an existing FSIS workgroup or staff that may be better suited to address the concern.

In 2014, HIT identified four high-priority issues. They included the allergen implications of wheat from beer being used as an ingredient in FSIS-regulated products; human exposure to amyloid proteins in organs of livestock or poultry; diseases in feral swine that may be transmissible to humans; and the human health implications of chronic wasting disease in deer and related animals. A task force of OPHS scientists consulted with FSIS experts and others on each issue to provide actionable recommendations to the Agency. Final reports for all of the task forces can be viewed on the HIT SharePoint site; their recommendations are currently being implemented.

Submissions of emerging food safety issues by FSIS personnel represent the wide range of valuable perspectives within this Agency. This input from across FSIS is vital to the success of HIT, so please continue to support food safety by identifying issues and filling out the issue initiation form, which is available on the HIT SharePoint site. The HIT coordinators are happy to assist you in filling out the form and stand ready to answer any questions you might have about how OPHS tackles emerging food safety issues. They also are more than happy to meet with your staff or program area to discuss the HIT process. They can be reached at hazardidentificationteam@fsis.usda.gov.

FSIS and Accountability

In upcoming issues of *The Beacon*, there will be various articles about the value of accountability at FSIS. Please consider submitting an article that describes how accountability positively affects your mission and contribution to food safety. Please put "accountability" in the subject of your email to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

SNAPSHOTS

Des Moines District

The Waterloo Circuit Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee (EEOAC) sponsored a Toys for Tots drive. The drive resulted in nearly 50 toys collected for children in the area around Waterloo and Cedar Falls, Iowa. Pictured: (from left to right) FI Jasminko Sabic, FI Dale S. Barth, FI Sean Hurst, and FI Megan Xiquita.

Photo contributed by Dr. Steinbronn, PHV, OFO.



Des Moines District

The USDA inspection team in Marshalltown, Iowa, donated Christmas gifts for children to their local Salvation Army. Inspectors Tarek Eldash, Ron Findley, John Schlamp, Kathy Findley, and John Rottmann (pictured left to right) along with Inspectors Jennifer Rottmann, Sean Lynch, Basem Elsayed, Deb Cisneros, Roger Greve, Dave Betts, Glen Ficke, Luke Randall, John Schlamp, Isaiah Lackland, Tawanna Vint, and Corey McAvoy (not pictured) all participated in the project. Photo contributed by Kathy Findley, OFO.



Omaha Office

To celebrate the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, Federal State Audit Branch (FSAB) team members Jonathan Coleman, Ron Eckel, Mike Lathrop, Joel Willnerd (Compliance Investigations Division), Deb Arthur, Jill Hughes, and Andy Smith (pictured left to right) volunteered at Food Bank for the Heartland in Omaha, Nebr. They packed 3,808 meals for the Backpack Program which delivers weekend meals for needy children. The program delivers over 8,000 food packs a week to 228 schools in Nebraska and western Iowa. Photo contributed by Ron Eckel, OIEA.



FROM THE **FIELD**

Atlanta District

On December 13, 2014, members from FSIS' Office of Investigation, Enforcement, and Audit, Compliance and Investigations Division, participated in the annual Children's holiday outreach program at Miami Dade College North, in Miami, Fla. The event was sponsored by USDA's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. FSIS and other USDA agencies set up booths across the campus to provide a fun and educational food safety experience. FSIS employees distributed food safety materials that included coloring books and crayons for the children. Left to Right: Investigators Sandra Fabregas-Ruiz, Dee Watson, Frances Hayes, Dan O'Rourke; and Supervisory Investigator William Kaile. Photo contributed by Dee Watson, OIEA.



Atlanta District

On January 21 and 22, FSIS team members participated in the Fort Stewart Transition Summit. The event provided service members, veterans, and military spouses with information about post-service career opportunities. At left: Microbiologist Dr. Jeanetta Tankson, OPHS, and Outreach Ambassador June Hassan, OIEA; at right: Compliance Investigator (CI)

Dana Maxwell, OIEA, and Public Health Veterinarian Dr. Angela McIntyre, OFO. Photo contributed by CI Dana Maxwell, OIEA.

Use Caution with Email Attachments

By Leigh Ann Rose Acree, OCIO
Phone: (202) 418-8816

While email attachments are a convenient way to send documents, they are a common source of computer viruses. Even messages from a seemingly familiar source could be infected with a virus. Many viruses “spoof” familiar or trusted email addresses to make it look like they came from a trusted source. If you have any doubt about the origin of the email, you should independently check with the alleged sender.

Strange file extension names on an email attachment are a potential sign the file could be unsafe. For example .exe is a common type of file extension which may contain a virus. Other potentially dangerous file extensions include .msi, .bat, .com, .cmd, .hta, .scr, .pif, .reg, .js, .vbs, .wsf, .cpl, and .jar. Any unfamiliar file extension should be treated with caution. It is recommended that users save email attachments to their desktop and right click over the files to perform an anti-virus scan.

Always have the most up-to-date security measures installed on your computer. By connecting to the FSIS network for at least 60 minutes, these system security patches and software updates can be updated on your system. The updates are installed when you are physically connected to the internet onsite at USDA facilities or when you are connecting using the FSIS VPN client software during times of telework. Users should also restart their computers at least once a week.

If you follow these practical tips and always use caution when opening email attachments, you should keep your system running smoothly and free from viruses and malicious code.

Have a hardware, software, or connectivity issue? Leave a Footprint ticket at the FSIS Service Desk <http://service/footprints>.

Lost or stolen equipment or Personally Identifiable Identification (PII) incident? Immediately contact USDA at 1-877-Pii2You or 1-888-926-2373 (available 24 hours a day), and then contact the FSIS Service Desk at 1-800-473-9135.

FSIS to Migrate Employees to a New USDA Authorization Service

By Leigh Ann Rose Acree, OCIO
Phone: (202) 418-8816

What is Enterprise Active Directory (EAD)?

USDA's Office of the Chief Information Officer launched Enterprise Active Directory (EAD) and is in the process of migrating all agencies to EAD. EAD is a service that authenticates and authorizes all users, computers, and laptops accessing the FSIS and USDA networks. EAD enforces security policies and installs/updates software.

Why are we doing it?

USDA has mandated that all agencies consolidate their agency Active Directories to USDA's Active Directory. This consolidation will support the Department in meeting its business and technical requirements.

When will this migration occur?

The migration to EAD will begin for all non-VPN customers in the coming weeks and last for several months. OCIO is coordinating with each program area on migration schedules as they will affect all FSIS computer users over time. For VPN customers, migration is planned for later this year, and the FSIS Service Desk will be scheduling transition to EAD.

How will this impact you?

A few days prior to your migration, you will receive an email notification providing you with instructions for the migration and reminding you to have your computer in the office, connected to the network, and powered on.

We need your help to make this migration a success. Please keep a look out for your migration date and the reminder emails.

Voluntary Resume Writing and USAJobs Workshops Now Being Offered

By Erasmo Nieves, OOEET
Phone: 1-800-336-3747

OOEET is offering voluntary resume writing and USAJobs workshops to empower employees with the training and tools needed to excel in their career. On January 24 and 25, 53 employees participated in the kick-off training in Mississippi. One participant said, "I truly enjoyed the whole session and would like for everyone to take advantage of this wonderful course."

The one-day workshop provides guidance on how to write a resume and apply for jobs through USAJobs. In the morning, participants focus on the skills necessary to understand the process of building a resume, begin to identify accomplishments, and learn how to use a position description to develop or modify their resume. In the afternoon, participants engage in a hands-on computer session to set up USAJobs accounts and build resumes with the assistance of instructors and Center for Learning staff. Participants also receive a Resume Writing Guide and CD with simulations on how to create emails and USAJobs accounts, build a resume using the resume builder, upload reference documents, and search for jobs.

Jackson District Schedule

District Manager: Paul Resweber

RMA: Cristina Walker

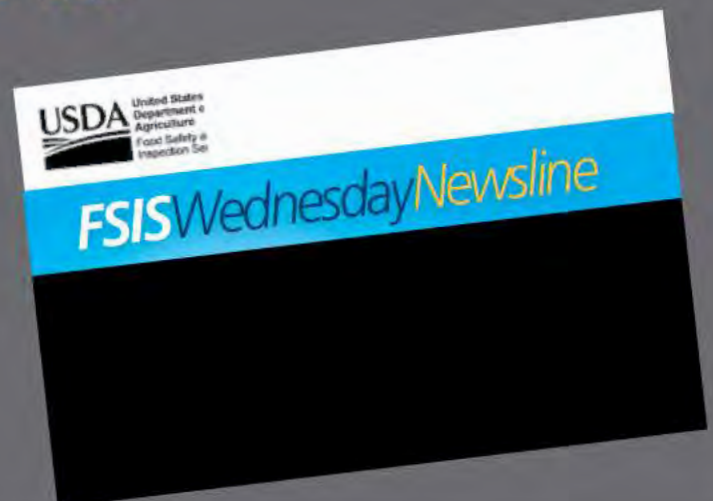
Site	Cities to be Served	Dates
Morristown, Tennessee	Morristown	March 7
Albany, Kentucky	Albany	March 8
Hickory, Kentucky	Hickory	March 14
Beaver Dam, Kentucky	Beaver Dam, Robards	March 21

OOEET will be offering 13 additional workshops in the Jackson District. Workshops are also scheduled for the Raleigh District in April and May; Atlanta District in May and June; Springdale District in July and August; and Dallas District in August and September. Additional districts will be scheduled in the next fiscal year. Since all sessions are voluntary and scheduled on the weekends, employees are encouraged to register for the workshops that have been designated to serve their area. To request a copy of the resume writing resource materials or ask questions about setting up your USAJobs account, please contact Training and Resource Helpdesk at 1-800-336-3747 or CEDL@fsis.usda.gov.

Stay up to date ...

The *Wednesday Newsline* is emailed to headquarter and field employees every Wednesday with important information about the Agency.

Be sure to read this valuable resource every week to stay up to date with Agency happenings. To submit an item to the Wednesday Newsline, please send it to wednesdaynewsline@fsis.usda.gov.



Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

Currently, many of your fellow employees are in need of leave for personal or family medical emergencies. If you have annual leave that you could spare, you can help them by donating it via the Leave Transfer Program. The Beacon will print the current list of leave recipients at various times. You can also view it on InsideFSIS. In the "I Want To" box, select "Access Public Folders." Then click on the "Personnel" folder and select "Leave Transfer Program." In addition to a listing of approved leave recipients, you will find more information about donating leave, forms, rules, eligibility, and requirements. For more information, contact Sonja Tomlinson in the Office of Management's Employment, Classification and Compensation Branch at (202) 690-0798.

Current list of leave recipients as of January 26, 2015

Recipient	Case Number	Program Area	State	Situation
(b) (6)	OFO-14-0061	OFO	VA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0025	OFO	KS	Surgery
	OFO-14-0015	OFO	CA	Family Illness
	OFO-13-0044	OFO	CA	Serious Illness/Surgery
	OFO-14-0054	OFO	CA	Family Illness
	OFO-14-0008	OFO	IL	Serious Illness
	OCIO-14-0001	OCIO	VA	Family Illness
	OFO-14-0064	OFO	AR	Surgery/Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0039	OFO	AR	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0041	OFO	AR	Accidental Injury
	OA-14-0001	OA	MD	Maternity
	OFO-13-0054	OFO	WA	Family Illness/Surgery
	OFO-14-0051	OFO	TX	Maternity
	OFO-14-0059	OFO	NC	
	OA-14-0002	OA	MD	Accidental Injury
	OFO-15-0002	OFO	TX	Surgery/Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0017	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0043	OFO	OR	Surgery
	OFO-14-0058	OFO	LA	Family Illness
	OFO-13-0016	OFO	PA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0052	OFO	NE	Surgery
	OFO-14-0040	OFO	OK	Surgery
	OFO-14-0037	OFO	DE	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0020	OFO	NY	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0026	OFO	AR	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0021	OFO	CA	Surgery
	OM-14-0001	OM	DC	Family Illness
	OFO-15-0003	OFO	GA	Surgery
	OOEET-13-0001	OOEET	MD	Surgery
	OM-14-0002	OM	WI	Maternity
	OFO-13-0045	OFO	TN	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0013	OFO	PA	Maternity
	OFO-13-0003	OFO	CO	Serious Illness
	OEIA-14-0003	OEIA	GA	Surgery
	OFO-14-0042	OFO	PA	Accidental Injury
	OFO-14-0066	OFO	FL	Maternity
	OPHS-14-0002	OPHS	GA	Surgery

Recipient	Case Number	Program Area	State	Situation
(b) (6)	OFO-14-0057	OFO	MO	Surgery
	OCIO-14-0002	OCIO	MD	Surgery/Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0030	OFO	TX	Family Illness
	OFO-14-0031	OFO	WA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0038	OFO	CA	Maternity
	OFO-14-0036	OFO	MS	Accidental Injury
	OM-13-0004	OM	MD	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0007	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0029	OFO	CA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0016	OFO	NY	Surgery
	OPACE-14-0002	OPACE	DC	Maternity
	OFO-12-0064	OFO	KS	Serious Illness
	OM-15-0001	OM	DC	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0014	OFO	NH	Maternity
	OFO-14-0046	OFO	NH	Complications/Maternity
	OFO-14-0065	OFO	NC	Surgery/Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0026	OFO	DE	Surgery
	OPPD-14-0001	OPPD	DC	Surgery
	OFO-14-0053	OFO	NC	Surgery
	OCIO-13-0002	OCIO	DC	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0022	OFO	IN	Surgery
	OPPD-13-0002	OPPD	DC	Family Illness
	OFO-14-0045	OFO	MN	Maternity
	OFO-14-0018	OFO	AZ	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0027	OFO	WA	Surgery
	OFO-14-0032	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0055	OFO	TN	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0010	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0024	OFO	IL	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0066	OFO	PA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0004	OFO	MS	Family Illness
	OFO-14-0001	OFO	OK	Surgery
	OFO-14-0056	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OPHS-14-0003	OPHS	GA	Serious Illness
	*OFO-12-0055	OFO		
	*OM-14-0003	OM		
	*OFO-14-0024	OFO		
	*OFO-14-0033	OFO		
	*OFO-14-0034	OFO		
	*OFO-14-0035	OFO		
	*OFO-14-0044	OFO		Serious Illness
	*OPHS-14-0005	OPHS-14-0005	OPHS	Surgery
	*OFO-14-0060	OFO-14-0060	OFO	Surgery/Serious Illness
	*OFO-14-0062	OFO-14-0062	OFO	
	*OFO-14-0063	OFO-14-0063	OFO	Surgery
	*OFO-15-0001	OFO-15-0001	OFO	Surgery

*These Leave Transfer Program recipients declined to publish their names and can receive donations using the assigned case number.

FIRST SCRIPT PHARMACY BENEFITS PROGRAM

By Pat Turner, OM
Phone: 1-800-370-3747

USDA recently selected a vendor to implement an Agency-wide Pharmacy Benefits program. This program will offer reduced rates for pharmacy and durable medical equipment to injured USDA workers.

Pictured on the right, the Initial Fill Sheet informs the injured worker about program benefits. This letter should be included in an initial correspondence package sent to each injured worker. If the injured worker elects this prescription plan, First Script will provide them with an information package which includes details about enrollment and benefits.

If you have any questions about the First Script Pharmacy Benefits Program: 1-888-232-0791 available 24/7

Image courtesy of First Script

FIRST SCRIPT®

3535 East Valencia Road, Tucson, Arizona 85706



TO INITIATE COVERAGE CALL
1-888-232-0791 Available 24/7

Workers' Compensation Benefit Card For Traumatic Injury (CA-1)

You may use this information for accessing prescriptions, durable medical equipment and medical imaging/testing related to your traumatic injury (CA-1). FECA recipients have a right to initial choice of physician and participation in this program is voluntary.

CARD BENEFITS:

- No need to pay out of pocket or file for reimbursements
- Convenient delivery for durable medical equipment (i.e. crutches, canes, medical supplies, etc.)
- Prompt scheduling for medical imaging/testing needs (i.e. MRI, CT scan, X-rays, EMG, etc.)
- 24/7 Dedicated call center to handle your questions

DO YOU NEED TO SCHEDULE AN MRI, X-RAY OR PHYSICAL THERAPY?

If you need to schedule a medical imaging test or physical therapy related to your traumatic injury (CA-1), you may call 1-877-203-8966. First Script call center representatives are available 24/7 to schedule your testing needs.

DO YOU NEED TO ORDER CRUTCHES, A WHEELCHAIR, A TENS UNIT, OR OTHER MEDICAL SUPPLIES?

If you need to order medical supplies related to your traumatic injury (CA-1), you may call 1-888-232-0791. First Script call center representatives are available 24/7 to order your medical supply needs.

DO YOU NEED TO FILL A PRESCRIPTION?

The card below may be used for your initial traumatic injury prescriptions. You may simply present the card below to your pharmacist along with your prescription for your work-related injury.

When your claim is accepted by the OWCP, you will be mailed a permanent card from First Script for your use when filling future prescriptions. If you require assistance or have questions regarding the use of the card below, you may call 1-877-203-8966.

PHARMACIST: The United States Department of Agriculture participates in First Script, an online pharmacy benefits program administered by Medco. To obtain billing information, please call the prescription help line toll free at 1-888-232-0791.

FIRST SCRIPT®		Traumatic Injury Card	
EMPLOYEE: This First Script card is valid only for your work-related injury needs.			
First Script is available at 67,000+ pharmacies nationwide, including the pharmacies listed below. To access durable medical equipment and/or medical imaging/testing services, you may call the First Script Network Services Help Line toll free at 1-888-232-0791.			
Employee:			
Date of Injury:			
Pharmacy: The person above participates in First Script, an online pharmacy benefits program administered by Medco. To obtain billing information, please call 1-888-232-0791, available 24/7.			
Pharmacy: Bill online through Medco			
No paperwork, guaranteed payment			
Group#: FSNFED • BIN# 010014			
The person identified on this card is employed by the United States Department of Agriculture			

Call along dotted line and fold in half.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- FSIS Directive 7120.1 Revision 24, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry and Egg Products

Administrative issues were also published.

- Notice 10-15, Country of Origin Labeling - Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Final Rule
- Notice 11-15, Activation of the Public Health Information System Help Button
- Notice 12-15, Updating the PHIS Profile for Raw Chicken and Turkey Products

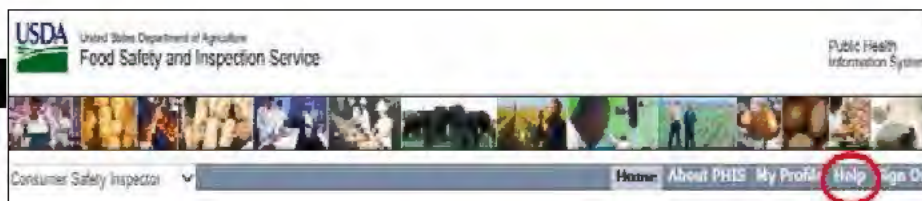
Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

Public Health Information System Help

By Robyn Joynes, OOEET
Phone: (301) 344-0756

FSIS is excited to announce the activation of the Public Health Information System (PHIS) Help button and the availability of online help for Consumer Safety Inspectors (CSIs). CSIs can click the Help button on any PHIS screen to get guidance on the following topics: How to Use Help, Establishment Profile, Coverage Assignment, Task Calendar, Inspection Verification, Sampling, Animal Disposition, and Reports. For example, if you need help finding routine tasks, then you would follow these steps:

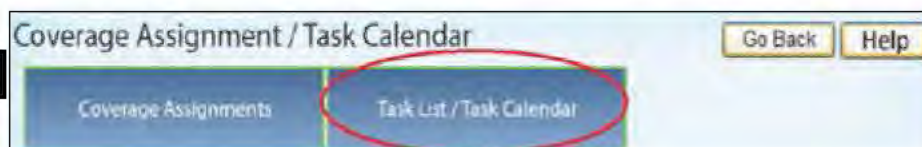
1. Click the Help button at the upper right of the screen.



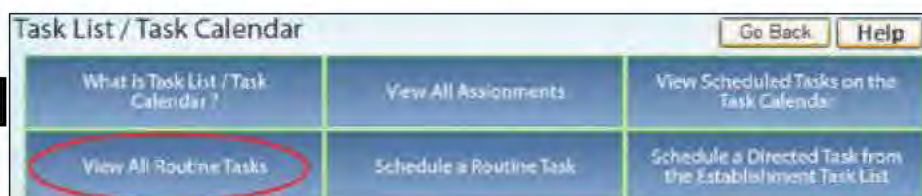
2. PHIS Home Help appears. Click Coverage Assignment/Task Calendar.



3. Coverage Assignment/Task Calendar page appears. Click Task Calendar.

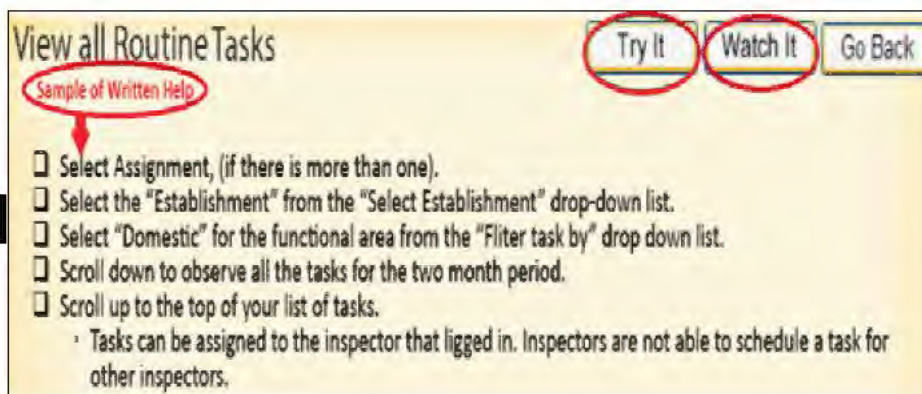


4. Task List/Task Calendar menu appears. Click View All Routine Tasks.



5. Help for View All Routine Tasks appears. You have three options:

- **Written Help** – A list of steps to perform the selected PHIS task.
- **Try It** – You click to practice performing the steps yourself.
- **Watch It** – You click to watch a video simulation of the selected PHIS task.



Additional updates will come with each new PHIS release. The Office of Outreach, Employee Education and Training thanks the Office of Field Operations and the Office of the Chief Information Officer for their help and support throughout the development of this tutorial. Users may provide feedback about Help by emailing Helpbuttonfeedback@fsis.usda.gov.

>>> **RECALLS**

Feb. 4	Kansas firm recalled pork product due to misbranding.
Feb. 10	Whole Foods Markets recalled products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
Feb. 10	Canadian firm recalled poultry products produced without benefit of import inspection.
Feb. 13	Californian firm recalled beef products produced without benefit of import inspection.
Feb. 17	Michigan firm recalled products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
Feb. 17	Texas firm recalled sausage product due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
Feb. 19	Ohio firm recalled beef product due to possible <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> contamination.
Feb. 20	Danish firm recalled pork products produced without benefit of import inspection.
Feb. 26	Georgia firm recalled sausage products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

KUDOS

Would you like to thank, congratulate, or give a shout out to someone in FSIS? Here's your chance. Send your kudo to beacon@fsis.usda.gov and we'll publish one or more each month. Please keep your kudos to a few sentences.

If you didn't know, there's a place on *InsideFSIS* where you can submit kudos as well. To find out who's done just that, go to <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/employee/balance/kudos/kudos.jsp>.

If you would like to place a kudo on *InsideFSIS*, click on the "Submit Kudos" link at the top of the box. You may also send your kudo to intranet.manager@fsis.usda.gov.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.

Inside This Issue

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

You can tell the stories of FSIS better than anyone! Send us your articles, photos and feedback. It's simple. Just prepare an article and include: who, what, when, where, why and how. Clear your article through your program area. Then send your article to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Candid photos preferred. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



Administrator's Awards ceremony, held at the Jamie Whitten Building patio, March 17, 2015.

Photo by
Lance Cheung, OC

Administrator's Awards 2014

By Gabrielle Johnston, OPACE
Phone: (202) 690-0428

On March 17, Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza presented the Administrator's Awards for Excellence. The criteria for these awards are directly linked to the Agency's strategic plan. Sometimes, documents like the strategic plan can be hard to grasp, but it's important to remember that these goals are meant to guide all FSIS employees in being accountable to our mission of protecting public health. This year's recipients vividly showcase how practical the Agency's goals are to ensuring a safe supply of meat, poultry, and egg products.

Closing the Administrator's Awards, Deputy Under Secretary Almanza stated, "I have never been as proud to be in the position I'm in—because of what you all do." These awards are an excellent way to recognize that hard work. It is never too early to start thinking about the next awards cycle. Remember that nominations are accepted from the field, district, and headquarters offices and that all grade levels are eligible. Please keep an eye out for the call for nominations, which will be coming out in the next couple of months. The following is a list of the awards winners and honorable mentions.

Continued on page 8 ...



OIEA Enforcement and Litigation Director Scott Safian poses with Administrator's Awards recipients. Pictured, left to right: Scott Safian, Robert Purdy, Olga Morales, Bonnie Cobb, Glenda Kelley, Carolyn Grant, Judy Akinola, Eleanor Lewis, Sara Baucher, Shannon Ashby, Beth Leopold, and Maxine Lebron.

Photo by Luis Delgadillo, OPACE

The Beacon is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education for FSIS employees.

Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education:

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

May issue – due April 1
June issue – due May 1
July issue – due June 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to email.

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN



Al Almanza

This month, I had the honor of presenting the FSIS Administrator's Awards for Excellence. I am particularly proud of what these awards represent. This ceremony allowed the Agency to join together in recognizing a diverse group of individuals and teams who have found innovative yet practical ways to implement the eight goals outlined in the Agency's strategic plan. These awards underscore the role the Agency's strategic plan plays in holding every employee accountable to the goals set forth in it and how they directly impact food safety.

In this edition of *The Beacon*, you can see a list of the award recipients. I want to highlight the fact that the recipients come from across the Agency. These awards are representative of the diverse team it takes to protect the public's health. Nothing illustrates the concept of *One Team, One Purpose* as much as this fact.

While these awards recognize exceptional achievements, I know all FSIS employees are committed to our mission to protect consumers by ensuring our meat, poultry, and processed egg products are safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled. I know the considerable effort that our people put in every day. These awards exemplify innovation, hard work, and the dedication behind the ongoing projects at FSIS.

Awards programs like this are an important part of recognizing achievement in the Agency, and remind us of what we can accomplish together when we hold ourselves accountable for well-planned goals. I want to encourage all supervisors to take the time to thank their employees for the important work they do in protecting public health. When the time comes again to highlight the superior work FSIS employees are doing, I not only encourage supervisors to nominate outstanding candidates but I also encourage employees to submit nomination packages for their peers.

Congratulations again to the award recipients. Thank you for what you do every day.

FSIS and Accountability

In upcoming issues of *The Beacon*, there will be various articles about the value of accountability at FSIS. Please consider submitting an article that describes how accountability positively affects your mission and contribution to food safety.

Please put "accountability" in the subject of your email to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Steven Soderborg, Jr., Teaching the Next Generation about Food Safety

By Felicia Thompson, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

Steven Soderborg, Jr., is a consumer safety inspector (CSI) who has worked for FSIS for 15 years. But work isn't the only place where he takes a lead role in food safety. Soderborg is also a Boy Scouts troop leader. He has to keep 15 boy scouts safe on camping trips. Soderborg teaches them how to keep food safe while living outdoors.

Teaching Scouts Leads to Safer Establishment Lines

"Each day when I'm in the plants conducting pre-operation checks on equipment and making sure everything is clean and ready to go, I think of one of my scouts," Soderborg said. "He is deadly allergic to a certain allergen. On one occasion when we went camping, he had to eat a specific kind of bread. If he ate anything that had come in to contact with the allergen, even a microscopic amount, it would have been terrible for him. It could have made him very sick. I relate that experience to my pre-op checks; I always keep that scout in mind because I don't wish for him or anybody else who may have allergies to get sick because establishments' machines weren't cleaned properly when their products were produced. A few years ago as I was performing a general labeling verification task, I observed that a plant had not added an allergen "soy" to their label, and due to my attention to detail and concern for allergens, the product was recalled."

The food safety tips that Soderborg teaches his troops can help them earn the Boy Scouts' Cooking merit badge. A portion of the requirements for this badge focus on principles of food safety, like the proper preparation and storage of meat along with the prevention of *Salmonella* and *Escherichia coli* food poisoning. In 2013, FSIS helped the Boy Scouts develop the food safety portion of this badge. "I teach food safety to my scouts, especially during camping trips where we have to keep meats, eggs, milk, juices, etc., iced (cooled) down," Soderborg said.



Making a Difference

Soderborg works on a patrol assignment that consists of inspecting 12 processing plants and nine export ID warehouses. A big part of Soderborg's duties is ensuring Export Health Certificates are filled out properly and products are eligible for export to Central America.

"I feel that by performing my job properly, I am helping fulfill FSIS' mission. Products are being prepared in a clean and wholesome manner and I am verifying that ready-to-eat products are being cooked, stabilized, and stored in the proper timeframe to hopefully prevent any harmful

microorganisms from growing and possibly making the consumer sick," Soderborg said. "It makes me feel really good knowing that I can make a difference." Soderborg's efforts reach consumers as far away as Mexico.

Soderborg also makes a difference by helping his supervisor and co-workers, taking on more duties when needed. "I think I am dependable and a hard worker," he said. "I am always willing to help out other inspectors, often covering other's assignments, and drafting the WUM (work unit meeting) report."

By preparing these reports, Soderborg said, it helps all the inspectors know what is happening on everyone's assignments. "Communication between all of the CSIs is crucial in carrying out the FSIS mission."

Industry Work Paved the Way for FSIS Work

The Murray, Utah, native attended Ricks College in Idaho (now Brigham Young University Idaho) where he earned an associate's degree in science in 1992.

Before working for FSIS, Soderborg worked in food-related fields, so coming to FSIS was the next logical step in his career. "My first job was at OK Foods in Ft. Smith, Arkansas. Next, I got a job at Tyson's Food in Van Buren,



Continued on page 10 ...

A Q&A SERIES

William "Bill" Smith, OFO

Phone: (202) 720-8803



How does the Office of Field Operations program area support the Agency's mission?

The fundamental mission of the Office of Field Operations (OFO) is to ensure that food safety inspection aligns with existing and emerging risks to minimize existing and emerging food safety hazards and maximize domestic and international compliance with food safety policies. The OFO mission is focused directly on food safety and food defense and aligns with Goals 1 and 2 of the FSIS Strategic Plan.

What is the most exciting (or significant) initiative or effort that the OFO program area is working on right now?

OFO is playing a significant role in implementing the new Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection Regulations. OFO has already implemented the following key requirements:

- Ensuring official poultry slaughter establishments immediately chill all poultry carcasses, parts, and giblets after slaughter operations so that there is no outgrowth of pathogens;
- Permitting all poultry slaughter establishments to use 1) approved online reprocessing (OLR) antimicrobial intervention systems or 2) offline reprocessing (OFLR) antimicrobial substances;
- Requiring poultry slaughter establishments to develop, implement, and maintain written procedures to ensure that carcasses contaminated with visible fecal material do not enter the chiller; and
- Developing, implementing, and maintaining written procedures to prevent contamination of carcasses and parts with enteric pathogens and fecal material throughout the entire slaughter and dressing operation.

Later this year, at the conclusion of bargaining, OFO will be playing a pivotal role in implementing the New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS), a major food safety initiative of the Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection Regulations.

What is the greatest challenge the OFO program area faces right now?

OFO will be implementing many new inspection requirements activities during fiscal year 2015 and early 2016 in addition to Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection regulations. These include the Salmonella Action Plan; inspection, sampling, and traceback procedures in the *E. coli* O157 and non-STEC 10010 series directives; PHIS enhancements including the export module and international components; aligning import re-inspection duties within the Districts; revision of the Food Safety Assessment methodology; new travel and time and attendance systems; and streamlining of the hiring process to bring employees onboard in less time. These initiatives will enhance Agency and OFO processes to meet strategic objectives.

What is your future vision for this program area?

To excel in the prominent role of assuring food safety and food defense to the American public and international community by enhancing the day to day enforcement of inspection requirements.

What are some ways in your program area that staff can provide suggestions or raise questions or concerns with you?

The work that Inspection Program Personnel (IPP) performs everyday has a direct and immediate impact on the citizens of the United States as well as the entire international community. So it is extremely important that IPP have an opportunity to provide suggestions or raise questions or concerns. All IPP can identify suggestions, concerns, and ideas to supervisors, the Districts, or OFO headquarters via email, blogs, employee associations, and participation in town hall meetings.

Go Red

FSIS employees wore red in February in honor of the American Heart Association's "National Wear Red Day"



IPP at P-6504 in Tuscaloosa, Ala., (left to right): Donna Jackson, Lorna Bailey, Martha Clark, Fernisa Parker, Paula Coston, and Kariann Chavez. Photo contributed by Estella Perez, OFO.



IPP at P-6504 in Tuscaloosa, Ala., (left to right): William Okeke, SPHV; Bernice Ward, FI; Kathy Love, CSI; Cynthia "Cookie" Perry, FI; Isabella Ryans, FI; and Dorothy Bobbitt, FI. Photo contributed by Estella Perez, OFO.

Inspectors at P-1307 in Jasper, Ala., (left to right): Dr. Shelia White, SPHV; Joel Ryals, Lead CSI; and Susan Hudson, CSI. CSI Thomas Hoggle was not pictured. Photo contributed by Christina Walker, OFO.



Inspectors at Est. 170 - P, in Pendergrass, Ga., (left to right): Serena Rogers, WAE; Betty Butler, FI; Sharon Page, FI; Patricia Arrington, FI; and Dr. Eddy R. Carter. Photo contributed by Dr. Carter, OFO.

FSIS Retirees: Feb. 15 - March 15, 2015

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Bazemore, Mary, CSI	Lewiston, NC	20
Binns, Sharion K., CSI	Farmerville, LA	14
Carlson, Daniel W., CSI	Momence, IL	28
Case, Mildred J., CSI	Harrisonburg, VA	23
Davis, Michael L., Food Inspr.	Nogales, AZ	34
Ellison, David L., SVMO	Waldron, AR	27
Gardner, Myra E., Microbiol.	Washington, DC	33
Glenn, Cynthia R., CSI	Pendergrass, GA	8
Gwozdz, Frank, B. Indl. Engr.	Washington, DC	25
Hollingsworth, Cathy A., Resource Mgmt. Asst.	Lakewood, CO	10
Ines, Doroteo B., SVMO	Livingston, CA	38
Jacobs, Kent N., Resource Mgr.	Raleigh, NC	37

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Johnson, Leonard G., SVMO	Abbotsford, WI	10
Leung, Sabrina B., Chemist	Alameda, CA	6
Lewey, Richard C., FI (ProcSD Products)	New Hampton, IA	28
Long, Bryce M., CSI	Fredericksburg, PA	37
Morgan, Estella W., FI	Lewiston, NC	21
Munday, Jayne A., FI	Cassville, MO	8
Norat, Isalia, FI-S	Center Hill, FL	13
Quinlan, Bernard W., CSI	Westfield, WI	31
Richard, Ralph B., CSI	Center, TX	21
Saunders, Shirley A., FI	Smithfield, VA	23
Strozykowski, John M., CSI	Moorefield, WV	16
Tennyson, Randy, CSI	Wichita, KS	30
Tombre, Matt E., SVMO	Twin Falls, ID	14
Trotter, Richard J., CSI	Evans, CO	34
Waldrop, Debra E., Biol. Sci. Lab. Tech.	Athens, GA	36

SNAPSHOTS



Des Moines District

Enforcement Investigations and Analysis Officers (EIAO) Eddy Cunagin and Arcenia Oliver (pictured left to right) informed students about FSIS careers and Pathways internship opportunities at the 6th annual St. Cloud State University Internship Fair held in St. Cloud, Minn., on January 30, 2015. Photo contributed by Arcennia Oliver, EIAO.

Jackson District

For the month of March, the USDA inspectors of P-6638 in Enterprise, Ala., will wear blue shirts every Thursday in support of Colorectal Cancer Awareness. Pictured, from left to right: 1st row- SVMO Dr. James Sparrow, FI Amy Stewart, FI Sherry Harrison, FI Phillip Kirkland; 2nd row: CSI Portia Teague, FI Shirley Jackson, CSI Joann Seay; 3rd row- FI Jack Sims, CSI Dell Vick, FI Jeff Smith, FI Lennie Laird. Not pictured is FI Murray Salter. Photo contributed by Portia Teague, OFO, Office of Field Operations.



Atlanta District

Atlanta District EIAOs, Robin Mesta and Peter Ebegbodi (pictured left to right), preparing to take Routine *Listeria monocytogenes* samples as part of a food safety assessment in post lethality exposed, ready-to-eat, facility in Georgia. Photo contributed by EIAO Robin Mesta, OFO.

FROM THE **FIELD**



OIEA Northeast Region

Representatives from FSIS' Office of Investigation, Enforcement, and Audit (OIEA), the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services, and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) performed outreach activities at the Western New York Farm Show in Hamburg, N.Y. The group answered questions and distributed information on food safety, food defense, agricultural products, pests, livestock diseases, and smuggled agricultural products. Pictured, from left to right: John Bartlett, APHIS; Nicholas Papapietro, OIEA; Kari Skiver, OIEA; and Joseph Dourie, CBP. Photo contributed by Nicholas Papapietro, OIEA.

Headquarters

Kristina Beagh (pictured), a Public Affairs Specialist for FSIS' Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education, visited Texas A&M University School of Public Health career fair in College Station, Texas.

Beagh represented FSIS as a recruiter to tell graduate students about opportunities within the FSIS Pathways Internship Program. Photo contributed by Kristina Beagh, OPACE.



Atlanta District

On January 27, 2015, Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza and OFO Assistant Administrator William Smith visited Atlanta District team members staffing the FSIS recruitment booth at the International Production and Processing Expo. Pictured, from left to right: Rick Halteman, John Ziegler, Dr. Jan Brown, Kimberly Beall, Al Almanza, Dr. Phyllis Adams, Bill Smith, Dr. Ghias Mughal, Jenny Scirfres, and Dr. Angela McIntyre. Not pictured: Daniel Puzo, Christian Valentin, and Don Ackerman. Photo contributed by Dr. Angela McIntyre, OFO.

Administrator's

Award	Recipients
Excellence in Mission Results	<p>New Poultry Inspection System Team - For exemplary service in developing a new poultry inspection system that will reduce the risk of foodborne illness by focusing PSIS resources on activities that advance the Agency's core mission of food safety. Team Leader: Mary E. Porretta (OPPD); Members: Christopher P. Alvares (ODIFP), Isabel P. Arrington (OPPD), Jennifer A. Beasley McKean (OFO), Quita Bowman-Blackwell (OFO), Sandra L. Burrell (OM), Michelle C. Catlin (OPHS), Catherine E. Cochran (OPACE), Robert V. Cooke (OFO), William T. Disney (OPHS), Todd M. Furey (OPPD), Tia D. Gayle (OM), Rebecca G. Hairgrove (OFO), Laurie A. Hopkins (OPPD), Lynvel J. Johnson (OFO), David D. LaBarre (OPHS), Gary A. Noyes (OPPD), Paulette M. Platko (OOEET), Jeremy T. Reed (ODIFP), April A. Regonlinski (OPPD), Thomas C. Reimler (OM), Duane W. Robinson, Jr. (OOEET), LaRia Robinson (OOEET), Gary H. Roseman, Jr. (OFO), and Yudhbir Sharma (OFO), and Daniel J. Smigal (OM)</p> <p>FSIS Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration (IFSAC) - For FSIS' development of/participation in the Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration (IFSAC), which seeks to develop harmonized attribution data, methods, and estimates; allowing FSIS to measure progress in achieving mission results to reduce foodborne illness. Team Leaders: Christopher P. Alvares (ODIFP) and Kristin G. Holt (OPHS); Members: Eric D. Ebel (OPHS), Neal J. Golden (OPHS), Chuanfa Guo (OPHS), Joanna Zablotzky Kufel (ODIFP), and Michael S. Williams (OPHS) Judy E. Akinola, Shannon M. Ashby, Sara M. Baucher, Bonnie L. Cobb, Carolyn A. Grant, Glenda A. Kelley, Maxine Lebron, Eleanor M. Lewis, and Robert Purdy (All OIEA)</p> <p>The Egg Products into PHIS Team - For outstanding efforts across FSIS serving as one team with one purpose to lead and implement, for the first time ever, the electronic management and documentation of egg products inspection through the Public Health Inspection System (PHIS). Team Leaders: Kim R. Green (OFO), Scott E. Seeborn (OPPD), and Dawn G. Sprouls (OFO); Members: Christopher P. Alvares (ODIFP), Robert V. Cooke (OFO), Dennis J. Depperschmidt (OFO), Jose F. Gabiola (OPPD), Gail C. Graves (OPHS), Julianne Henderson (OFO), Daniel T. Jozefowski (OFO), Katherine A. Kjome (OFO), Susan A. Knowler (OA), Susan P. Knox (OOEET), Victoria A. Levine (OPPD), Mildred Rivera-Betancourt (OOEET), Gurinder S. Saini (ODIFP), Michael H. Sheldon (OOEET), Alexandra F. Tarrant (OPACE), Jeffery Tarrant (OOEET), Daniel J. Willis (OM), and Valerie M. Yarbrough (OM)</p>
Excellence in Civil Rights and Diversity	<p>OIEA Diversity and Inclusion Group - For consistently demonstrating the highest level of professionalism and dedication to FSIS, its employees, and partners, to promote and sustain diversity and inclusion initiatives that integrate EEO into the Agency's mission of protecting public health. Team Leader: Beth R. Leopold (OIEA)</p>
Employee of the Year	<p>Gary A. Noyes, Economist (OPPD) - For demonstrating excellence and commitment in support of the Agency's mission.</p>
Leader of the Year	<p>Patricia A. Bennett, Deputy Director (OPHS) - For transformative leadership in cultivating the newly-formed Science Staff as "one team for one purpose."</p>

HONORABLE MENTIONS:

Excellence in Mission Results - PHIS Reports Development Team, Goal 8 Work Group, State Lab Methods "At Least Equal To" Review Methodology and Criteria Team, Non-O157 Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) Test Kit Validation Review Team, International Issues Working Group, and OIEA, Enforcement and Litigation Division

- **Excellence in Civil Rights and Diversity** - I am FSIS Team
- **Employee of the Year** - Olga N. Morales, Senior Compliance Specialist (OIEA)
- **Leader of the Year** - Valerie J. Neris, Branch Chief, Hearings and Appeals Branch (OIEA)

Awards 2014



Employee of the Year: Gary A. Noyes, Economist (OPPD)



Leader of the Year: Patricia A. Bennett, Deputy Director (OPHS)



Jonathan Guo accepted the Administrator's Award for Excellence in Mission Results on behalf of his father, Chuanfa Guo (OPHS), for his contributions made as a member of the FSIS Interagency Food Analytics Collaboration.



Team leaders Kim R. Green (OSEC), Scott E. Seebohm (OPPD), and Dawn G. Sprouls (OFO) accept the Excellence in Mission Results Award on behalf of the team for implementing the electronic management and documentation of egg products inspection through the Public Health Inspection System (PHIS).



Team leaders Kristin G. Holt (OPHS) and Christopher P. Alvares (ODIFP) accept the Excellence in Mission Results Award for their work on the Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration (IFSAC).

Beth R. Leopold (OIEA) accepts the Excellence in Civil Rights and Diversity Award on behalf of the OIEA Diversity and Inclusion Group.



Photos by
Lance Cheung, OC

Mary E. Porretta (OPPD) accepts the Excellence in Mission Results Award for her work in developing a new poultry inspection system that will reduce the risk of foodborne illness.



IT Operations & Maintenance Support is Changing for FSIS

By: Jennifer Dallis, OA
Phone: (202) 418-8800

What is O&M Support?

Operations and Maintenance (O&M) support is the day-to-day management of Information Technology (IT) services. This includes the FSIS Service Desk, depot operations, applications/systems operations, and infrastructure operations— networks, servers, and telecommunications.

The current contract for FSIS' O&M support provided by General Dynamics IT (GDIT) expires April 10, 2015, and will be transitioning to Sotera Defense Solutions over the next 30 days. You can expect more communication in the coming weeks.

What does this mean for FSIS customers?

The impact to customers should be minimal.

- The FSIS Service Desk will continue to exist 24 hours, 7 days a week.
- The FSIS Service Desk toll free number will remain the same: 1-800-473-9135.
- The FootPrints Ticketing System will remain the same.

Customers can continue to contact the Service Desk for any IT issue. Customers may also contact the Customer Advocate assigned to your Program Area:

Customer Advocate	Program Areas	Contact Information	
		Office Phone	Mobile Phone
Lisa Brownlee	OFO	(515) 334-2040	(515) 954-0897
Eric Carrier	OA, OIEA, OPACE, OOEET, OPPD	(612) 659-8542	(612) 816-2704
Melissa Yen	OPHS, OM, ODIFP	(510) 814-3009	
Dedric Ayo	States	(214) 767-2784	(214) 912-3677

If there are any questions or concerns regarding the O&M Transition, please submit them to the O&M Transition Team at TransitionTeam@fsis.usda.gov.



Soderborg

... Continued from page 3

Arkansas, and then transferred to Clarksville, Arkansas. I felt that my seven years working in industry allowed me to be able to communicate effectively and understand and relate better to establishment owners and employees when they have any questions or concerns."

When not camping and teaching his group of scouts about food safety, Soderborg helps his wife, Rhonda, with fund raising projects for their three sons' former high school football team, the Parkland Matadors. Soderborg and Rhonda have five kids: Steven, Jordan, Michael, Ashton, and Anne Marie.

Steven Soderborg performs consumer safety inspector duties.

Photo contributed by CSI Frances Emeh

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- Notice 14-15, Prescribed Treatment to Destroy Trichinae in Pork, and Products Containing Pork, as Required by 9 CFR 318.10
- Directive 7120.1 Revision 25, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry and Egg Products
- Notice 15-15, Verification of Carcasses that an Establishment Further Processes Without an Official Inspection Legend
- Directive 7230.1, Ongoing Verification of Product Formulation and Labeling Targeting the Eight Most Common (BIG 8) Food Allergens
- Notice 16-15, Raw Chicken Parts Sampling Project
- Notice 17-15, FSIS Program Personnel Hygiene and Biosecurity Practices
- Notice 18-15, Analysis for *Salmonella* of All Imported Beef Products Sampled for Shiga Toxin-Producing *Escherichia Coli* (STEC)
- Notice 19-15, Requirement for a Special Certification Statement for Export of Raw Poultry and Raw Poultry Product to Canada
- Notice 20-15, Survey of Products Exported to Canada
- Directive 6300.1 Revision 1, Manufacture of Animal Food or Uninspected Articles at Official Establishments
- Notice 21-15, Use of FSIS Form 9060-5EP, Egg Products Export Certificate of Wholesomeness
- Notice 22-15, Changes to the *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* Verification Testing Programs for Poultry Carcasses

Administrative issues were also published.

- Notice 13-15, Annual Notice to High-Mileage Drivers

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

New Poultry Inspection System

NPIS Notes

Question of the Month

How will the Agency assist employees wanting to apply for promotions to GS-8 positions under NPIS?

Promotions within NPIS will be a competitive process, and all factors in the announcement and the application process will be considered. The Agency has developed a voluntary resume writing training seminar. The Office of Outreach, Employee Education and Training (OOEET) is offering this 1-day seminar to help employees with resume writing basics and with navigating and using the USAjobs application website. Participants have the option of writing a resume during the session. Computers are made available for hands-on training, and one-on-one assistance is provided as needed. Since this training is voluntary, the Agency does not pay for travel or overtime. Many of those who have attended the seminar have reported that it was very helpful and informative. The announcement of seminars will be in the *Wednesday Newsline*.

NPIS Mailbox

FSIS has set up a mailbox for any employee inquiries about NPIS. The NPIS mailbox is a one-stop shop to find answers to questions regarding the new poultry inspection system.

All questions will be collected and triaged among four senior management officials, who will review them and provide responses in the shortest amount of time possible. Questions and responses are being tracked and posted on *InsideFSIS*.

If you have questions about NPIS, send them to askNPIS@fsis.usda.gov.

GET ANSWERS AT

AskFSIS

AskFSIS is a web-based technology and policy question-and-answer forum on topics such as exporting, labeling, inspection, programs and procedures.

Visit <http://askfsis.custhelp.com/> to view recently posted topics.

>>> **RECALLS**

March 1	New York firm recalls beef jerky product due to processing deviation.
March 2	Tennessee firm recalls beef products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
March 4	Washington firm recalls brand loaf products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
March 5	Arizona firm recalls beef and pork products due to misbranding.
March 6	Texas firm recalls ready-to-eat beef products due to possible <i>Listeria</i> contamination.
March 12	New Jersey firm recalls chicken product due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
March 12	Ohio firm recalls bacon bits due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
March 13	Michigan firm recalls fried pork skin products produced without benefit of inspection.
March 14	New Jersey firm recalls various beef and chicken products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
March 14	Texas firm recalls beef products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
March 17	Missouri firm recalls beef products due to misbranding.
March 18	Wisconsin firm recalls pork tenderloin product due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
March 20	Illinois firm recalls pork and chicken products due to misbranding and undeclared allergen.
March 20	Massachusetts recalls pork and beef products imported from an ineligible country without benefit of import inspection.
March 23	Arizona firm recalls roast beef product due to misbranding.
March 25	California firm recalls beef product due to misbranding.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

May 2015

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

You can tell the stories of FSIS better than anyone! Send us your articles, photos and feedback. It's simple. Just prepare an article and include: who, what, when, where, why and how. Clear your article through your program area. Then send your article to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Candid photos preferred. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

FACES OF FOOD SAFETY

In this month's Faces of Food Safety, FSIS spotlights Cecilia Matthews. To read about how she remains responsive to the needs of the workforce and the public health mission, go to page 3.



Speak Your Mind, Take the FEVS!

By Richard J. McIntire, OPACE
Phone: (202) 690-0417

According to the Office of Personal Management's (OPM) website, "One of the best ways for managers to know whether they are living up to their responsibility to create an engaging and inclusive workplace is by listening to and acting on feedback from employees."

FSIS and many other federal workers will again have their chance to help guide the culture of their agencies during the 2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS), currently underway. FEVS is a tool that measures employees' perceptions of whether, and to what extent, the organization has the elements that are fundamental to success.

"I encourage you to participate in the FEVS should you receive it," said USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety Al Almanza. "FSIS uses the results from FEVS to determine what we are doing well and what we need to improve. We need to hear from you so that we'll have an accurate representation of employees' views. Your perspective and that of others will add value and make a difference as we strive to improve upon employee engagement and satisfaction."

Randomly selected employees will be granted official time to complete the FEVS. The survey is intentionally anonymous and responses go directly to OPM and FEVS' administrators, not FSIS officials or its leadership.

Like all federal agencies, FSIS receives a synopsis of the overall data. Action plans emerge from each set of FEVS results. The plans include short-term deliverables, as well as mid- to long-term actions. Some of the accomplishments that resulted from the 2013 and 2014 FEVS included: holding an Agency listening session regarding FEVS and employee engagement, publishing an updated Agency mission book to promote understanding of FSIS' goals, implementing a new supervisor training pilot program, implementing an Agency-wide mentoring program pilot, and re-implementing the Administrator's Awards Program.

"OPM's annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey is a valuable and powerful tool for government leaders, supervisors and managers as they work to make sure the Federal workforce feels engaged, supported and motivated," said OPM Director Katherine Archuleta. "In that way, Agency leaders can help this dedicated workforce continue to provide excellent service to the American people each and every day."

The Beacon is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education for FSIS employees.

Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education:

Carol Blake, Assistant Administrator
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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

June issue – due May 1
July issue – due June 1
August issue – due July 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to email.

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN



Al Almanza

The Agency is making a concerted effort to bolster employee engagement and satisfaction. There are many areas where employees are satisfied, but there is room for improvement. According to the 2014 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS), about 93 percent of employees who responded believe their work is important and 95 percent of respondents said they would be willing to put in the extra effort to get work done.

Those numbers make me proud, but they don't surprise me because I know how hard you work each day. I am also aware that feedback over the course of several previous FEVS has shown us that employees are eager for programs that support and increase employee engagement.

The FSIS leadership team is continually looking for new and innovative ways to support our employees and the FEVS provides us important feedback as we seek to improve. We are an inclusive and high-performing organization, but we can do better. The only way we can build upon our strengths as an Agency is by responding to input that we receive from you.

Some of you may have already received notice that you were randomly selected for the 2015 FEVS. In order to ensure the broadest spectrum of participation, those who are unable to access the web-based survey will be able to participate by filling out paper surveys. This year, the web-based survey will be open from May 4 to June 12. The paper-based survey begins May 19 and will continue until June 29.

I want to underscore a few aspects of the FEVS that make the data we receive from it so valuable. FEVS is confidential. If you receive the survey, please answer the questions honestly. After all, only candid responses can provide Agency leadership with an accurate picture of our employees' thoughts on important aspects of their work experience, such as their thoughts on Agency leadership, work/life balance, and creating a diverse and inclusive work environment.

Not every FSIS employee will be offered the chance to participate in the 2015 FEVS. Since only a random sample of FSIS employees will be selected, it is even more important that those who do receive the survey complete it. That way, the data will represent a complete and accurate picture of the health of our organization.

I want to thank those of you who will be taking the time to complete this year's FEVS. I want to hear what is working for you in the Agency so we can press ahead in those areas. I also want to hear what isn't working or what you believe can work better. I understand that sometimes change can seem slow, but I assure you that your thoughts and opinions matter and are the foundation of what drives our Agency's change and movement forward.

"Are these leftovers still good?"
There's an app for that.

FOODKEEPER



Cecilia Matthews – Your Feedback Matters

By Jeremy J. Emmert, OPA
Phone: (202) 205-3058

How does an Agency with over 9,600 employees, working in over 6,000 federally inspected establishments in all U.S. states and territories remain responsive to the needs of the workforce and the public health mission? Cecilia Matthews, a Human Resources Specialist in FSIS' Office of Management (OM) will tell you the answer is simple – employee feedback. Matthews speaks proudly of the role she plays in achieving Goal 7 of the Strategic Plan. Her work empowers employees with the training, resources and tools they need to protect public health. Matthews believes that empowering employees begins with listening to them.



she is adamant that if you are selected for the upcoming 2015 FEVS you should make completing it a top priority. "I want everyone to know that their input is more important now than ever," she said.

Cultural Transformation

Matthews is involved in another dynamic Department initiative to make USDA a model employer. She is on the Department's Cultural Transformation (CT) working group. The goal of CT is to get every employee, regardless of grade, invested in creating an atmosphere of equality and ensure each employee reaches his or her full potential. "CT is about treating others in a sensitive, inclusive and empowered way," Matthews said.

Matthews identifies both feedback and employee engagement as linchpins of CT. "You cannot get meaningful feedback unless the employees are engaged in the process," she said. "I am so proud to be a member of the Cultural Transformation workgroup because it gives me the opportunity to work with a diverse group of people and gain insight on their perspective coming from a different culture," she said.

District of Columbia Native

Matthews is a native Washingtonian who has lived in the city her entire life. She grew up in the Capitol Hill neighborhood of D.C., where she currently resides. 2015 marks 28 years of her service to the Federal government. She has been at USDA since 1995. "Working for the Federal government has allowed me the opportunity to blossom and develop my knowledge, skills and ability in an array of various professional positions," she said.

She has three daughters, ages 29, 24 and 22. She is proud that her oldest daughters have graduated from college – one from North Carolina A&T State University (with honors) and one from American University. She is also excited for her youngest daughter who is currently majoring in criminal justice at Virginia Commonwealth University. Matthews likes to spend her free time with family and considers dancing and working out as her main hobbies. She also enjoys riding her bicycle or walking home from work.

FEVS

Matthews is the Agency's point of contact for the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). "By completing this important survey, you are casting a vote to help improve the Agency," Matthews said.

Cecilia, or 'CC' as her colleagues fondly call her, has worked with the results of five FEVS since she began in OM in 2010. She uses results to conduct trend analysis, summarize information for leadership, and share information with Agency and Department working groups. "Information from FEVS is not only useful for identifying areas where the Agency can improve, but also for pinpointing what employees believe are the strengths," she said. Feedback from the survey has been used to drive a variety of changes:

- Senior Executive Service (SES) performance standards were revised to include requiring employee engagement activities;
- The Agency published the mission booklet, "One Team, One Purpose – Protecting Public Health and Preventing Foodborne Illness," and;
- Leadership implemented a 'New Supervisor Training' pilot program.

Matthews acknowledged that employees can easily get survey fatigue and have very little time in their busy schedules to complete yet another questionnaire. However, as someone who personally knows the value of the survey,

A Q&A SERIES

Michael Watts, OOEET

Phone: (202) 205-0194



How does your program area support the Agency's mission?

OOEET supports the Agency's mission by developing and delivering outreach, education and training programs designed to ensure public health and food safety. OOEET delivers education and training to the FSIS workforce, state inspectors, small plants and very small plants. OOEET ensures that education and training is relevant, timely and aligned with FSIS policies.

What is the most exciting (or significant) initiative or effort that your program area is working on right now?

Our Center for Learning (CFL) is currently developing training for the New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS). In addition, CFL has also recently developed a new FSIS-specific Leadership Competency Model consisting of eighteen customized FSIS competencies that directly link to the Agency's strategic plan and will help FSIS further build and sustain a highly qualified well-trained workforce. Another exciting initiative that began in late January 2015 offers resume writing workshops and job application training to field staff under the NPIS.

The Outreach and Partnership Division (OPD) is currently working on several significant initiatives including the Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) Program and the Small Plant Help Desk (SPHD). The CIS Program, a component of USDA's "Know Your Farmer; Know Your Food," aims to assist small and very small plants operating under state inspection to apply for, and ultimately acquire, state inspection "Equal To" standards. These standards allow plants to ship their products across state lines. Currently in its third year, the SPHD provides one-on-one expert assistance five days a week to small and very small plant owners/operators. Through the SPHD, owners/operators can receive technical assistance from FSIS subject matter experts. Services provided by SPHD would usually cost these establishments significant funds if procured through private sector consultants. The SPHD has even caught the eye of Secretary Vilsack, and while testifying before the House Agriculture Appropriations Committee, he offered this program as an example of USDA's customer service to small business.

What is the greatest challenge your program area faces right now?

One of the greatest challenges OOEET currently faces is remaining relevant, adding value to the Agency, and balancing our training development and delivery requirements with the increased emphasis on scientific methodology. This challenge includes finding the best approach to meet expansive growth while developing targeted, high quality training programs that address the training and developmental needs of all FSIS staff.

What is your vision for the future of your program area?

OOEET aims to be recognized as a premier program area that delivers high quality training and outreach services.

FSIS Retirees: March 15 - May 15, 2015

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Allen, Jackie L., FI-S	Decatur, AR	21	Iskandar, Saied K., Consmr Safety Offcr	NY Mills, NY	27
Anderson, Redetha A., FI-S	Albertville, AL	17	Johnson, Maggie L., FI-S	Sanford, NC	19
Baker, Jacqueline S., CSI	Gainesville, GA	14	Jones, Charles K., CSI	Montgomery, AL	25
Baker, Robert L., CSI	Austin, MN	28	Jordon, Vicki J., CSI	Southwest City, MO	25
Baltimore, Maggie D., CSI	Houston, TX	33	Koshy, Poovathoor, SVMO	Hatfield, PA	35
Callanta, Antonietta R., CSI	Broadview, IL	12	Kozlowski, Robert L., CSI	West Seneca, NY	31
Campbell, David C., CSI	Huntsville, AR	45	LaRusso, Dorothy K., Mgmt Anal	Washington, DC	13
Chlarson, Walter K., CSI	Moroni, UT	31	Mandese, Nicholas, CSI	Buena Vista, GA	17
Cornell, Craig L., CSI	Milford, DE	15	McDermott, Daniel R., VMO	Denison, IA	5
Cottman, Betty Lou, CSI	Athens, GA	40	Miller, Betty Jean, CSI	Mount Pleasant, TX	20
Coyle, Richard T., FI- Procsd Prod	Rembrandt, IA	20	Mix, Joyce L., CSI	Collins, MS	17
Coley, Shirley S., CSI	Guntersville, AL	36	Mora, Rodolfo, FI-S	Arcadia, LA	9
Cromwell, Randall K., FI-S	Momence, IL	24	Olinski, Richard E., Compliance Invstgr	New York, NY	25
Curry, Jack E., Food Insp Procsd Products	Seymour, IN	33	Page, David W., Lead CSI	Clarksville, AR	36
Darter, Brenda G., CSI	Clarksville, AR	26	Phillips, James L., Lead CSI	Guntersville, AL	39
Disney, William T., Risk Analyst	Oak Ridge, TN	25	Pilcher, Jr., Frank L., CSI	Westville, FL	17
Edbauer, Robert, Supvy CSI	Glen Allen, VA	16	Powell, David K., SVMO	Canton, MS	12
Edie, Patricia I., SVMO	Woodland, WA	16	Prophet, Lillie P., CSI	Batesburg, SC	34
Elliott, Antoinette F., FI-S	Arcadia, WI	7	Rupe, Melvin D., FI-S	Ottumwa, IA	25
Finnicum, Mark E., CSI	Wooster, OH	39	Silva, Joe C., CSI	Greeley, CO	20
Gabel, Steven R., FI-S	Lexington, NE	11	Vann, Gloria D., FI-S	Selbyville, DE	30
Glover, Bobby J., CSI	Eads, TN	29	Velky, Kenneth J., CSI	Marshalltown, IA	43
Gossman, Roman L., CSI	Rochester, MN	30	Waltrip, Andrew J., FI-S	Cassville, MO	19
Growden, Pauline , FI-S	Waterloo, IA	9	Ward, Hilda, FI-S	Wilkesboro, NC	4
Helton, William A., CSI	Laurel, MS	14	Wheeler, Joe M., CSI	Batesville, AR	25
Howard Capen, Alice, CSI	Cave Junction, OR	31	Whitmire, Billy F., CSI	Henderson, TX	35
Huey Jr., Samuel W., CSI	Dexter, MO	42	Wilson, William L., CSI	Warren, OH	35
Hurst, Dennis M., SCSi	Douglas, GA	38			

Kudos ...

Kudos to Dr. Rager and Dr. Bottinick

"[Kudos to] Dr. Rager and Dr. Bottinick of the Reading Circuit #23 of the Philadelphia District for keeping the CSIs and FIs grounded and on track with your guidance and [the] knowledgeable information that you provide to us daily!"

—Robert J. Henderson, OFO

Kudos to Dr. Sarah Davis, Public Health Veterinarian (PHV)

"Dr. Sarah Davis at Est. 18859 in New Rockford, N.D., has been an absolute role model for me in the past 4 years. Her vast experience in pathology and animal behaviors has given me the confidence to perform my duties every day. She constantly encourages me to achieve the best in me every day and consistently leads the way in Agency mission. Kudos to you, Dr. Davis!"

—Jess Cobb, OFO

SNAPSHOTS



Des Moines District

On November 20, 2014, FI Scott Kusman (pictured) visited Bristol Day School in Bristol, Wis. to teach children about germs and the importance of hand washing. The children were amazed to “see” the germs under a blue light and were especially vigilant when re-washing their hands in order to “get them all!” Photo contributed by Tim Tice, FLS.

Jackson District

On January 16, 2015, Deputy District Manager Dr. David Thompson visited with inspectors at P-6504 and introduced himself to any of the inspectors that he had not previously had an opportunity to meet.

Pictured, from left to right: Kariann Chavez, FI; Paula Coston, CSI; Dr. David Thompson, DDM; Martha Clark, FI; Myantha Crawford, WAE; and Dian James, WAE. Photo contributed by Estella Perez, SPHV.



Atlanta District

EIAOs Wendy Master and Willis Wright, III speaking with prospective candidates during the Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse Program at Fort Campbell, KY. The recruitment event was open to all military spouses, including Active Duty, Guard, Reserve, Veteran, and Gold Star Spouses. Photo Contributed by Willis Wright, III.

FROM THE **FIELD**



Des Moines District

CSI Steven Lee (pictured) spent a day in December 2014 performing outreach activities at three Watertown, Wis. schools. Lee spoke about food safety, the agency's mission, and proper hand washing techniques. The students were also treated to a black light hand washing exercise along with take-home bags filled with crayons, coloring books, pens and food safety publications. Photo contributed by Tim Tice, FLS.

Jackson District

The inspection team at P-1254/V-1254 third shift in Ashland, Ala. honored Cindy Paschal for 20 years of Federal service, celebrating with a surprise party of hamburgers, hot dogs, snacks and a group picture. Congratulations, Cindy! Sitting, from left to right: Steve Collier, CSI; Linda Welch, FI; Cindy Paschal, CSI; and Linda Smith, FI. Standing, from left to right: Dr. Courtney Baldwin, SPHV; David Clanton, FI; Carol Sims, WAE; Tommy Hoggle, Jr., CSI; and Patricia Sisk, WAE. Not pictured: Cenchrea Cooper, FI and Bernice Lindsey, WAE. Photo contributed by Dr. Courtney Baldwin, SPHV.



Atlanta District

P-855 in Athens, Ga. celebrated Black History Month in February with many festivities, including posters and a pot-luck style dinner. Dr. Umelaalim Idris (pictured) shared traditional African wedding dress, scarf, sash, jewelry and a basket to keep the food warm. Dr. Idris answered questions about Sudan, which was followed by great conversation and plenty of food. Photo contributed by Susan Kelley, SCSi.

Pay Grade Increases Primer

By Laura Kranitz, Human Resources Division, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8577

For those of us who were paid under the Public Health Human Resources System (PHHRS) pay bands, 2015 marks a full year under the conversion to the General Schedule (GS) pay scale. Many of us may be wondering how this affects a wage grade increase or how this might affect career ladder promotion opportunities.

Within-Grade Increase (WGI): As defined by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), within-grade increases (WGIs) or step increases are periodic increases in a GS employee's rate of basic pay from one step of the grade of his or her position to the next higher step of that grade.

How is WGI date determined? A WGI is effective on the first day of the first pay period beginning on or after the completion of the required waiting period (5 U.S.C. 5335 and 5 CFR 531.412.). For the majority of former PHHRS employees, the last equivalent increase date was January 12, 2014. You can view your last WGI date on your Employee Personal Page, under the Miscellaneous Tab.

When am I Eligible for my next WGI? An employee must be performing at an acceptable level (at least fully successful) and complete the required waiting period, as shown in the chart below.

Example: Consider an employee who is a GS-14 step 2 with a WGI date of January 12, 2014. The waiting period between step 2 and 3 is 52 weeks. That employee will be eligible for a step 3 increase on January 11, 2015. As your step advances, so will the waiting period. Please see the OPM Chart below for specific waiting periods per step:

Required Waiting Periods: For employees with a scheduled tour of duty, the required waiting periods established by law for advancement to the next higher step are as follows:

Advancement from ...	Requires ...
step 1 to step 2	52 weeks of creditable service in step 1
step 2 to step 3	52 weeks of creditable service in step 2
step 3 to step 4	52 weeks of creditable service in step 3
step 4 to step 5	104 weeks of creditable service in step 4
step 5 to step 6	104 weeks of creditable service in step 5
step 6 to step 7	104 weeks of creditable service in step 6
step 7 to step 8	156 weeks of creditable service in step 7
step 8 to step 9	156 weeks of creditable service in step 8
step 9 to step 10	156 weeks of creditable service in step 9

Special Note: The Dates for WGI and Promotion Eligibility are not always the same. Career ladder promotion is based on Time in Grade and Full Potential of the position. To be eligible for a promotion, the employee must have 52 weeks in his or her grade. Promotions are not automatic and require the approval of the employee's supervisor.

Listed below is the link to the OPM website addressing commonly asked questions for WGI: <http://www.opm.gov/FAQS/topic/payleave/index.aspx?cid=cd8d4f9e-90bd-4bae-a4ed-aab61e33966c>.



Empower Yourself



United States Department of Agriculture

Food Safety and Inspection Service

To better understand your concerns.

We Want Your Point Of



2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

Employees will be randomly selected for participation.

NPIS Notes

Question of the Month

Will plants that currently operate under the HACCP-Based Inspection Models Project (HIMP) remain HIMP plants or will they change to the new system?

The New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS) will end HIMP for all plants. NPIS is a voluntary process. Young chicken slaughter establishments currently operating under HIMP have the option to opt-in to NPIS with a modified *Salmonella* Initiative Program (SIP) waiver for an increased line speed. FSIS will allow these 20 young chicken establishments to run at line speeds up to 175 birds per minute (bpm). FSIS will also update these SIP waivers to remove aspects of HIMP that are inconsistent with NPIS, such as the Other Consumer Protection (OCP) performance standards. To ensure that the updated SIP waivers are consistent with NPIS, the Agency will also require that establishments operating under the updated waivers to submit the annual attestation regarding worker safety specified in the final rule. The maximum line speeds for young chicken establishments operating under NPIS is 140 bpm per line and 55 bpm for turkey establishments. The five turkey slaughter establishments formerly operating under HIMP must either opt-in to NPIS or identify and revert to one of the pre-existing inspection systems.

NPIS Mailbox

FSIS has set up a mailbox for any employee inquiries about NPIS. The NPIS mailbox is a one-stop shop to find answers to questions regarding the new poultry inspection system.

All questions will be collected and triaged among four senior management officials, who will review them and provide responses in the shortest amount of time possible. Questions and responses are being tracked and posted on *InsideFSIS*.

If you have questions about NPIS, send them to askNPIS@fsis.usda.gov.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- Notice 21-15, Use of FSIS Form 9060-5EP, Egg Products Export Certificate of Wholesomeness
- Notice 22-15, Changes to the *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* Verification Testing Programs for Poultry Carcasses
- Directive 5420.1, Revision 8, Food Defense Verification Tasks and Threat Notification Response Procedures for the Office of Field Operations
- Directive 7120.1, Revision 26, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry and Egg Products
- Directive 2610.3 Revision 2 - The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Correspondence Manual
- Notice 23-15, Raw Pork Products Exploratory Sampling Project (RPPESP)
- Notice 24-15, Export of Product with a Country Label Designation Different From the Export Certificate Designation
- Notice 25-15, Notification of Availability of Revised Guidance Procedures for New Technology Notifications and Protocols
- Directive 9510.1, Importation of Inedible Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products



Photo contributed by Donna Savage, OFO

PHOTO ^{OF THE} MONTH

The Atlanta District Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee (EEOAC) presented Nicholas E. Mandese with a "Big Buck Award." Mandese is a Food Inspector stationed at Tyson Foods Inc. in Buena Vista, Ga. He has been employed by USDA for 9 years. He is an avid hunter it was a pleasant surprise to be recognized by the Agency in this manner. This winning buck was a massive 215 pounds. Mandese had taken annual leave to go hunting and got the buck hunting on his own property. The deer was so large his father had to assist him in getting it out of the woods.

Inspectors' Annual Safety Requirements

By Michael Lyons, OM
Phone: (402) 344-5145

If you have any questions regarding annual safety requirements, please contact the Occupational Safety and Health Specialist assigned to your district.

Lockout/Tagout Safety Procedures

Training: Training must be provided to inspection personnel before performing pre-operational process verification inspection, verification of pre-operational or operational corrective action (FSIS Directive 4791.11, Revision 1, Part IX).

Inspection: Energy control procedures must be inspected annually (FSIS Directive 4791.11, Revision 1, Part XII).

Retraining: Retraining must be provided whenever a change occurs in the employee's assignment, machines, equipment, energy control procedures, or processes. Additional training is also required if the annual inspection reveals a deviation or inadequacy in the employee's knowledge or use of the approved procedure (FSIS Directive 4791.11, Revision 1, Part XIII).

Hearing Conservation Program

Noise Monitoring: Monitoring must be repeated if there is a change in production processes, equipment or controls that increase noise exposures (FSIS Directive 4791.1, Revision 2, Part Three).

Audiometric Testing: Annual audiometric testing must be offered to inspection personnel who work in environments that are at or exceed 85 decibels for an 8-hour time-weighted average.

Annual Training: Annual training must be provided to inspection personnel who work in environments that are at or exceed 85 decibels for an 8-hour time-weighted average.

Workplace Safety and Health Inspections

Offices: Office safety and health inspections must be conducted annually using Form 4791.23, Safety and Health Inspection Checklist for Office Facilities, and posted to the bulletin board (Directive 4791.13, Part One).

Establishment Facilities: Plant facility safety and health inspections must be conducted annually using Form 4791.24, Safety and Health Inspection

Checklist for Plant Facilities, and posted to the bulletin board (Directive 4791.13, Part One).

The OSHA 300, 300A and 301 Forms

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Recordkeeping begins January 1 using the OSHA 300 and 301 forms. Post the OSHA 300A summary page February 1 to April 30 from the previous calendar year.

Hazard Communication Program Training

Training must be provided to employees exposed, or potentially exposed, to hazardous chemicals. Additional training must be provided whenever a new hazardous chemical is introduced to the work area (FSIS Directive 4791.5, Part V).

Occupant Emergency Plan Training

Training must be provided when the plan is first developed; when new employees, relief employees and visitors come to the workplace; when new equipment, materials or processes are introduced; and when emergency procedures are updated or changed (FSIS Directive 4791.6, Rev. 2, Part XVI).

New Travel System Operational

By Jeremy Roper, OCFO
Phone: (301) 344-0721



FSIS is using Concur® Government Edition for all travel arrangements, authorizations and vouchers. Employees may access the Concur website using their eAuth ID and password at <https://cge.concursolutions.com/ui/ssol/usda> or through the FSIS Applications shortcut folder.

Training options are still available. While training is not required to use the system, employees who travel regularly should utilize the training. Employees can receive one-on-one instruction from the Federal Agency Travel Administrator (FATA) assigned to their program or district office or they can take self-paced instruction in AgLearn or using a training CD. The available AgLearn trainings are called "Concur for New Users" and "Concur for Routing Officials." The training CD is specifically developed for FSIS use, and contains selected simulations on accomplishing common system activities, a copy of the user manual, a quick reference guide and a recorded training webinar. The CD can be obtained through the Center for Learning at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=CDDVDRequest9757>.



FSIS will now partner with a new Travel Management Center (TMC). The new TMC will

be Rodgers Travel, Inc., which will replace Boersma Travel. Rodgers Travel will provide ticketing and booking for Agency travel in the same manner as the Agency's previous TMC. Services include changes, rescheduling and cancellations to existing authorized travel through the Concur travel system. The TMC will also assist with international, invitational and group reservations.

TMC services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year and can assist with emergency travel up to 24 business hours in advance of a trip. USDA employees may contact the TMC toll-free at (877) 655-1047 or at (610) 964-2063 for local domestic and international calls.

For more information, visit the Chief Financial Officer's (OCFO) Travel Resources Website. Employees with questions should contact their program or district area FATA, or the Financial Services Center (FSC) Customer Contact Center at (800) 949-3964 and FSCGeneral@fsis.usda.gov.

USDA Launches New Smartphone App

By Chris Bernstein, OPAE
Phone: (202) 260-9433

Every year, billions of pounds of good food go to waste in the U.S. because cooks are not sure of the quality or safety of items. USDA estimates that 36 pounds of food is wasted every month per person in the U.S. On April 2, 2015, FSIS released an app to help solve that. FSIS, with the help of Cornell University and the Food Marketing Institute, developed the new Smartphone application (app) called FoodKeeper!

This app is designed to help users understand how different storing methods affect a product's shelf life. It enables consumers to maximize the storage life of foods and beverages. The app has a reminder function that can alert users to consume items before they are likely to spoil.

App Features

The FoodKeeper app offers users valuable storage advice about more than 400 food and beverage items, including various types of baby food, dairy products, eggs, meat, poultry, produce, seafood and much more. Some of the features include:

- Finding specific storage timelines for the refrigerator, freezer, and pantry, depending on the nature of the product;
- Getting cooking tips for meat, poultry and seafood products;
- Putting a note in your devices' calendar when products were purchased and receive notifications when they are nearing the end of their recommended storage date;
- Searching the application with swipe gestures or voice control; and,
- Submitting a question to USDA using the 'Ask Karen' feature of the application. 'Ask Karen' is USDA's 24/7 virtual representative. The system provides information about preventing foodborne illness, safe food handling and storage, and safe preparation of meat, poultry and egg products.

With this app, FSIS aims to reduce food waste in America and ensure consumers are confidently consuming safe food products. Download it today on Android and Apple devices!

>>> **RECALLS**

April 1	Maryland firm recalls corned beef products not presented at the U.S. point of entry for inspection.
April 1	Washington firm recalls beef and pork jerky product due to possible <i>Listeria</i> contamination.
April 2	Virginia firm recalls beef, goat and lamb products due to misbranding and being produced without benefit of full inspection.
April 8	Oregon firm recalls beef and chicken products produced without benefit of inspection.
April 8	Illinois firm recalls pork and chicken products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
April 11	California firm recalls beef and pork products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
April 13	Pennsylvania firm recalls veal carcasses produced without full benefit of inspection.
April 14	New York firm recalls baby food product due to possible foreign matter contamination.
April 15	Arkansas firm recalls products due to nitrite levels in excess of regulatory limit.
April 17	California firm recalls beef and chicken products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
April 18	Arkansas firm recalls pork products due to possible processing deviation and staphylococcal enterotoxin contamination.
April 20	Michigan firm recalls turkey and beef products due to misbranding.
April 20	Mississippi firm recalls sausage products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
April 23	Utah firm recalls grilled chicken breast products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
April 24	Maryland firm recalls beef and pork products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
April 24	New Mexico firm recalls beef and pork products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
April 27	California firm recalls beef and pork products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
April 27	Illinois firm recalls beef products due to <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 contamination.
April 29	New York firm recalls beef and chicken products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls .	

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

More Snapshots!

Because you asked for it, this month's issue includes **DOUBLE** the photos! Snapshots begin on page 8.



FACES OF FOOD SAFETY

FSIS spotlights Maria Esteras, Deputy District Manager of the Denver District. To read about Maria and how she supports the field office with the largest geographical area, go to page 3.

Photo contributed by Maria Esteras, OFO.

The Annual Performance Plan in Plain English

By Leo O'Drudy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-8693

There is no doubt that FSIS employees are busy! The many tasks that it takes to ensure a safe meat and egg product supply for this country are as diverse as the employees who are working hard to complete those tasks. The Annual Performance Plan (APP) is the guide to making sure all of those individual actions work in concert to accomplish goals. It is one of the Agency's most important accountability documents. The thought of taking the time to digest the entire APP can seem daunting. However, the APP is a guide for action for every FSIS employee at every level. Understanding how it applies to you is important!

To fully understand the APP, first consider the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan and the APP work in harmony. The Strategic Plan is the broader of the two accountability documents. It outlines the Agency's intentions over a 5-year period in eight strategic goals. The APP is the annual operational guide. The APP lets the public and every employee know how the Agency intends to realize the goals of the Strategic Plan step by step.

The 2015 APP demonstrates the Agency's effort to modernize the fight against foodborne illness through a science-based approach. While it contains goals from across all program areas, a few highlights include:

- The *Salmonella* Action Plan (SAP), which aims to reduce the number of foodborne *Salmonella* illnesses associated with FSIS-regulated products;
- The Agency's modernization efforts through the New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS);
- FSIS program areas working together with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the development, publication and communication of harmonized foodborne illness attribution fractions by the end of fiscal year 2015.

These are just a sampling of the performance measures and outcomes outlined in the APP, which you can find at

Continued on page 3 ...

The Beacon is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

July issue – due June 1
August issue – due July 1
Sept. issue – due Aug. 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
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We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to email.

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN



Al Almanza

Individual and collective accountability is the key to FSIS' success. In last month's issue of *The Beacon*, I discussed how we use data from Federal Employee Viewpoint (FEVS) to improve employee satisfaction in the workplace and hold ourselves accountable for making changes based on the feedback we receive from your input. This month, I want to talk about one of the Agency's most important accountability measures - the Annual Performance Plan (APP).

The APP ensures that Agency actions are consistent with the longer term strategic vision laid out in the fiscal year (FY) 2011-16 Strategic Plan. In other words, the APP sets out exactly what must be done in a particular period of time to achieve results articulated in the broader Strategic Plan. The APP provides the clear direction to every FSIS employee, the American public and our stakeholders.

The APP is a detailed roadmap of the steps that are necessary in order to achieve Agency priorities each year. Managers are held accountable for ensuring that the employees they supervise understand how their individual duties and assignments support the Agency priorities.

Knowing that every employee has a role in understanding and supporting the goals in the APP, it naturally influences the way performance standards are written for every employee. No matter what your job, where you are in the Agency, or where you are physically located, your performance plan sets forth the individual goals you should achieve, and helps the Agency meet the broader goals of the APP.

For over a century, our Agency and all of our employees have played a vital role to ensure that American food is safe from contamination. The services you provide touch the lives of almost every citizen, every day in America. We are doing so much right now. It really is amazing when you think about how productive we have been in such a short time, and the progress we have made for food safety. Our Agency's progress is due to holding ourselves accountable and our commitment to the FSIS mission.

FSIS' important mission inspires the pride and accountability that I see exemplified in the work FSIS employees do every day. When you show up to work, you do so with a positive attitude and a commitment to our mission to reduce foodborne illness. That's not easy to do, no matter where you work, and I am extremely grateful to each of you for it.

Awards and Recognition Handbook

By Julaine Schmidt, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8598

The Office of Human Resources has developed an Awards and Recognition Handbook, which is a comprehensive guide to the awards and recognition programs in FSIS. Employee awards and other forms of recognition are used to show appreciation for organizational, individual and group performance that exceeds expectations, especially that which contributes to the mission and goals of FSIS. Ensuring that the eligibility and criteria for awards and recognition are clear is an action item in the 2014 FSIS Employee Engagement Action Plan. The Awards and Recognition Handbook provides detailed information on monetary and non-monetary awards and can be found on *InsideFSIS* at Awards and Recognition Handbook.

Maria Esteras: Leading by Example

By Whitney Joy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 692-0061

Maria Esteras is the Deputy District Manager (DDM) for the Denver District Office. She is accountable for the largest geographical area of all the field office. The area encompasses 10 states (including Alaska and Hawaii) as well as the Northern Mariana Islands. She faces logistical and even language barriers. For example, Maria's work spans several time zones. The time difference between Guam and Denver is more than 8 hours! Esteras loves a challenge and her career at FSIS reflects it.

Esteras has always wanted to work with animals, although she never envisioned a career with FSIS. She graduated from Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 2006, and worked in private practice with race horses in Florida and New Mexico. She wanted to return to Colorado, and FSIS gave her that opportunity. Her transition to a Public Health Veterinarian (PHV) in 2008 was easy since she was already used to working with large animals. She saw this position as an opportunity to ensure that animals being processed for food were treated humanely.

After a year and a half as a PHV, she was promoted to Supervisory Public Health Veterinarian. Her career includes serving as a Frontline Supervisor and as a Supervisory Enforcement, Investigations, and Analysis Officer (SEIAO). As a manager, she holds herself accountable to the employees that she supervises by being knowledgeable of what their jobs entail and how it contributes to the bigger picture.



Photo contributed by Maria Esteras, OFO.

"It was very important for me to have field experience. It helps me to better understand how I can help the field do their job," Esteras said.

Esteras is proud when she sees diverse people come together to solve a problem. Esteras recalled that once there had been a problem with measles in beef. The supervisors and veterinarians worked together to create an action plan and, with feedback from the inspectors, set a solution into motion. Their strategy of more extensive inspections effectively dealt with the issue at hand and also led to an increase in communications between the veterinarians and the inspectors. During the process, the team's morale was boosted.

Esteras summed up her leadership philosophy. She strongly believes that to be successful, you should be able to do the jobs of the people you supervise. To her, accountability means leading by example. Esteras is willing to cover for her team when someone calls in sick or needs a break. She goes above and beyond and expects her employees to follow her example.

"The District Management team in Denver works on encouraging, motivating and educating our field inspection team to work towards our goal of food safety. Things change, sometimes very rapidly, so the management team ensures that the field stays focused on the food safety risks that have been identified. We strive to communicate new information to the field as quickly as possible and to provide guidance on concerns that come up along the way," she said.

APP

... Continued from page 1

www.fsis.usda.gov/APP2015. Food Inspectors, Consumer Safety Inspectors, Import Inspectors, Public Health Veterinarians, Scientists, Compliance and Investigation Division Inspectors and all the other professionals in the food safety continuum do important and interrelated work that supports the APP and, in turn, a safe food supply.

The APP is truly one of the Agency's most important accountability documents. It allows FSIS management to hold itself accountable. It permits the public and stakeholders to hold the Agency true to its stated goals. It empowers employees to make sure their performance reports reflect tasks in furtherance of the Agency's broader goals.

A Q&A SERIES

Mary Frances Lowe, U.S. Codex

Phone: (202) 720-2057

How does your program area support the Agency's mission?

The U.S. Codex Office (USCO), located in FSIS, leads the U.S. Codex Program, an interagency partnership that engages stakeholders in the development of science-based food standards for the benefit of the United States and the worldwide community, within the framework of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC). The Codex Alimentarius is the joint food standards program of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO). Codex sets global food standards based on scientific risk assessments and serves a dual mission of protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in trade.

The USCO promotes the adoption by the CAC of voluntary international standards, codes of hygienic practice and other guidelines that align with U.S. food safety goals, public health regulations and international trade goals. Promoting international cooperation in Codex contributes to the FSIS mission by helping to ensure the safety of imported foods.

USCO is responsible for leading interagency efforts and coordinating stakeholder input into Codex work, including organizing U.S. delegations to the dozen or so Codex committees that meet each year. The U.S. Codex Office manages the three committees that are hosted by the United States – Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH); Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF); and Codex Committee on Processed Fruits and Vegetables (CCPFV).

USCO also supports the FSIS goal of ensuring effective use of science to understand foodborne illness and emerging trends by promoting international food safety standards aimed at maximizing international compliance with food safety policies and strengthening collaboration among external stakeholders to prevent foodborne illness.

What is the most exciting (or significant) initiative or effort that your program area is working on right now?

Recently, the CAC approved initiation of new work to develop international Guidelines for the Control of

Nontyphoidal *Salmonella* spp. in Beef and Pork Meat. FSIS scientists from the Office of Public Health Science are leading the technical work, under the auspices of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH), hosted by the United States. We believe these guidelines, which will benefit from independent international expert review, will help achieve important public health goals. The USCO also strongly supports ongoing CCFH work on parasites, including development of Guidelines for Control of *Trichinella spiralis* in *Suidae* (pork).

What is the greatest challenge your program area faces right now?

The greatest challenge for the USCO is anticipating what international food safety issues may be around the corner, and working to ensure that international standards remain soundly based on science. We engage domestic stakeholders and international partners in identifying emerging trends and collaboratively developing harmonized, science-based food standards that safeguard public health and fair trade interests in the United States and worldwide.

What is your future vision for your program area?

For the future, the USCO envisions continuing to play a leadership role in advancing science-based food standards in the CAC. To accomplish this, we will assure that our national infrastructure and Codex governance remain strong.

What are some ways in your program area that staff can provide suggestions or raise questions or concerns with you?

Our work requires a team effort to achieve our goals. There is a great deal of informal communication among the USCO staff to discuss issues that are on the agenda of the Codex committees. We have weekly staff meetings to discuss pending issues and to raise questions or concerns. This is also the forum where we discuss any outreach activities we believe may help further our food safety goals for the U.S. and beyond. There are also one-on-one meetings and team meetings about specific issues. Even when we can't get together in person, we are in constant touch via email.

FSIS Retirees: May 15 - June 15, 2015

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Brewer, Vicky L., Space Mgmt Spectst	Beltsville, MD	18
Burns, David J., CSI	Crete, NE	40
Caldwell, Michael L., SVMO	Lexington, KY	24
Calzone, Thomas J., CSI	Randolph, NY	30
Carrillo, Juan E., CSI	Corpus Christi, TX	42
Cash, William R., CSI	Simpsonville, KY	41
Chermak, Roger, CSO-EIAO	Miami, FL	39
Dooley, Roy L., SVMO	Dexter, MO	27
Elkins, Mary E., DVM, CSO-EIAO	Lawrence, KS	21
Ferrell, Robert Lee, CSI	Shelbyville, TN	27
Flournoy, Roy E., FI-S	Hickory, KY	19
Goff, James A., CSI	Cleveland, OH	42
Hammons, Claude R., SVMO	Springdale, AR	5
Hess, James G., Lab Director	St. Louis, MO	44
Hunt, Thelma L., CSI	Danville, AR	25

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Johnson, Diane V., CSI	Orland, CA	27
Jones, Dennis A., CSI	Emmitsburg, MD	24
Kendrick, Kirkland K., CSI	Springdale, AR	25
Martin, Michael L., CSI	Lancaster, PA	34
McDaniel, David L., CSI	Perry, IA	37
Mohammad, Waheed A., SVMO	Winesburg, OH	6
Nichols, Beverly J., FI-S	Broken Bow, OK	14
Nims, Curtis E., PHV/VMO	Estherville, IA	9
Phan, Sang N., SVMO	Waterloo, IA	32
Proffer, Angela, FI-S	Dexter, MO	12
Push, William E., PHV/VMO	Omaha, NE	14
Reavis, Dexter U., Lead VMO	Omaha, NE	24
Register, Charlotte A., FI-S	Jack, AL	20
Shepard, Michael D., FI-S	Ottumwa, IA	27
Shortnacy, Jaynie E., CSI	Oklahoma City, OK	22
Whitmarsh, Christine L., CSI	Nashville, AR	20

New Poultry Inspection System

NPIS Notes

Question of the Month

In plants that choose not to adopt the New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS), will FSIS continue to staff those plants with the same number of USDA inspectors?

The staffing and inspection system will not change for those establishments that do not opt-in to NPIS. Establishments will have the same staffing options available to them that are currently in place.

NPIS Mailbox

FSIS has set up a mailbox for any employee inquiries about NPIS. The NPIS mailbox is a one-stop shop to find answers to questions regarding the new poultry inspection system.

All questions will be collected and triaged among four senior management officials, who will review them and provide responses in the shortest amount of time possible. Questions and responses are being tracked and posted on *InsideFSIS*.

If you have questions about NPIS, send them to askNPIS@fsis.usda.gov.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Photo contributed by Patrick Stillwell, SEIAO.

The Des Moines District (DO25) in conjunction with North Dakota State University (NDSU) held a Food Safety Summit on May 21, 2015 in Fargo, N.D. The goal of the Summit was to educate, exchange information and open lines of communication between industry, public health officials and regulatory agencies. Topics included Jerky Compliance Guidelines, Allergens, Corrective Actions, Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program, Revisions to the *Lm* Compliance Guidelines and FSIS Regulatory Developments. The diverse knowledge and experience of the presenters from FSIS, NDSU and the ND Meat & Poultry Inspection Program helped to make the Food Safety Summit a success.

Pictured, from left to right: Dr. Travis Maddock, Dakota Gobal; Phil Derfler, FSIS Deputy Administrator; Thomas Beck, SEC; Nathan Kroh, ND Meat & Poultry Inspection Program; Clarke Jones, EIAO; Todd Gerwig, DDM; Dr. Robert Maddock, NDSU; Dr. Dawn Sprouls, DM; Dr. Sheree Clark, EIAO; Dr. Mike Sheldon, OOEET; Dr. Rosemary Turner, DDM; Gary Chihos, EIAO; William Langer, EIAO; Dr. Khalid Masood, DDM; and Dr. Keith Gilmore, OFO.

“Kudos ...

Kudos to Barry Rhodes, Office of Field Operations (OFO)

The Office of Data Integration and Food Protection (ODIFP), Food Defense Assessment Staff (FDAS) would like to thank Barry Rhodes, Recall Management and Technical Analysis Staff (RMTAS), for his support of the food defense mission. On March 16, 2015, Barry helped facilitate a trip to the National Targeting Center-Cargo (NTC-C) in Va. Participants included personnel from FSIS' Office of International Coordination (OIC), FDAS and USDA's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Coordination. Attendees received informative briefings from various Agencies about targeting activities and toured the facility. We greatly appreciate that Barry took time out of his busy schedule to arrange this visit and for his continued collaboration!

—Marianne Elbertson, ODIFP

If you would like to thank, congratulate or give a shout out to someone in FSIS, send your kudo to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. You can also place a kudo on *InsideFSIS*. Just email it to intranet.manager@fsis.usda.gov. Keep your kudo to a few sentences.

”

Employee Engagement is an FSIS Leadership Commitment

By Cecilia Matthews, OM
Phone: (202) 205-4284

Employee engagement is a major focal point for FSIS for a good reason. Engaged employees are better producers, more committed to the organization and in it for the long haul.

Leadership recognizes that employees are the Agency's most valuable asset. Engaged employees aren't just motivated by money, status or power – they're motivated by shared values, integrity, purpose and mission. FSIS is listening to its employees to effectively use their feedback. To do that, FSIS is actively engaging its workforce and implementing innovative ideas to keep employees engaged and to make FSIS a better place to work. More importantly, management needs to be engaged and lead with passion. Leaders set the tone for engagement in the workplace.

Here are some of FSIS' fiscal year 2014 accomplishments on this subject:

- Revised SES performance standards to include specific employee engagement activities.
- Published a book titled *One Team, One Purpose -- Protecting Public Health and Preventing Foodborne Illness* to promote understanding of FSIS' mission/goals.

- Implemented a New Supervisor Training pilot program.
- Added an employee engagement performance measure for all FSIS supervisors.
- Implemented an Agencywide mentoring program pilot.
- Implemented a Supervisor Refresher Training pilot program for current supervisors.
- Implemented mandatory use of a 360 assessment tool for SES employees to gauge feedback from their subordinates, peers and managers.

These accomplishments are a demonstration of FSIS' commitment to employee engagement. Engagement is a leadership commitment to the organization and its goals. It requires a positive culture, constant maintenance and change. Engagement isn't magic; it's a craft. It is built by creating trust and requires open communication, clearly-articulated goals and clear-cut expectations.

FSIS employees don't want to work for just any organization; they're looking for a shared sense of purpose, challenging work, committed leaders and excited and satisfied customers. This is why employee engagement is so important in FSIS. The payoffs are extensive: happier, more productive employees, satisfied customers, better profits and business results. It's also hard work that we as an Agency have to commit to. Resolve to master employee engagement. It's a worthy undertaking.

Reporting Workplace Violence

By Kerrie Tao, OM
Phone: (202) 403-0422

Workplace violence is not tolerated at FSIS. Since this type of behavior can be unpredictable, it is more important to be aware of the warning signs.

A threat is any gesture or oral or written expression that conveys intent to cause physical harm to persons or property. Critical threats are the actual use or display of firearms or other weapons with intent to harm, physical hitting, pushing, emotional verbal threats, destroying property, and stalking. Developmental threats are verbal or written remarks, conversations involving talk of guns that are perceived as threatening, nonverbal threats, and menacing gestures.

Report workplace violence immediately! The prevention hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-877-987-3747 or 1-877-WVP-FSIS. Please call if you need assistance concerning a workplace violence issue.

The following are additional resources:

- FSIS Directive 4735.4, Reporting Assault, Harassment, Interference, Intimidation or Threat (<https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/DocumentViewerServlet?filename=FSISIntranet/Offices/Documents/fsisprdb20130402020456.pdf>)
- FSIS Form 4735-4 (Oct. 2004), Reporting Form for Assault, Harassment, Interference, Intimidation and Threat (<https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/global/forms/forms.jsp>).

OIEA Wesern Region

OIEA staff in Diamond Bar, California participated in a celebratory potluck luncheon in honor of Black History Month. Pictured, from left to right: Adriana Perez, Nashante Barnes, Edgar Jaimez, Michael Dunn, Bobbie Jones, Shaun Smith, Linda Ramos, Carl Mayes, Guadalupe Solis, Luis Cruz and Pedro Rodriguez.

Photo contributed by Shaun Smith, OIEA.



Alameda District/OIEA Western Region

OFO Alameda District, San Diego Circuit team and OIEA CID met in San Diego, California and discussed joint efforts to protect public health. Pictured, from left to right: Clarence Watson, Michael Barham, Alvin Dyson, Marilyn Carpenter, Linda Ramos, Shaun Smith, Daniel Griggs, Marco Trejo, Jose Martinez, Jared Beville, Efrén Viramontes, Patricia Montiel, Gregory Worthy and Nicholas Payne. Photo contributed by Sue Newman, OFO.



Denver District

Dr. Randall Broberg (pictured, left) presented John Ridgeway (pictured, right) with the "Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence" for his contribution to the investigative efforts to prevent distribution of uninspected meat to school children and the successful prosecution of violators of the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA). John actively participated in a team that investigated and eventually prosecuted the FMIA violator. Photo contributed by Randall Broberg, OFO.



FROM THE **FIELD**

OIEA Northeast Region

OIEA Compliance Investigators Michael Dionne and James Lappin of the Oak Park, Michigan office, participated in the Oakland University Government Career Recruitment Mixer, providing Oakland University students and alumni with information about USDA careers. Pictured, from left to right: Michael Dionne, Oakland University graduate student and James Lappin. Photo contributed by James Lappin, OIEA.



Headquarters

USDA conducted its 2014 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Closing Ceremony and Awards event in the headquarters building's Jefferson Auditorium. Carl Mayes, OIEA Acting Director and FSIS' CFC coordinator, poses with some of the Agency's keyworkers and Dr. Gregory Parham, OSEC Assistant Secretary. Mayes received a Special Service Award. FSIS received the CFC Merit Award for having participation from 50 percent of employees and/or having at least \$125 per capita donated to the CFC. Pictured, from left to right: Patrice Perkins, Carl Mayes, Kristina Beaugh, Fatima Weaver, Monica Marcelli, Felicia Thompson and Dr. Gregory Parham. Photo contributed by the USDA's Office of Communications.



Chicago District

CSIs Angelina Schile (pictured, right) and William Imler, III (pictured, left) performed a food safety outreach activity at the local grocery store in Columbus, Ind. Approximately 300 people visited the table and took food safety information. Schile and Imler were able to answer consumers' questions about proper cooking temperatures and provide them with "Is It Done Yet" magnets that reference the cooking temperatures for meat, poultry and fish.

Photo contributed by Angelina Schile, OFO.



SMART Goal Setting

By Chrisie Tynan, OM
Phone: (202) 720-7983

Employees and supervisors have an equal role in developing work goals. Establishing goals allows supervisors to evaluate their employees' performance. Likewise, they also assist employees in managing their own success.

At the beginning of each rating cycle, supervisors are responsible for ensuring that each employee has a performance plan in place. Supervisors are responsible for communicating organizational goals and how they directly link to the employee's performance. While developing performance plans, supervisors and employees should have an open conversation about how employee accomplishments support organizational goals. Once the supervisor and employee make these connections, they can agree upon more specific, individual goals to incorporate under the mission results performance element.

When developing goals, apply the "SMART" model to ensure that the goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-focused, and Timely.

- **Specific:** Goals should be written and clearly describe tasks and responsibilities.
- **Measurable:** Goals should allow for tangible evidence of progress and accomplishment.
- **Achievable:** Goals should be achievable while still providing a challenge.
- **Results-focused:** Goals should measure outcomes not activities.
- **Timely:** Goals should be linked to a timeframe that creates a practical sense of urgency.

An individual employee's goals should be directly linked to the program area and in turn the Agency's Annual Performance Plan Standards and Strategic goals. Through open communication between employees and supervisors there should be no surprises during the annual performance appraisal period.

If you have questions you can contact the Performance Management Branch at (202) 720-7983 or via email at performancemanagement@fsis.usda.gov.



Have your say!

Take the survey.

Empower Yourself

Web-based survey closes June 12
Paper-based survey closes June 29



United States Department of Agriculture

Food Safety and Inspection Service

To better understand your concerns.

We Want Your Point Of



Vision Insight Experience Wisdom

**2015 Federal Employee
Viewpoint Survey**

(Employees will be randomly selected to participate)

Interagency Collaboration Protects Public Health

By Johanna L. Lopez, OIEA
Phone: (787) 749-4370

FSIS' Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit (OIEA) Compliance and Investigations Division (CID) Southeast Region worked jointly with USDA's Office of the General Counsel and Assistant United States Attorney (AUSA) Mariana E. Bauza-Almonte, to prosecute a case under the Federal Meat Inspection Act.

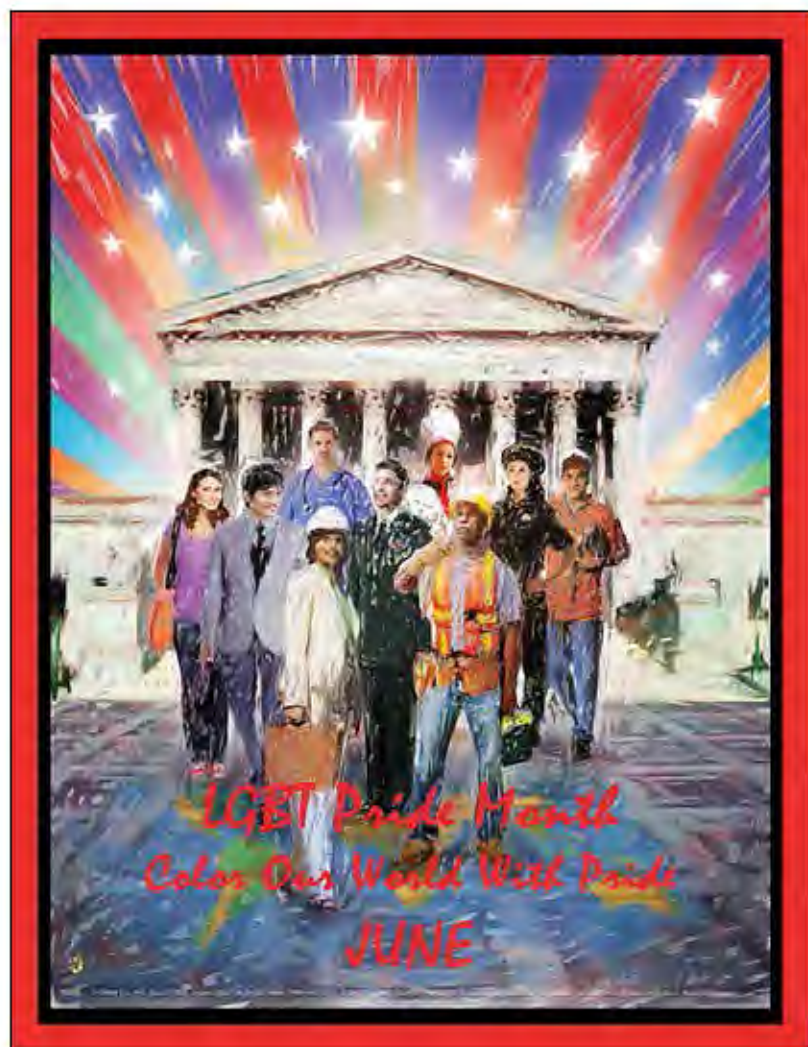
OIEA's investigation revealed that a company in Puerto Rico offered more than 52,000 pounds of pork shoulder for sale that the owner knew was not fit for human consumption. Ultimately, the owner of the company plead guilty to violating federal law and was sentenced to 1 year of probation, 100 hours of community service, a \$2,500 fine and \$100 special monetary assessment.

OIEA's Southeast Region presented an award on March 18, 2015 to AUSA Bauza-Almonte for Extraordinary Contributions to FSIS Public Health, Safety and Enforcement Goals.



Photo contributed by Lymarie U. Lovet-Ayala, USDOJ- U.S. Attorney Office.

Pictured, from left to right: Johanna L. Lopez, CID; Mariana E. Bauza-Almonte, AUSA; William Tirado, CID; and William Kaile, CID.



POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **FSIS Directive 5100.4 Revision 1, Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officer (EIAO) Public Health Risk Evaluation (PHRE) Methodology**
- **FSIS Directive 7120.1 Revision 27, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products**
- **FSIS Directive 5100.1, Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officer Food Safety Assessment Methodology**

SNAPSHOTS

OIEA Western Region

OIEA CID Investigator Stacy Tyralla (pictured) hosted an FSIS food safety exhibit at the 11th Annual Agriculture Day event in Napa, California. "Ag Day," as it is commonly known, was hosted by Napa Farm Bureau Agriculture in the Classroom and Napa County Department of Agriculture and attended by more than 1,000 children and 50 teachers and parents. Children were encouraged to answer questions about proper hand washing and safe food handling techniques at the FSIS booth. Food safety materials in English and Spanish, such as the *FSIS Be Food Safe Activity Book*, *Discovery Zone Coloring Book* and *Kitchen Companion*, were provided. The children were enthusiastic about winning FSIS prizes and learning about food safety. Photo contributed by Stacy Tyralla, OIEA.



OPHS Midwestern Laboratory

The OPHS Midwestern Laboratory partnered with USDA Rural Development to recognize Women's History Month. This year's theme was "Weaving the Stories of Women's Lives." Jaime Bourrassa, the keynote speaker from the Missouri History Museum, enlightened attendees with stories about "Literary Women of St. Louis." Pictured, from left to right: Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza, Renee Brown (Rural Development), Valeria Jefferson (Federal Women's Program Manager), Jaime Bourrassa, Ashley Ellis, Arneather Thompson, Dr. David Goldman and James Hess. Photo contributed by David Blank, OPHS.



Springdale District

Denise Hickman (pictured) performed an outreach activity at Lafayette County Elementary. She spoke with kindergarten classes about safe food handling, hand washing and ways to "Fight BAC!" The children received coloring books and crayons, as well a USAJOBS flyer to take home for their parents. The children especially enjoyed the sticker sheet that came with the coloring book. Stickers are serious business in kindergarten! The children were very excited to have a visitor, and have already invited Hickman back for another visit. Photo contributed by Denise Hickman, OFO.



FROM THE **FIELD**



Philadelphia District

Supervisory Public Health Veterinarian Chelsea Faircloth, DVM gave a presentation at her alma mater, Delaware Valley University (formerly Delaware Valley College) to approximately 50 undergraduate Animal Science students about FSIS careers. Topics included definitions of public health, veterinary public health, epidemiology, One Health; the mission of FSIS and OFO; and descriptions of the duties of food inspectors, consumer safety inspectors, public health veterinarians and consumer safety officers. Photo contributed by Chelsea Faircloth, OFO.

OIEA Northeast Region

FSIS Recruiters Lauren Behar (pictured, left) and Paul J. Calafiore (pictured, right) had a great opportunity to meet a few hundred undergraduate students, graduate students and alumni at the St. John's University Non-Profit and Government Career Fair. Students and alumni from St. John's were able to present their resumes and gather information about career opportunities from many of the employers, including FSIS. The

FSIS recruiters provided a wealth of information and job-specific handouts about the Agency and FSIS careers. Photo contributed by Paul J. Calafiore, OIEA.



OIEA Northeast Region

OIEA CID Northeast Region, Waltham, Massachusetts, participated in the 2015 New England Food Show. The show is the region's largest business-to-business trade event for restaurants, food producers, institutions and retailers. The three-day event attracted more than 20,000 attendees visiting more than 500 exhibit booths. OIEA Investigators Robert Ackert, John Augustine, Thomas Collaro, Nicolas Molinski and Joseph Palmisano, and EIAO Officer Susan Isberg answered questions from hotel, restaurant and institution employees while providing them with food safety materials and guidance. Visitors also received promotional items and information about FSIS activities. Pictured, from left to right: Joe Palmisano, OIEA; Darin Holmes, EIAO; Tom Collaro, OIEA; Robert Ackert, OIEA; and Susan Isberg, EIAO. Photo contributed by Joe Palmisano, OIEA.



TORNADO SAFETY

By Michael Lyons, OM
Phone: (402) 344-5145

Tornadoes form any time of the year, but the traditional Tornado season lasts from March to August. Advanced planning and quick response are keys to surviving a tornado. Always have disaster supplies on hand like a flashlight, extra batteries, battery-operated radio, first aid kit along with emergency food and water.

Terminology:

- Tornado Watch: Issued when conditions are favorable for tornadoes to develop.
- Tornado Warning: A tornado is imminent; take shelter immediately!

Actions at work or home:

- If you have a tornado safe room, storm cellar, or basement go there immediately.
- If there is no basement, go to an inner hallway or a smaller inner room without windows, such as a

bathroom or closet. Get under sturdy furniture such as a workbench, heavy table or desk and hold on to it. Use arms to protect head and neck. If in a mobile home, find shelter elsewhere.

Actions outdoors:

- If shelter is not available, or there is no time to get indoors, lie in a ditch or low-lying area or crouch near a strong building. Be aware of the potential for flooding.
- Use arms to protect head and neck.
- Never try to out-drive a tornado in a car or truck.
- Get out of car immediately and take shelter in a nearby building.

For further information on any topics addressed in this safety article, contact the safety specialist for your District. Contact information for FSIS Occupational Safety and Health Specialists is available on the FSIS safety site at www.tinyurl.com/FSIS-ESHG.

Stay up to date ...

The *Wednesday Newsline* is emailed to headquarters and field employees every Wednesday with important information about the Agency.

Be sure to read this valuable resource every week to stay up to date with Agency happenings. To submit an item to the Wednesday Newsline, please send it to wednesdaynewsline@fsis.usda.gov.



PREPARING FOR THE HEAT

By Laurie Segna, OM
Phone: (202) 690-0827

Employees who are exposed to hot and humid conditions are at risk of developing heat-related illnesses. It is important to know the symptoms of heat-related illnesses and what to do.

Causes & Symptoms

When a person is exposed to heat, blood flow to the skin increases, there is sweating and heart rate increases. Sweating too much can cause dehydration and the core temperature to rise. If too much blood flow goes to the skin the brain and organs cannot function properly. Reduced blood flow to active muscles can cause fatigue and loss of strength. Excessive exposure to heat can also cause a range of heat-related illnesses, such as heat exhaustion, heat cramps and heat rash. The person may become faint, have difficulty focusing, begin to feel sick or irritable and lose the desire to drink fluids. They may also experience heat stroke, a very serious condition which can result in death and requires immediate medical attention. Exposure to heat can also increase the risk of injuries due to slippery hands, fogged safety glasses and reduced alertness and comprehension.

First Aid

For heat exhaustion, sit or lie in a cool, shady area. Drink plenty of water or other cool beverages. Apply ice, ice packs or cold compresses. If symptoms worsen or do not improve within 60 minutes, seek medical attention. If you think someone is experiencing heat stroke, call 911 immediately.

Also, loosen clothing and/or remove outer clothing. Wet the person with cool water and stay with them until help arrives. Notify your supervisor.

Preventing Heat-Related Illnesses

The following are recommendations to reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses:

- Drink plenty of fluids – 3 to 4 cups per hour is recommended.
- “Sqwinchers,” electrolyte replacement drinks, are available from the Beltsville Service Center. (If you are on a low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage.)
- Avoid heavy meals and hot foods.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored and breathable clothing (like cotton) to help air move over the skin surface.
- Do not overdo it. If exertion in a hot environment makes your heart pound or it becomes difficult to breathe, stop all activity.
- Use a buddy system – Monitor the condition of your co-workers and have someone do the same for you.

For more information about heat stress and what you can do to prevent it, go to the FSIS Safety Site at www.tinyurl.com/FSIS-ESHG and click on “Occupational Health” and then “Heat Stress.” You can also contact the safety specialist for your District. Contact information is on the FSIS safety site at www.tinyurl.com/FSIS-ESHG. Questions can also be sent to AskEmployeeSafety@fsis.usda.gov or contact your local safety specialist.

DONATE TO THE LEAVE TRANSFER PROGRAM

There are a number of your fellow employees who are in need of annual leave for a variety of reasons. If you have annual leave that you can spare, you can help them by donating it through the Leave Transfer Program.

The Beacon will print the current list of leave recipients at various times. You can also view it on *InsideFSIS*. In the “I Want To” box, select “Access Public Folders.” Then click on the “Personnel” folder and select “Leave Transfer Program.” You will find more information about donating leave, forms, rules, eligibility and requirements.

For more information, contact Robbie Terry in OM’s Employment, Classification and Compensation Branch at (202) 720-8971.

>>> **RECALLS**

April 20	Michigan firm recalled turkey and beef products due to misbranding.
April 20	Massachusetts firm recalled chicken sausage products that may be contaminated with pieces of plastic.
April 23	Utah firm recalled chicken breast products that may be contaminated with pieces of plastic.
April 24	Maryland firm recalled beef and pork products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
April 24	New Mexico firm recalled beef and pork products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
April 27	California firm recalled beef and pork products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
April 27	Illinois firm recalled beef products due to <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 contamination.
April 29	New York firm recalled beef and chicken products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
April 30	California firm recalled sausage products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
May 1	Canadian firm recalled products containing chicken from an ineligible country.
May 1	Georgia firm recalled ground beef products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
May 7	Illinois firm recalled beef products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
May 7	Oregon firm recalled sausage products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
May 8	Georgia firm recalled pork products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
May 14	Wisconsin firm recalled chicken and turkey products due to use of unapproved substance.
May 16	Pennsylvania firm recalled herb stuffing with pork and veal product due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
May 18	Washington firm recalled boneless veal trim products due to possible contamination with <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7.
May 20	California firm recalled poultry, beef and pork products produced without the benefit of inspection and misbranded with unauthorized use of the USDA mark of inspection.
May 22	Minnesota firm recalled roast beef products due to misbranding and undeclared allergen.
May 22	California firm recalled pork products due to misbranding and undeclared allergen.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Volume
19

Number
6

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

July 2015

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



VOLUNTEER STUDENT PROGRAM

Student Volunteer Samiah Alqahtani (pictured, left) and CSI Beverly Primus-Grosman (pictured, right) are reviewing HACCP records at a raw meat processing plant in the Dearborn Circuit, Chicago District. To read about Alqahtani and the Volunteer Student Program, go to page 6.

Photo contributed by Samiah Alqahtani, OFO.

FSIS Warmly Welcomes 2015 Interns

By: Leo O'Drudy
Phone: (202) 720-8693

It's that time of year again – when the arrival of our interns gets employees re-energized about public service and the FSIS mission. "Interacting with the student interns and the Pathways program participants is one of the most rewarding parts of my job. Not only do our student interns pitch in to help get important tasks for public health and food safety done more quickly and easily, they help refresh the Agency with new perspectives, diverse life experiences and a can-do outlook," said Robbie Terry, who works in the Student Programs in the Office of Human Resources for FSIS' Office of Management.

Many of us share Terry's excitement. While interns go about their daily work routines, they will learn about our Agency's history and the mission of food safety, and most importantly, they will build a professional network within USDA. FSIS employees are often seen and heard sharing stories about the work they do for the public, how they got started and the challenges they face. Our interns listen to these stories, collecting first-hand accounts about "what happened when ..." to take back to their personal world.

Our interns are just beginning their careers, but they are a valuable resource for each of us. FSIS employees at all levels greatly value the energy, enthusiasm, hard work and diverse thinking of our interns, including Student Trainees and Volunteers, Recent Graduates and Presidential Management Fellows (PMFs), along with many others. Our interns are also trying to make the most of the experience, fit into the culture of the workplace and be successful. That can be exciting and challenging at the same time. Both FSIS and USDA offer a variety of resources that interns can use. Below is a short list of what FSIS provides:

- **InsideFSIS:** Our internal website provides access to a broad array of topics, regulations, activities, functions and employee resources at the click of a mouse. It also provides a link to the USDA website, which encompasses an even broader portfolio of information.
- **Training:** Interns, Recent Graduates and PMFs receive on-the-job training. Recent Graduates receive at least 40 hours of formal, interactive training per year. PMFs receive at least 80 hours of formal, interactive training per year. Additionally,

Continued on page 7 ...

The Beacon is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

Aug. issue – due July 1
Sept. issue – due Aug. 1
Oct. issue – due Sept. 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to email.

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN

This month, we welcome our summer interns to FSIS. Every summer, a select group of student interns joins FSIS to help the Agency advance our mission to protect public health and prevent foodborne illness. Internships open doors of opportunity to many students across the country. They allow talented students to explore a potential future career path and are an integral part of the Agency's succession planning. As half of the Federal workforce is approaching retirement age, these internships assist the Agency in ensuring that it continues to be successful in completing its mission in the future.

FSIS interns gain valuable work experience while continuing their respective programs in school. We currently have 47 students interning with FSIS and expect an additional 82 to arrive in the coming weeks. FSIS continues to benefit from the talent and academic excellence that these students are bringing to the offices where they are working. We have student interns in a variety of fields including public health, biotechnology, business administration, international studies, public relations, graphic design, criminal justice, agricultural economics and food science.

In order for both the Agency and the students to get the most out of these internships, we need active participation on the part of all involved. I want our interns to have a truly meaningful experience. Likewise, I want the offices in which they work to benefit from their time. I believe the key to creating this environment is excellent mentorship.

Although I didn't join FSIS as an intern, I can still recall what it's like to be in the early stages of a new career and the value mentorship brings to both parties. There is a learning curve that a new employee encounters, and it can often be intimidating. Ever since I started my career as a food inspector, I've been thankful to all of the mentors I had along the way. They pushed me to challenge myself and exposed me to a variety of skill sets that I may not have pursued on my own. Their influence allowed me to excel and truly contribute to the mission around me.

Our interns are the best and brightest and I want to remind you all to welcome them as they make meaningful contributions to the important work we do. Summer internships benefit all of us. I encourage you to befriend an intern this summer and I look forward to hearing about all the creative ways our interns contribute!



Al Almanza

GET ANSWERS AT **AskFSIS**

AskFSIS is a web-based technology and policy question-and-answer forum on topics such as exporting, labeling, inspection, programs and procedures.

In addition, AskFSIS offers Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds that link back to the Q&As.

Visit <http://askfsis.custhelp.com/> to view recently posted topics.

Kristin Goodwin: From Mentee to Mentor

By Whitney Joy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 692-0061

Kristin Goodwin has made the most of her education and career, which began with an internship. Her progression from college to intern has allowed her to now work in a career position as a Food Technologist with the Office of Policy and Program Development's (OPPD) Labeling and Program Delivery Division (LPPD). LPPD evaluates FSIS regulated product labels to ensure they are truthful and not misleading; develops and provides labeling guidance, policies and inspection methods; and responds to stakeholders' inquiries regarding labels.

Goodwin began her career in public service as a contractor in administrative support for the Department of Energy's personnel office while she was still in high school. In 2005, she came to USDA as a budget analyst student trainee with the Office of Budget and Program Analysis (OBPA) and in 2006 became an intern in LPPD.

Mentorship

Once accepted to North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NC A&T), Goodwin saw an incredible opportunity in USDA 1890 National Scholars Program, a scholarship offered by the USDA in partnership with the 1890 Historically Black Land-Grant Universities. The scholarship encourages black students to consider fields of study in agriculture. It provides full tuition, employment, employee benefits, fees, books, and room and board each year for up to 4 years to selected students pursuing a bachelor's degree in any field of study in agriculture, food, natural resource sciences or other related disciplines.

As part of the scholars program, Goodwin was placed with USDA as a budget analyst trainee in 2005. After changing her major in 2006 from agricultural economics to food and nutritional sciences, she was placed in LPPD. As many interns do, Goodwin felt a nervous excitement in preparation for her internship, not knowing what to expect.

Upon arrival, she was assigned a mentor, Jeff Canavan, LPPD's Deputy Director. He helped Goodwin acclimate to FSIS by creating an inclusive environment; giving her opportunities to shadow and attend meetings; and having an open line of communication. Although Goodwin is now a full-time



Photo contributed by Kristin Goodwin, OPPD

employee, she still goes to her mentor with questions. Goodwin is thankful for having someone there to guide her through her internship and career. "Without him, it would have been difficult. The job is fast paced and although the staff is open to help, they are very busy," she said.

Although much of her schoolwork was directly applicable to her current position, Goodwin believes that the internship provided indispensable on-the-job training. "There is a big difference [between] learning from a book and working with the regulations and food industry," she said. Goodwin accepted a Food Technologist position in FSIS after graduating from NC A&T in May 2010.

Guiding Others

Goodwin knows the benefit of having a mentor, and now takes what she has learned through her internship experience and shares it with others. "I serve as a mentor for the interns on my staff and I love it," she said. Goodwin has been mentoring two to three interns a year since 2012. She is responsible for making sure they get acclimated to the office and have meaningful work assignments. As a former intern, Goodwin is able to easily connect with them because she has been in their shoes. She feels that having had the experience herself, she has a better idea of how to help them succeed. Some advice that Goodwin shares with interns is to stay busy and ask for more work, look for opportunities to shadow and network, and find an employee you can relate to and learn as much as you can from them.

Family First

Outside of work, Goodwin enjoys spending quality time with her 6-year-old daughter. They enjoy shopping, reading and watching movies together. Goodwin takes a piece of work home with her by teaching her daughter about food safety. They enjoy cooking together, so Goodwin makes sure they follow the four steps to safe food preparation: clean, separate, cook and chill. Goodwin's career has had such an impact on her daughter that she even wants to be a Food Technologist like her mom when she grows up.

FSIS Retirees: June 15 - July 31, 2015

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Beutler, Michael L., FI-S	Hyrum, Utah	7
Bosek, Chester P., SVMO	Mount Pleasant, Texas	23
Frey, Brenda C., CSI	Dodge City, Kan.	32
Frey, Rodney H., CSI	Dodge City, Kan.	31
Harrington, Karen S., SVMO	Lufkin, Texas	12
Hendricks, Anna M., FI-S	Decatur, Ark.	19
Hernandez, Alvino, CSI	Nixon, Texas	41
Hosko, Carol A., CSI	Muskegon, Mich.	28
Huato Castro, Cynthia J., CSI	Mendota, Minn.	33

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
McClellan, Jimmie Donita, CSI	Springdale, Ark.	28
McKivergan, John D., CSI	Dodge City, Kan.	28
Murdock, Debra D., FI-S	Newbern, Tenn.	5
Odom, Barbara A., CSI	Hazlehurst, Miss.	11
Oliver, Minnie, Ofc Automation Clerk	Atlanta, Ga.	27
Orosco, Jacinto S., CSI	Dinuba, Calif.	39
Ramos, Eduardo, FI	Laredo, Texas	51
Sanborn, Ronald J., CSI	Everett, Mass.	42
Sommers, William E., CSI	Russellville, Ala.	11
Speake, James J., CSI	Greenwood, S.C.	30
Winzer, Katie Hill, CSI	Arcadia, La.	26

GRILLIN' like a...

**P
R
O**

P = Place the Thermometer!

Place the food thermometer into the **thickest** part of the meat.



145 °F* W/ 3 MIN REST		STEAKS
145 °F* W/ 3 MIN REST		PORK CHOPS
165 °F		CHICKEN
160 °F		GROUND BEEF

R = Read the Temp!

Wait about **10-20 secs** for the temperature to be accurately displayed. Foods must reach the safe internal temps listed here for safety.

O = Off the Grill!

Once the meat is at a safe temperature, take it off the grill.



Put cooked food on a **CLEAN PLATE!**

OPM SECURITY BREACH

Information from the Office of Personnel Management

As you may have heard, an Office of Personnel Management (OPM) system recently suffered a security breach. Data, including the Personally Identifiable Information (PII) of current, former and prospective Federal government employees, as well as other individuals for whom a Federal background investigation was conducted, may have been compromised.

OPM has begun sending notifications to individuals whose PII may have been compromised. The investigation of this incident is ongoing. If OPM discovers any additional PII exposures, they will send additional notifications as necessary.

Notifications will be sent out in the form of a letter via the U.S. Postal Service, or in an email from this email address: opmcio@csid.com. If you receive the OPM notification, we recommend that you immediately take the appropriate actions outlined in the notification to protect yourself. If you have not received the notification from OPM, we ask that you check your home mail and all email addresses, to include your spam or junk email folders.

After the malicious activity was discovered, OPM immediately implemented additional security measures and will continue to add protections for sensitive information. OPM has partnered with the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to determine the impact to federal personnel.

In order to mitigate the risk of fraud and identity theft, OPM is offering affected individuals credit monitoring services and identity theft insurance through CSID, a company that specializes in identity theft protection and fraud resolution. This comprehensive, 18-month membership includes credit report access, credit monitoring, identity theft insurance and recovery services and is available immediately at no cost to affected individuals identified by OPM. Questions regarding these services should be directed to CSID at www.csid.com/opm or 1-844-222-2743 (International callers: call collect (512) 327-0700).

OPM remains committed to improving its security capabilities and has invested significant resources in implementing tools to strengthen its security barriers. USDA is working closely with OPM, as well as the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other experts across the government, to detect and thwart evolving and persistent threats, and ensure that USDA is able to continue to deliver its mission.

We encourage you to visit www.opm.gov for additional updates, and steps you can take to protect yourself.

Steps for Monitoring Your Identity and Financial Information

- Monitor financial account statements and immediately report any suspicious or unusual activity to financial institutions.
- Request a free credit report at www.AnnualCreditReport.com or by calling 1-877-322-8228. Consumers are entitled by law to one free credit report per year from each of the three major credit bureaus – Equifax®, Experian® and TransUnion® – for a total of three reports every year. Contact information for the credit bureaus can be found on the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) website, www.ftc.gov.
- Review resources provided on the FTC identity theft website, www.Identitytheft.gov. The FTC maintains a variety of consumer publications providing comprehensive information on computer intrusions and identity theft.
- You may place a fraud alert on your credit file to let creditors know to contact you before opening a new account in your name. Simply call TransUnion® at 1-800-680-7289 to place this alert. TransUnion® will then notify the other two credit bureaus on your behalf.

Precautions to Help You Avoid Becoming a Victim

- Be suspicious of unsolicited phone calls, visits or email messages from individuals asking about you, your employees, your colleagues or any other internal information. If an unknown individual claims to be from a legitimate organization, try to verify his or her identity directly with the company.
- Do not provide personal information or information about your organization, including its structure or networks, unless you are certain of a person's authority to have the information.
- Do not reveal personal or financial information in email, and do not respond to email solicitations for this information. This includes following links sent in email.
- Do not send sensitive information over the Internet before checking a website's security (for more information, see Protecting Your Privacy, <http://www.us-cert.gov/ncas/tips/ST04-013>).
- Pay attention to the URL of a website. Malicious websites may look identical to a legitimate site, but

Continued on page 6 ...

PHOTO ^{OF} THE MONTH

Volunteer Student Program

By Nicole Dent, OM
Phone: (202) 720-8966

Samiah Alqahtani is a volunteer extern within the Office of Management (OM). She received both her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Nutrition and Food Science (NFS) from King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. She also received a second Master of Science in NFS at Wayne State University in Detroit, Mich. She is now a Ph.D. candidate in the same field. Alqahtani was awarded a trainee position with the Broadening Experiences in Scientific Training (BEST) program. BEST provides Ph.D. students with the opportunity to gain work experience outside of academia. Alqahtani also became Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) certified in July 2013 from the Rutgers Food Innovation Center. She completed the training program and passed the written exam for Integrating Risk-based Preventative Controls into a HACCP Program. Alqahtani's academic background and professional certification complements her personal desire to prevent foodborne illnesses and protect public health. She is excited about the opportunity to volunteer with FSIS in the Dearborn Circuit for the Chicago District Office.



Photo contributed by Samiah Alqahtani, OFO.

OPM

... Continued from page 4

- the URL may use a variation in spelling or a different domain (e.g., .com vs. .net).
- If you are unsure whether an email request is legitimate, try to verify it by contacting the company directly. Do not use contact information provided on a website connected to the request; instead, check previous statements for contact information. Information about known phishing attacks is also available online from groups such as the Anti-Phishing Working Group (www.antiphishing.org).
 - Install and maintain anti-virus software, firewalls and email filters to reduce some of this traffic (for more information, see Understanding Firewalls, www.us-cert.gov/ncas/tips/ST04-004; Understanding Anti-Virus Software, www.us-cert.gov/ncas/tips/ST04-005; and Reducing Spam, www.us-cert.gov/ncas/tips/ST04-007).
 - Take advantage of any anti-phishing features offered by your email client and web browser.
 - Employees should take steps to monitor their personally identifiable information and report any suspected instances of identity theft to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.ic3.gov.
 - Additional information about preventative steps by consulting the Federal Trade Commission's website, www.consumer.gov/idtheft. The FTC also encourages those who discover that their information has been misused to file a complaint with the Commission using the contact information below.
- Identity Theft Clearinghouse**
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20580
<https://www.identitytheft.gov/>
1-877-IDTHEFT (438-4338)
TDD: 1-202-326-2502



Photo contributed by Kristina Beaugh, OPACE.

Interns: Get the Most Out of Your Summer!

By Kristina Beaugh, OPACE
Phone: (202) 260-8572

It took one week and a box of Kleenex to pack up my two cats and all of my clothes, but I did it. I leaned in and moved from New Orleans to Washington, DC to start a new chapter of my life as a Summer Intern for FSIS.

My experience as an intern with FSIS was nothing short of amazing. I learned so much in such a short amount of time. When I think back to who I was less than a year ago, it's pretty crazy to think about how much I've grown and developed in my career. I was blessed with supervisors and colleagues that made me feel like an essential member of the team since day one. My team held me to a high standard which felt great because that meant I was valued as more than an intern. The tasks and responsibilities that I was assigned allowed me to apply my academic education and gave me opportunities to learn new things and further develop skills I already had.

The internship completely prepared me to transition to a full-time employee after the summer. I had a lot more responsibilities, but I was ready to take on any task. I am still learning and growing every day, and I am grateful because I know that my experiences at FSIS will help me to have a successful future career. It is great to be able to go back to my school to share my positive experiences and shatter any preconceived notions students may have about working in the federal government.

My advice to all student interns is to take advantage of every opportunity that comes across your desk, even those that may not be related to your field. These are all opportunities to grow personally and professionally. Get to know your strengths and weaknesses so that you can capitalize on your strengths and find ways to improve your weaknesses. Talk about your goals and ask for feedback throughout your time at FSIS. This experience will help build your path toward a successful future career.

- PMFs complete at least one developmental assignment for 4 to 6 months, or participate in an Agency-wide or Presidential initiative. PMFs and Recent Graduates are assigned a mentor. Student trainees can consult *AgLearn* (www.aglearn.usda.gov/) for the 2015 USDA Student Trainee Training Plan, which includes 40 training items such as "Managing Your Career: Professional Networking Essentials" and "Business Writing: How to Write Clearly and Concisely."
- **Events:** Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza will hold a Town Hall meeting with interns on Thursday, July 16, from 2-3 p.m. in the Secretary's Conference Room, 108A, in the Whitten Building. All interns at Headquarters are invited in person, and those in the field are encouraged to call in at 1-888-844-9904, access code: 9519972.
- For an additional list of resources, USDA Departmental Management also makes a useful list available at www.dm.usda.gov/employ/sip/resources.htm (note the "Interns" column).
- **Insurance and Benefits:** Recent Graduates and PMFs are generally eligible for retirement benefits; flexible spending accounts; and health, life, dental, vision and long-term care insurance.

All interns are encouraged to make the most of their opportunity with FSIS by exploring, learning, and engaging employees at all levels. Current employees also play a part in the success of interns by making ourselves generously available for questions about the work we do, or working life in general. All FSIS employees are encouraged to reach out to this year's intern class, get them involved, and help make them successful. They will become our ambassadors to the public. This mutually beneficial relationship has provided dividends for both the Agency and the Pathways participants for years and we all look forward to that continuing well into the future.

Kansas Accepts USDA Grant to Help SNAP Recipients Find Work

By Liz Simmons, OFO
Phone: (479) 751-8412

On March 23, 2015, the Governor of Kansas, Sam Brownback, announced his administration's acceptance of a \$13.5 million federal grant from USDA aimed at helping food assistance recipients find jobs. Audrey Rowe, head of the Food and Nutrition Service, which administers the nation's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) said the 3-year grant will help expand a Department for Children and Families (DCF) initiative, called GOALS (Generating Opportunities for Attaining Lifelong Success). GOALS will train SNAP recipients for living-wage jobs available in their communities and provide services intended to help maintain employment.

This grant will allow DCF to expand currently exiting programs and enhance an already successful partnership with FSIS. Springdale District Manager, Paul Kiecker, described the positive impact that the DCF partnership has had on the District's ability to recruit for food inspector positions in traditionally hard to fill locations.

Dr. Evan Sumner, Front Line Supervisor for the Dodge City, Kan. Circuit, spoke at a separate press conference. He expressed his appreciation to Kansas DCF for their efforts in



Photo contributed by Mike Boettcher, SCS.

Pictured, from left to right: DCF Employment & Training Program Coordinator Eric Hunt, Food Inspector Erika Diaz, FLS Dr. Evan Sumner, DCF West Regional Coordinator David Kurt.

assisting FSIS with recruiting qualified individuals for food inspector positions in the area. Erika Diaz, Food Inspector, also gave a statement on how the recruitment process through Kansas DCF led to an opportunity for a full-time job that has been life-changing for her and her family.



Photo contributed by Liz Simmons, MA.

Standing at the podium, Kansas Governor Sam Brownback addresses the audience.

EAP Support for Veteran Employees

By Jodi Hallstrom, OM
Phone: 1-800-222-0364

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) recognizes that serving our nation in a military capacity is not without its challenges for service members and their families: pre-deployment planning, family separation issues, money management, spousal employment, stress, parenting and child care, relocation, reunion and sometimes grief counseling. No matter what phase of deployment a military service member is in, the EAP offers 24/7 assistance and resources, including counseling and reintegration support.

Counseling Support

EAP professionals provide short-term problem solving support to military members and their families and can help address a wide variety of concerns, such as difficulties with personal relationships, stress, marital problems, parenting, grief and loss, legal or financial matters, or adjustment issues.

The EAP offers short-term, non-medical counseling. If long-term counseling is needed, the EAP counselor will work to identify the best available outside treatment resource

through health insurance providers, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or Military OneSource—a behavioral health program sponsored by the Department of Defense (DoD).

The EAP also offers a variety of orientations and presentations for deployment-related concerns, such as:

Phases of Deployment Presentation – Directed toward those who are deploying and their family members. This presentation is generally offered pre-deployment.

Readjustment Presentation: Transitioning from Mission to Home – Addresses personal and workplace readjustment concerns of those returning home from deployment.

Reintegration of Deployed Staff: Guidance for Managers – Directed toward managers who need to reintegrate deployed persons back into the workplace.

Let the EAP and WorkLife4You programs support you and your military family. Call the EAP/Worklife4You hotline at **1-800-222-0364** (TTY 1-888-262-7848) or go online at www.foh4you.com and www.worklife4you.com for free and confidential services, **24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

Strategic Performance Working Group (SPWG) Basics

By Karen Hunter, OPACE
Phone: (202) 690-3882

The SPWG was created by the Administrator to establish a process for performing critical performance reviews of public health information and data. These reviews help to identify deficiencies and successes that warrant particular attention or action from the Agency. Recently the SPWG undertook a new challenge: implementing a multi-phase project addressing *Listeria monocytogenes* (*Lm*) at retail. Although FSIS has made significant progress driving down the level of *Lm* in FSIS regulated products, the incidence of *Lm* related illnesses is still above the Healthy People 2020 goal to improve food safety and reduce foodborne illnesses. In an effort to further control *Lm* along the farm to fork continuum, FSIS and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) jointly developed a risk assessment

in 2013. This risk assessment identified practices in retail delicatessens that can increase the risk contamination with *Lm* and how to reduce it. In June 2015, FSIS released “The FSIS Best Practices Guideline for Controlling *Lm* in Retail Delicatessens.” It is still unclear whether retailers have adopted the recommendations in the guideline or whether adopted actions have been effective in controlling *Lm*.

The SPWG is considering ways of determining the effectiveness and actual implementation of the guideline. Recent discussions revolved around collaborating with industry or other partners to ensure that the guidelines are effectively disseminated, how to measure the impact of the document and how to collaborate with state and local agencies to disseminate the information in the guideline. The SPWG will be discussing how to measure success and determine what oversight FSIS can (or should) provide to contribute to a decrease in illnesses caused by *Lm*.

OIEA Western Region

On March 11, 2015, CID Investigator Vickie Sulenes went to Port of Entry 3310, Sweetgrass, Mont., to meet with the new Area Port Director and celebrate Women's History Month with a luncheon and presentation. Pictured, from left to right: Lynn Hurst (DHS CBP), Vickie Sulenes, Lori Jennings (FDA), Ed Wilkinson (FDA), Dr. Sandra Sisson (APHIS), Taelor Anderson (APHIS), Lori Witham (APHIS). Not pictured: Gary Adams (APHIS), Luca Furnare (DHS CBP). Photo contributed by Gary Adams, APHIS.



OIEA Southwest Region

On April 21, 2015, Ron Wells (pictured), a CID Investigator, participated in the Meals on Wheels Texas Annual Conference in Clear Lake, Texas. Wells distributed food safety materials to Meals on Wheels and Senior Center representatives from throughout the state of Texas. Photo contributed by Ron Wells, OIEA.



FROM THE **FIELD**

Chicago District

On April 9-10, 2015, the Chicago District hosted a recruitment event at the Illinois Dept. of Employment Security Workforce Center in Rock Island, Ill. Recruiters Benjamin Tate and Corinne Calhoun, Chicago District FLS Dr. Ken Davis and CSI/Local President of East Moline, Ill. Local 2925 John Hovey participated in this event. Tate and Calhoun assisted more than 20 people through the USAJOBS application process. Davis and Hovey provided interested applicants with a background of FSIS and the various positions available within the Office of Field Operations (OFO). Pictured, from left to right: Dr. Ken Davis, Benjamin Tate, John Hovey, Corinne Calhoun. Photo contributed by John Hovey, OFO.



Des Moines District

On April 14-15, 2015, The Des Moines District Office, in conjunction with Jennie-O Foods, Office of Policy Program Development (OPPD), and Center for Learning (CFL), hosted a multi-District turkey correlation meeting in Willmar, Minn. The 2-day session was conducted by Drs. Naima Amirian, Hala Bessyoung, and Isabel Arrington. Public Health Veterinarians from the Des Moines, Chicago, Raleigh, Atlanta, Springdale and Alameda District Offices were in attendance, as well as officials from various turkey slaughter plants in Minnesota and South Dakota. Dr. Collen Bruning-Fann from APHIS Veterinary Services gave a timely presentation on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza at the meeting. Photo contributed by Dr. Rosemary Turner, OFO.



Atlanta District

The day shift at Est. 0855P/1 in Athens, Ga., donated paper products to the Land of Promise Drug Rehabilitation Center in Colluden, Ga. Land of Promise is a residential recovery program for men suffering from substance abuse addiction. Front row, pictured from left to right: Eddie Wise, Denise Faust, Linda McIntosh, Patricia Lee, Dr. Qureshi, Tanya Muckley. Back row, pictured from left to right: Kat Gillespie, Brunus Mickens, Denise Compton, Ann Moon, Emma Hancock, Emma Pittard. Photo contributed by Ann Moon, OFO.



Merit Promotion Reminders

By Thomas Reimler, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8593

Merit promotion regulations are in place to help an Agency effectively manage the selection and promotion process. Unless you take the time to learn how the system works, you may miss promotion opportunities.

In 2013, USDA issued comprehensive merit promotion regulations covering all mission areas. This guidance covers all non-bargaining unit positions in FSIS. The guidance focuses on efficiency and consistency. Requirements vary based on bargaining unit status and competitive status, but everyone should read vacancy announcements carefully to determine application requirements.

Key Reminders for Applicants

For many positions, you must submit:

- A copy of a recent SF-50 (Notification of Personnel Action)
- A copy of your most current performance appraisal

In general, by the closing date of the announcement, you must:

- Meet all time-in-grade requirements
- Meet all qualification requirements

By the closing date of the announcement, you must:

- Provide all required documentation, including a resume and responses to any questionnaires

- Provide a copy of official transcripts (if qualifying based on education)

Planning ahead is helpful. Many employees build a resume in USAJOBS before a vacancy arises, to have it ready to submit as soon as an announcement is issued. Also, you can use eOPF to access and obtain needed documents in advance of a vacancy. Then you will have those documents available to submit with the rest of your application package the next time you apply to a merit promotion announcement.

Key Reminders for Selecting Officials

For non-bargaining unit positions, selecting officials must conduct reference checks on the top candidates referred for competitive consideration. In addition, if interviews are conducted, the selecting official (or designated interviewers) must interview at least five applicants. And as always, selections must be made on the basis of merit factors, without regard to non-merit factors.

Summary

USDA merit promotion guidance focuses on helping agencies find and select the best applicants. To help ensure that you receive full consideration for positions announced under merit promotion, carefully follow instructions on the vacancy announcement.

Resume Writing Training

By Dr. Ahmad Jilani, OFO
Phone: (410) 943-6883

FSIS has initiated Resume Writing training in order to prepare GS-5, GS-7 and GS-8 food inspectors to apply for promotion under the New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS). The first of these training sessions was held in April at the University of Maryland in Salisbury, Md. Approximately 60 food inspectors attended.



Photos contributed by Dr. Ahmad Jilani, OFO.

Bill Smith, Assistant Administrator, Office of Field Operations, opened the session and explained NPIS. Various speakers covered resume writing, critical points that should be emphasized on resumes and how the resumes are evaluated. Attendees were then given time to implement this guidance during hands-on resume writing practice.

Managing Conflict in the Workplace

By Dr. Becky Bell, OM
Phone: (919) 208-9521

Have you seen people at work giving one another the cold shoulder? Do workplace arguments start at the drop of a hat? These are obvious forms of conflict. There are also less obvious events that over time cause small conflicts to escalate. Unfortunately, conflict is a routine aspect of the workplace, and how employees choose to manage it will help determine how satisfying the professional relationship with others will be. But one fact is clear—conflict doesn't just magically disappear when ignored. When dealing with conflict, keep the following points in mind.

Often, people identify "lack of communication" as the reason for a conflict when, in fact, the culprit is an overabundance of poor or ineffective communication. We can combat poor or ineffective communication by practicing effective listening skills that ensure vital information is shared and the other person feels heard.

Listening is more complex than just hearing what someone is saying. It is the ability to accurately receive, process and interpret messages. Effective listening is the building block for all productive communication and requires a concerted effort to attend to the others' message, body language, non-verbal communications and emotions behind the message.

Before responding, attempt to gather all of the information. Taking time to 'check in' on what you heard versus what was said, as well as what was intended, is critical. Everyone processes information differently.

Conflict often surfaces when difficult conversations are avoided or handled inappropriately, which can lead to confusion, misunderstandings and feelings of anger and frustration. These negative outcomes can be reduced by initiating conversations early in the process, developing a strategy for handling them and anticipating and preparing for the conversation.

Conducting follow-up is an often overlooked aspect of effective communication. After the conflict ends, parties may make incorrect assumptions about what is going on if there is no further discussion. Conducting follow-up provides the opportunity for an individual to give or receive clarification as well as additional information.

Conflicts in the workplace can involve uncomfortable emotions and threaten relationships. However, when handled effectively they can provide the opportunity for growth and contribute to Agency effectiveness.

Protocols to Address Emergencies or Imminent Danger in Your Workplace

- ☑ Stay calm
- ☑ Find a safe place (protect yourself)
- ☑ Call 911
- ☑ Call private or local security personnel
- ☑ Call your supervisor
- ☑ Call OIG at 1-800-424-9121 if there is criminal activity

Workplace Violence Prevention & Response

Program Hotline:

1-877-987-3747

Employee Assistance Program (EAP):

1-800-222-0364

(TTY: 888-262-7848)

E-mail:

workplaceviolenceprevention@fsis.usda.gov

www.FOH4you.com

Document all incidents of assault, harassment, interference, intimidation or threat per Directive 4735.4.

Chicago District Observes Asian-Pacific Islander Heritage Month

By Wendy Plenty Ferguson, OFO
Phone: (630) 620-9782

The Chicago District Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee (EEOAC) partnered with the FSIS Civil Rights Staff to host the 2015 Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month observance on May 6 in Lombard, Illinois.

Attendees were issued a mock passport before embarking on a 10-country tour which highlighted the special customs, fashions, music, exports and culinary delights of a variety of Asian countries. Participants traveled from office to office, learning about each country from an EEOAC volunteer representing a country. Each office stamped their passport. Travelers also collected educational brochures and themed giveaways such as macadamia nut clusters in "Hawaii," decorative bamboo in "Laos," and chai tea in "India."

Along the way, guest travelers took their palates on a culinary journey while sampling the diverse, distinctive dishes of Asia. All attendees were served an Asian lunch buffet featuring regional favorites such as Chicken Tikka Masala (India) and Lumpia (Philippines). While enjoying their



Photo contributed by Grace Willis, True Grace Photography.

CSI Rickey Birnell stands near an Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month display.

meals, guest travelers challenged their newly-gained knowledge of the Asian countries by answering trivia questions for USDA-branded prizes. Employees contributed Asian recipes to be included in a cookbook that was distributed to all guests. A special raffle was held to fund relief efforts for those affected by the earthquake in Nepal.

Asian-Pacific Heritage Month originated in a congressional bill in 1977. In 1992, the official designation

of May as Asian-Pacific American Heritage was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush. May was chosen to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese to the United States on May 7, 1843 and to mark the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad on May 10, 1869. The majority of the workers who laid the track were Chinese immigrants. Learn more at www.asianpacificheritage.gov.

Equal Employment Opportunity Committees (EEOAC) Across FSIS

Alameda District	Frank Gillis, Deputy District Manager (DDM) Jaclynn Scrivner, Front Line Supervisor (FLS)	Atlanta District	Addie Sides, SVMO Dr. Satya Vishnubhakat, SPHV
Chicago District	Dr. Karnail Mudahar, DDM Marjorie Cook, Consumer Safety Inspector (CSI)	Philadelphia District	Elwin Weaver, CSI
Dallas District	Lisa Myles, CSI	Raleigh District	Dr. Meredith Ellerbee, SPHV
Denver District	Isabelle Alexander-Hague, Food Inspector Lisa Powell, Sup. Veterinary Medical Officer (SVMO)	Springdale District	Dr. Travis Nienhueser, SPHV Kimberley Smith, CSI
Des Moines District	Dr. Sarah Davis, Sup. Public Health Veterinarian (SPHV) Dr. Rosemary Turner, DDM	OA	Jessica Carson, Staff Assistant Teresa Becker, Supervisory Financial Program Specialist
Jackson District	Perry Davis, DDM Christina Walker, Sup. Resource Management Analyst	ODIFP	Annette Vanderhall, Special Assistant
OM	MaryKay Acker, HR/ER Specialist Sharon Randle, Program Specialist Jim Miller, Employee Advisory	OIEA	Scott Safian, Director Deena Ismail, Supervisory Investigator
OPHS	Stephanie Hretz, Microbiologist (MB) Alexander Domesle, Regulatory Risk Assessor	OPACE	Jeremy Emmert, Issues Analyst
OOEET	Dr. Robert Boyle, SVMO	OPPD	Kristi Barlow, MB Kevin Gillespie, Staff Officer

“

Kudos

“Thanks to Front Line Supervisor, Dr. David James, of the Denver Circuit for putting in a relentless amount of hours and work to ensure a safe food supply while doing his best to ensure happy circuit employees. Dr. James is available for consultation at any time of the day or night. He is receptive to new ideas and is willing to implement new strategies to enhance food safety and improve the Agency.”

–Anonymous

“Everyone at Est. M9400 would like to congratulate Joseph Stanek on his promotion to Consumer Safety Inspector at the New Windsor Circuit!”

–Christopher Musso, OFO

If you would like to thank, congratulate or give a shout out to someone in FSIS, send your kudo to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. You can also place a kudo on InsideFSIS. Just email it to intranet.manager@fsis.usda.gov. Keep your kudo to a few sentences.

New Poultry Inspection System

NPIS Notes

Question of the Month

What will be the application process for NPIS positions?

Employees interested in positions made available through the implementation of NPIS will find the vacancy announcement and application instructions at *USAJobs*, which can be acquired through the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) careers website at www.USAJobs.gov. Applicants should set up their *USAJobs* account, with the appropriate resume and employment information/personal profile prior to the vacancy opening date or as part of the application process. In order to assist those that do not have computer access, vacancy announcements will also be posted in-plant and hard copy application packets and instructions will be mailed to bargaining unit employees (BUE), upon request.

Applicants will be evaluated using the normal merit promotion process evaluating each candidate based on their skills and experience for the desired position. For applicants that are unable to submit their application through *USAJobs*, they need to pay close attention to the announcement instructions, which will clearly state the date that the application packet must be postmarked, in order for the applicant to receive consideration, no later than the closing date of the announcement. The Agency will wait for five (5) business days after the announcement closing date, before issuing a certificate. Applications submitted through *USAJobs*, or submitted manually that bear a timely postmark will be scanned and/or uploaded into eRecruit for evaluation and consideration.

FOOD DEFENSE ASSESSMENT STAFF

Promoting Food Defense

By Carolyn Grant, ODIFP
Phone: (202) 418-8877

What is Food Defense?

Food defense is the protection of food products from **intentional** contamination or adulteration where there is an intent to cause public harm or economic disruption. Potential sources of a food defense incident may include terrorist organizations (foreign or domestic), disgruntled employees or a competitor. The food system within the United States continues to increase in complexity, diversity and reliance upon interconnected domestic and global systems. For these reasons, threats and vulnerabilities posed to the food supply continue to exist and deserve our attention. Food defense continues to be a priority for FSIS.

Our Role in Food Defense

In order to better prevent and protect against an intentional attack involving our regulated products, the Food Defense Assessment Staff (FDAS) within the Office of Data Integration and Food Protection (ODIFP) conducts vulnerability assessments to identify countermeasures that industry can implement to protect the food supply, develops tools and resources for food defense, and encourages industry and FSIS personnel to participate in food defense training programs. FDAS collaborates with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other federal, state and local partners, including universities and industry, when conducting these activities.

As part of our responsibility to increase awareness on food defense and how important it is to the Agency's mission, FDAS is committed to working with our field personnel. FDAS visited the Denver, Atlanta and Alameda district offices in 2014, and received valuable feedback for improvements to food defense activities. In 2015, we conducted outreach with the Regional Import Field Supervisor and Compliance and Investigation Division, Philadelphia office. Additionally, we will conduct District Office visits in Chicago, Dallas, Jackson and Raleigh. Meetings with field personnel have not only enhanced awareness of food defense, but they have also helped to establish a more effective dialogue between headquarters staff, Agency personnel and industry.

Functional Food Defense Plan

A functional food defense plan is the cornerstone of FSIS' food defense program. The goal of a functional food



Photo contributed by Janet Everhart, ODIFP.

Pictured, from left to right: FDAs Alexandra Woodruff (on temporary assignment from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)), Carolyn Grant, Kim Mah, Kelli Willis, Jessica Pulz, Bryan Norrington and Marianne Elbertson.

defense plan is to help an establishment prevent, protect, mitigate, respond to and recover from an intentional contamination incident. A food defense plan is functional when it meets **all** four of the following conditions:

1. **Written/developed** – the plan is documented and signed
2. **Implemented** – preventative measures are implemented
3. **Tested** – security measures are monitored
4. **Reviewed and maintained** – the plan is reviewed at least annually and revised as needed

FDAS developed tools and resources to help establishments develop a functional food defense plan. These resources can be found at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/fooddefense>. Although adoption of functional food defense plans in FSIS-regulated establishments is optional, it is measured via an annual food defense plan survey of FSIS inspection personnel. **The 2015 Food Defense Plan Survey will be active in PHIS June 1 – July 31, 2015.** We have seen a continued positive trend in the adoption of functional food defense plans, and as of 2014, 84 percent of FSIS-regulated establishments had a functional plan, with a goal of 90 percent for 2015.

Food Defense Contact Information

Additional questions regarding FSIS' food defense program can be directed to the Food Defense Assessment Staff by emailing FoodDefense@fsis.usda.gov or to the Small Plant Help Desk: infosource@fsis.usda.gov or by calling 1-877-FSISHelp (1-877-374-7435).

Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

If you have annual leave that you could spare, you can donate via the Leave Transfer Program. You can view the most current list now on InsideFSIS. In the "I Want To" box, select "Access Public Folders." Then click on the "Personnel" folder and select "Leave Transfer Program." In addition to a listing of approved leave recipients, you will find more information about donating leave, forms, rules, eligibility and requirements. For more information, contact Sonja Tomlinson in OM's Employment, Classification and Compensation Branch at (202) 690-0798.

CURRENT LIST OF LEAVE RECIPIENTS

Revised June 30, 2015

Recipient	Case Number	Program Area	State	Situation
(b) (6)	OFO-14-0061	OFO	VA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0025	OFO	KS	Surgery
	OFO-14-0015	OFO	CA	Family Illness
	OFO-13-0044	OFO	CA	Serious Illness/Surgery
	OCIO-14-0001	OCIO	VA	Family Illness
	15-OFO-0031	OFO	CA	Serious Illness
	OFO-15-0006	OFO	TN	Family Illness/Surgery
	OFO-14-0064	OFO	AR	Surgery/Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0039	OFO	AR	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0041	OFO	AR	Accidental Injury
	OFO-15-0004	OFO	MS	Surgery
	OA-14-0001	OA	MD	Maternity
	15-OPACE-0029	OPACE	DC	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0054	OFO	WA	Family Illness/Surgery
	OFO-14-0051	OFO	TX	Maternity
	OFO-14-0059	OFO	NC	
	OFO-15-0002	OFO	TX	Surgery/Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0017	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0043	OFO	OR	Surgery
	OFO-14-0058	OFO	LA	Family Illness
	OFO-13-0016	OFO	PA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0052	OFO	NE	Surgery
	OFO-14-0040	OFO	OK	Surgery
	OFO-14-0037	OFO	DE	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0020	OFO	NY	Serious Illness
	15-OFO-0033	OFO	AR	Serious Illness
	OFO-15-0008	OFO	OH	Surgery
	OFO-13-0026	OFO	AR	Serious Illness
	15-OFO-0027	OFO	MO	Serious Injury
	15-OFO-0026	OFO	LA	Surgery
	OFO-14-0021	OFO	CA	Surgery
	OM-14-0001	OM	DC	Family Illness
	OFO-15-0003	OFO	GA	Surgery
	OOEET-13-0001	OOEET	MD	Surgery
	OFO-13-0045	OFO	TN	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0013	OFO	PA	Maternity
	15-OFO-0016	OFO	LA	Serious Illness
	OFO-15-0009	OFO	GA	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0003	OFO	CO	Serious Illness
	OEIA-14-0003	OEIA	GA	Surgery

Recipient	Case Number	Program Area	State	Situation
(b) (6)	15-OPACE-15	OPACE	DC	Surgery
	15-OFO-0023	OFO	NJ	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0030	OFO	TX	Family Illness
	15-OFO-0019	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0031	OFO	WA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0038	OFO	CA	Maternity
	OM-13-0004	OM	MD	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0007	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0029	OFO	CA	Serious Illness
	15-OFO-0030	OFO	TX	Surgery
	OFO-14-0016	OFO	NY	Surgery
	OPACE-14-0002	OPACE	DC	Maternity
	15-OFO-0022	OFO	LA	Serious Illness
	OFO-12-0064	OFO	KS	Serious Illness
	OM-15-0001	OM	DC	Serious Illness
	15-OFO-0025	OFO	DC	Serious Injury
	OFO-14-0014	OFO	NH	Maternity
	OFO-14-0046	OFO	NH	Complications/Maternity
	OFO-14-0065	OFO	NC	Surgery/Serious Illness
	OFO-15-0005	OFO	SC	Surgery
	OFO-14-0026	OFO	DE	Surgery
	OPPD-14-0001	OPPD	DC	Surgery
	OFO-14-0053	OFO	NC	Surgery
	OCIO-13-0002	OCIO	DC	Serious Illness
	15-OFO-0032	OFO	ID	Surgery
	15-OFO-0018	OFO	IN	Surgery
	OFO-14-0022	OFO	IN	Surgery
	OPPD-13-0002	OPPD	DC	Family Illness
	OFO-14-0045	OFO	MN	Maternity
	OFO-14-0018	OFO	AZ	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0027	OFO	WA	Surgery
	15-OFO-0014	OFO	VA	Surgery
	15-OFO-0028	OFO	GA	Maternity
	OFO-14-0032	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-15-0010	OFO	NY	Surgery/Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0055	OFO	TN	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0024	OFO	IL	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0066	OFO	PA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0004	OFO	MS	Family Illness
	OFO-14-0001	OFO	OK	Surgery
	OFO-14-0056	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-15-0021	OFO	NC	Family Illness
	OPHS-14-0003	OPHS	GA	Serious Illness
	*OFO-12-0055	OFO		
	*OM-14-0003	OM		
	*OFO-14-0024	OFO		
	*OFO-14-0034	OFO		
	*OFO-14-0035	OFO		
	*OFO-14-0044	OFO		Serious Illness
	*OPHS-14-0005	OPHS-14-0005	OPHS	Surgery
	*OFO-14-0060	OFO-14-0060	OFO	Surgery/Serious Illness
	*OFO-14-0062	OFO-14-0062	OFO	
	*OFO-14-0063	OFO-14-0063	OFO	Surgery

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- Directive 6240.1 Revision 2, Inspection, Sampling, and Disposition of Cattle for Tuberculosis
- Directive 7120.1 Revision 27, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products
- Directive 6240.1 Revision 2, Inspection, Sampling, and Disposition of Cattle for Tuberculosis (TB)
- Notice 32-15, Imported Raw Poultry Products Sampled for *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* Analysis
- Notice 33-15, Updating the Public Health Information System (PHIS) Profile for Raw Pork Products
- Notice 34-15, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Posters Sent To Poultry Slaughter Establishments
- Notice 35-15 - PHIS Modifications in Preparation for the Implementation of Export Certification within PHIS
- Notice 36-15 - Submission of Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Renewal Orders (ROS)
- Notice 37-15 - Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection - Post-Mortem Inspection for New Poultry Inspection System
- Notice 38-15 - Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection -Verification that an Establishment Operating under the New Poultry Inspection System is Producing Ready-To-Cook Poultry
- Notice 39-15 - PHIS Changes Related to the New Poultry Inspection System

Administrative issues were also published.

- Directive 9500.9, International Visitors Program
- Directive 5100.1, Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officer Food Safety Assessment Methodology
- Directive 9500.9 Revision 1, International Visitor's Program

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

Leave Transfer Program

... Continued from page 18

Recipient	Case Number	Program Area	State	Situation
*OFO-15-0001	OFO-15-0001	OFO		Surgery
*OFO-15-0011	OFO-15-0011	OFO		Family-Serious Illness
*OFO-15-0012	OFO-15-0012	OFO		Accidental Injury
*15-OFO-0013	15-OFO-0013	OFO		Serious Illness
*15-OFO-0017	15-OFO-0017	OFO		Family Serious Illness
*15-OFO-0020	15-OFO-0020	OFO		Serious Illness
*OFO-14-0047	OFO-14-0047	OFO		Serious Illness

*These Leave Transfer Program (LTP) recipients declined to publish their names and can receive donations using the assigned case number.

>>> **RECALLS**

May 27	California firm recalls poultry, beef and pork products produced without the benefit of inspection and misbranded with unauthorized use of the USDA mark of inspection.
May 29	Kentucky firm recalls turkey and cheese lunch kits due to misbranding and undeclared allergen.
June 3	Nebraska firm recalls beef products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 contamination.
June 4	California firm recalls chicken and pork products due to misbranding.
June 4	Michigan firm recalls pork products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
June 6	California firm recalls chicken and turkey sausage products due to misbranding.
June 9	Louisiana firm recalls poultry product due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
June 12	New York firm recalls beef tongue products that may contain specified risk materials.
June 15	California firm recalls pork products produced without benefit of import inspection.
June 16	California firm recalls pork sausage products due to misbranding and undeclared allergen.
June 17	Arkansas firm recalls poultry products due to misbranding.
June 20	New York firm recalls pork and beef products due to possible <i>Listeria</i> contamination.
June 26	Nevada firm recalls beef products produced without benefit of import inspection.
July 2	Maine firm recalls kiev stuffed chicken product due to possible <i>Salmonella Enteritidis</i> contamination.
July 3	Colorado firm recalls steak and ground beef products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 contamination.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



Food Safety and
Inspection Service

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Number
7

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

August 2015



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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



MP HOTLINE TURNS 30

This past July marked the 30th anniversary of USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline. MP Hotline team members pictured, from left to right: Clara Yuvienco, Janice Lopez-Munoz, Jason Waggoner, Marianne Gravely, Archie Magoulas and Tina Hanes.

Photo contributed by Kristina Beaugh, OPACE.

FSIS Food Safety Modernization Initiatives

By Leo O'Drudy
Phone: (202) 720-8693

In the last century, we have seen dramatic technological advances in fields such as transportation, telecommunications and medicine. As a result, food safety regulations and techniques have been, and will continue to be, updated to keep pace with the latest developments. Maybe that's why the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently referred to FSIS as, "an increasingly data-driven, science-based food safety Agency." The items below highlight the Agency's efforts and previews what is coming:

Salmonella has been the number one focus for FSIS for some time now, in part because while rates of other foodborne illness have fallen over the last 20 years, rates of salmonellosis have not.

In December 2014, FSIS proposed performance standards for *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* in ground poultry products and the first ever performance standards for those pathogens in chicken parts.

Although poultry is the top cause of salmonellosis among FSIS-regulated products, we're not forgetting about beef and pork. In 2014, FSIS sampled pork products (cuts) at retail for *Salmonella*, something that had never been done before. This year we are following up

with testing at pork slaughter and processing establishments, which will let us compare prevalence for *Salmonella* among various types of pork products with an eye toward developing options to reduce salmonellosis attributable to pork products.

Poultry slaughter modernization. Probably the most prominent and far-reaching modernization initiative that we have undertaken, in part because of the need to make progress against *Salmonella*, has been poultry slaughter modernization. While meeting the statutory requirement to perform carcass-by-carcass inspection, FSIS moved its emphasis forward from sorting for food quality defects, which has been the case since 1957 (when poultry inspection began), to the modern era of product sampling and pathogen testing, where we can get more public health "bang for the buck." As a result, many FSIS inspection personnel will have an opportunity to perform more varied work, and more resources will be devoted to catching harmful pathogens that can't be seen by the naked eye.

E. coli. The Strategic Performance Working Group met several times in 2014 to discuss how to better control the most dangerous strains of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC)

Continued on page 4 ...

The Beacon is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

Sept. issue – due Aug. 1
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Nov. issue – due Oct. 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

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We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to email.

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN



Al Almanza

This month, we celebrate modernization and the ways in which it has impacted all aspects of the Agency's effectiveness. FSIS is an Agency rooted in history, dating back to publication of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, which described insanitary working conditions in a Chicago meatpacking house. This led to the passing of legislation providing for meat inspection in 1906 and the early stages of FSIS. As the times have changed, our ways of inspecting, researching and communicating have evolved to focus on modernization techniques that will enable us to be a more efficient and resourceful Agency with work rooted in science.

Collaboration is a key to modernization. One example of the way FSIS benefits through collaboration is our Strategic Performance Working Group (SPWG); a collaborative effort between headquarters and field employees to coordinate ideas within the Agency on how to improve Agency performance. Recently, the SPWG worked to leverage the latest scientific data to reduce Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) illnesses associated with FSIS regulated products. The group recognized that improving sanitary dressing procedures as an effective way to accomplish this goal. We also began co-analyzing samples for *Salmonella* and *E. coli* O157:H7 in July of last year. By examining this data, we will be able to determine if we need to revise our performance standards to better protect public health. If you'd like to learn more about the SPWG, you can find information and contacts in the *Constituent Update* from March 6, 2015: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/newsroom/meetings/newsletters/constituent-updates/archive/2015/ConstUpdate030615>.

Just as we have modernized our research tools and techniques, we have also modernized the way we provide outreach and education to our consumers. This month, we are celebrating the 30-year anniversary of the USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline, which enables consumers to ask questions or report incidents of foodborne illness. The Hotline receives more than 80,000 calls each year and helps prevent foodborne illness by answering questions about the safe storage, handling and preparation of meat, poultry and egg products.

With the expansion of the internet, our consumer response system added live chat, email, Q&A, and even social media, making our resources even more widely accessible. In April, we introduced a smartphone application called the 'FoodKeeper' for Apple and Android. The app contains valuable storage advice to help consumers maintain the freshness and quality of foods. So far, more than 70,000 people have downloaded it.

Consumer confidence in the nation's food supply comes as a result of the work that FSIS does. As the Agency continues to explore new ways of modernizing, we encourage you to share your ideas for improvement with your supervisors. Thank you for all of your work you do that enriches our Agency and protects the public's health.

Coming in September!

The Agency will launch a survey to improve internal communications efforts. Participants will be able to provide feedback about the various ways FSIS communicates with employees. Survey results will be featured in upcoming editions of The Beacon. To ensure confidentiality, individual identification will not be requested.



" I am excited to be part of such an innovative organization and can't wait to share our new training offerings in the years to come. "

-Shannon Edelmann

Photo contributed by Shannon Edelmann, OOEET

Shannon Edelmann: Empowering FSIS Employees Through Training

*By Donald Garrett, OPACE
Phone: (202) 205-3058*

No Agency modernization initiative can succeed without a workforce properly trained to utilize advances in technology and science. Delivering tailored training resources to such a large and technically diverse workforce is a challenging task. Shannon Edelmann understands that she has an important role to play in that task as the Agriculture Learning (AgLearn) Lead Administrator with FSIS. AgLearn is USDA's department-wide system for managing training records and activity at USDA. USDA employees use AgLearn to search, access, and record all training opportunities through the web. By using AgLearn, USDA employees have access to a plethora of learning resources any time, and any place an Internet connection is available.

Edelmann works in the Distance Learning Branch (DLB) located in the Office of Outreach, Employee Education and Training (OOEET). She brought a wealth of knowledge to the DLB when she joined in 2008. Before coming to USDA, she worked for NASA in a training role for more than 25 years. Now she is part of the FSIS team responsible for designing, developing, delivering, and evaluating training and education programs delivered through distance learning methods.

FSIS' DLB actively engages with partners in every program area to identify training topics like Environmental, Safety and Health Heat Stress Training; *E. coli* Sampling Update for Imports; and Investigation Training. The branch also decides which employees should receive the training,

determines the optimal format, coordinates the curricula, and ensures the training is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. DLB staff participate in several committees throughout the Agency to stay informed about initiatives that might result in the need for the development of training modules.

"The DLB is always looking to future innovations to make training easily accessible and available when needed," said Edelmann when asked about her office's plans for the future. Edelmann is passionate about providing developmental opportunities to all FSIS employees and is aggressively working on getting all employees, especially those in the field, access to AgLearn. To provide easier access to training, DLB is working to expand current distance learning offerings beyond AgLearn to include webinars, the Intranet and paper-based methods. Today, her branch is developing interactive learning systems that will show employees virtually what their duties in the field would be like through simulations, videos and other interactive technologies. "Training is great! I wanted to bring excitement to the system," Edelmann said. "I am excited to be part of such an innovative organization and can't wait to share our new training offerings in the years to come." Edelmann views her role as bringing professional development to all FSIS staff and ensuring all employees have up-to-date information that will empower them to effectively carry out their responsibilities.

Outside of FSIS and training, Edelmann is a mother of two and a swim official. She spends her summer weekends at swim meets.



Photo contributed by Alicia Hickman, OFO

Celebrating LGBT Pride Month

*By Alicia Hickman, OFO
Phone (314) 772-2125*

CSI Thomas Ellestad, stationed in Pine Bluff, Ark., created an informational bulletin board in celebration of June's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) pride month. The display included facts about the LGBT community including the meaning of the colors in the rainbow flag, which is often used as a symbol of gay pride. His informational board also highlighted famous members of the LGBT community, and the status of LGBT rights around the world. Most importantly, the display serves as a reminder that everyone deserves to be treated fairly in and out of the workplace. We want to thank Tom for his informative bulletin board!



Modernization

... Continued from page 1

in beef products, and in March 2015 announced its recommendations about what FSIS can do involving sanitary dressing to reduce STEC contamination specific milestones. Relatively simple improvements such as using photographs rather than using solely written descriptions in Agency trainings can go a long way in getting improved inspection results. Other recommendations include developing a standard and relying on indicator organisms to check the effectiveness of sanitary dressings.

Grinding Logs/Traceback. In July 2014, FSIS proposed that all grinders, including retail stores, keep clear records on the sources of the products they use in making ground beef products. The Agency proposed to require that the records identify the supplier, and names of all materials used in preparation of the raw ground beef products. Having this information available will help with traceback and trace-forward efforts, speed up outbreak investigations and enhance the effectiveness of some recalls.

Mechanically Tenderized Beef (MTB). Technology allows industry to make certain cuts of meat more tender and more marketable by using needles and blades to pierce the surface of the cut. The problem with this technique is that it can push pathogens from the outside of the meat to the interior, where the pathogens can survive improper cooking.

The problem is, for most cuts of meat it is not possible to tell whether the cut has been tenderized simply by looking at the cut. Therefore, in May 2015, FSIS finalized a rule that requires that the fact that a cut has been mechanically tenderized be disclosed on its principal display panel. The label will also be required to include validated cooking instructions. The rule will take effect in May 2016.

Whole genome sequencing (WGS) is a way to determine the entire DNA sequence of a living being in a single lab process. It has enormous potential to help with outbreak detection and surveillance and could replace several older methods of identifying microbes, such as pulsed field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) testing and classical serotyping. WGS can help researchers and food safety authorities to pin down different sources of contamination, figure out which ingredient in a multi-ingredient food (such as a salad or sandwich) is the one that contained the pathogen causing an outbreak, and more. The cost of this powerful new technology is coming down rapidly, which means it can be used more often than in the past, opening up new possibilities for those protecting public health. Keep an eye out for it in the months and years ahead.

The world around us is changing rapidly, and the dedicated professionals at FSIS are changing many of the tools we use and the way we do things, but one thing never changes: our dedication to public health and the safety of the food Americans eat.

FSIS Trains New Supervisors

By Anthony L. Thompson, OOEET
Phone: (202) 720-6238

All new supervisors at USDA are required to complete supervisory training within the first probationary year following their appointment pursuant to DR4040-412-002.

This requirement is applicable to all new supervisors in the Department regardless of grade or occupational code. Twenty-seven FSIS supervisors completed the 2-week course in Alexandria, Va., on April 17, 2015.



Photo by Jeff White, OOEET.

Pictured, above: Dr. Bryan C. Brunswig, Alan Lang, Dr. Michael Kirkpatrick, Dr. Nianet Carrasquillo, Dr. Gregory Shaw, Dr. Tiffany Cable, William Lawler, Amanda Krot, Jeffrey Jacobsen, Dorothy Feustel, Scott Ehle, Maria Malagon, Dr. Esther Badie, Dr. Stacie Sturdivant, Dr. Jenna Fier, Dr. Heather Havens, Dr. Janet MacDonna, Rodney Robinson, Dr. Laura Anderson, Ms. Brenda Taylor, Emilia Chavez, Melissa Fernandes, Joseph Schein, Antonio Hampton, Dr. Jennifer Gaither, Dr. Pat Knox, Dr. Alison Kellar, Michael Watts (OOEET AA), D'Juan Jenkins, Anthony L. Thompson (NSTP Manager). Not pictured: Dr. Amy Nooyen.

FSIS Retirees: Aug. 1-31, 2015

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Amos, Shirley L., CSI	Sebastopol, Miss.	20	Scanlan, Robert W., Lead CSI	Moorefield, W.Va.	32
Baker Sr., Robert S., CSI	Edinburg, Va.	35	Slagel, Michael A., Supvy CSI	Murrayville, Ga.	28
Clark, Richard J., CSI	Everett, Mass.	25	Tyler, Samuel A., SVMO	Greenville, S.C.	38
Dick, Jeffry S., SVMO	Marshalltown, Iowa	33	Thompson, David L., CSI	Schuyler, Neb.	30
Kusman, Scott R., CSI	Cudahy, Wis.	32	Waller, Juanita M., FI-S	Georgetown, Del.	31
Lyons, Roger L., CSI	New London, Wis.	30	Zielinski, Peter F., CSI	New Glarus, Wis.	31
McSweeney, Bryan J., CSI	Wallingford, Conn.	16			
Neal, Barbara L., FI-S	Albany, Ky.	3			
Patty, Keith H., CSI	Hillsdale, Ill.	27			

NPIS Notes

Question of the Month

What will the application process be for NPIS positions?

Employees interested in positions made available through the implementation of NPIS will find the vacancy announcements and application instructions at USAJOBS.gov. Applicants should set up their USAJOBS account, with the appropriate resume and employment information/personal profile prior to the vacancy opening date or as part of the application process. In order to assist those that do not have computer access, vacancy announcements will also be posted in-plant and hard copy application packets and instructions will be mailed to Bargaining Unit Employees (BUE), upon request.

Applicants will be evaluated using the normal merit promotion process evaluating each candidate based on their skills and experience for the desired position. For applicants that are unable to submit their application through USAJOBS, they need to pay close attention to the announcement instructions, which will clearly state the date that the application packet must be postmarked, in order for the applicant to receive consideration, no later than the closing date of the announcement. The Agency will wait for five (5) business days after the announcement closing date, before issuing a certificate. Applications submitted through USAJOBS, or submitted manually that bear a timely postmark will be scanned and/or uploaded into eRecruit for evaluation and consideration.



Photo contributed by True Grace Photography.

Pictured, from left to right: DM Paul Wolseley; CSI Bill Ridlen; Deputy Administrator Phil Derfler; Dr. Keith Gilmore, EARO.

Chicago District Recognizes Employees with 40+ Years of Service to FSIS

*By Wendy Plenty Ferguson, OFO
Phone: (630) 620-9782*

During a recent town hall meeting, the Chicago District recognized 17 employees all of whom had had more than 40 years of public service. Each employee received a plaque and a special token of appreciation for their dedication.

Marvin E. Cool	Circuit 22 Versailles, Ohio	47 years
Richard G. Burkett	Circuit 07 Farina, Ill.	46 years
William L. Ridlen	Circuit 07 Beardstown, Ill.	46 years
Ralph E. King	Circuit 31 Haubstadt, Ind.	45 years
Joseph Fano	Circuit 05 Mundelein, Ill.	45 years
Barry N. Lovenberg	Circuit 05 St Charles, Ill.	44 years
Mary E. Hollrah	Circuit 31 Corydon, Ind.	43 years
Stephen R. Jankowski	Circuit 21 Canton, Ohio	43 years
Scott M. Elliott	Circuit 06 Bridge View, Ill.	43 years
Walker J. Duff	Circuit 23 Indianapolis, Ind.	42 years
James A. Goff	Circuit 21 Cleveland, Ohio	42 years
John L. Helm	Circuit 21 Massillon, Ohio	42 years
Donald S. Rucinski	Circuit 03 Chicago, Ill.	42 years
Darrell L. Popp	Circuit 10 Pigeon, Mich.	41 years
Mark E. Finnicum	Circuit 21 Wooster, Ohio	40 years
Dorothy J. Shelton	Circuit 03 Chicago, Ill.	40 years
Kathryn A. Smith	Circuit 34 Quincy, Mich.	40 years

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Inspector Paulette Buice of Est. P-855 Pilgrim's Pride Night Shift cut her hair and donated it to Pantene Beautiful Lengths program. This program makes wigs and gives them for free to women that have been affected by hair loss from cancer. Paulette has lost several family members to cancer. It takes 6 to 7 ponytails to make one wig.

If you would want to know more about the program, the address is:

Pantene Beautiful Lengths
Attn: 192-123
806 SE 18th Ave.
Grand Rapids, MN 55744



Photos contributed by Susan Kelly, OFO.



2015 Diversity Training Conference

The Civil Rights Staff in the Office of the Administrator is excited to announce that FSIS will host the 2015 Diversity Training Conference in Washington, D.C.

Employees have been selected from across FSIS, and they will attend educational workshops that cover a wide-range of subjects including diversity, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), civil rights, career development, and conflict management. Be sure to look for information and pictures from the conference in the September edition of *The Beacon*.



Des Moines District

On April 23, 2015, CSIs Tommie Olson (pictured, front right) and John Cottier (pictured, back) conducted a food safety outreach project at Hormel Foods Corp. (Est. 199W M), in Beloit, Wis., during their annual Health Fair. The CSIs handed out and discussed food safety information pertaining to internal cooking temperatures of meat, poultry and fish; hand washing techniques; and recommended refrigerator and freezer temperatures. The CSIs also provided the Kitchen Companion booklet and information specific to the senior population and individuals with cancer. Both English and Spanish language information was made available. Photo contributed by Tommie Olson, OFO.



Des Moines District

The Des Moines District EEOAC held their spring meeting in Austin, Minn. on April 28-30, 2015. Participants received several cultural briefings and were given a tour of a local historic site. Pictured, back row, from left to right: John Haymond, Roberta Jacobson, Dr. Khalid Masood, Heather Swan, Amanda Krot, Brian Hanson, Mike VerBruggen, Arcenia Oliver, Dr. Tim King, Clarke Jones, Shirish Saxena, Megan Xiquita, Dr. David Needham. Pictured, front row, from left to right: Dr. Sarah Davis, Dr. Rosemary Turner, Dr. Dawn Sprouls, Jasminko Sabic. Photo contributed by Brian Hansen, OFO.

OIEA Southwest Region

Beth Leopold, OIEA, and Debra Owens, Agricultural Research Service (ARS), staffed a USDA booth at the National College Resources Foundation (NCRF) and Black College Expo held in Houston, Texas on February 28, 2015. About 175 participants (students, parents, and high school counselors and educators) visited the USDA booth. Participants learned about possible internship and career opportunities at USDA. National celebrities Kel Mitchell, of the Nickelodeon TV comedy sitcom "Kenan and Kel;" and Yo-Yo (born Yolanda Whitaker), a female hip-hop artist and actress, provided words of encouragement with an entertainment twist to the students during the scholarship award presentations. Pictured, from left to right: Beth Leopold, OIEA; Kel Mitchell; Debra Owens, ARS. Photo contributed by Beth Leopold, OIEA.



FROM THE **FIELD**

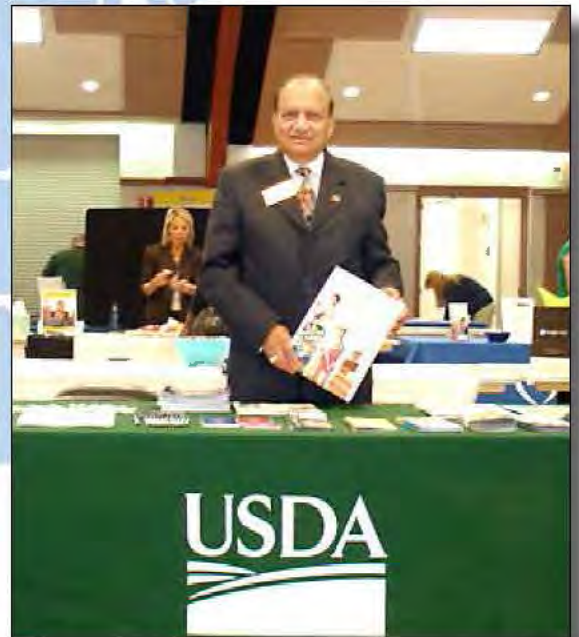
Springdale District

On April 12, 2015, Dr. Ricky Couch, SPHV (pictured, left) and Amanda Garcia, CSI (pictured, right) attended a career fair at College of the Ozarks. The event was a success, with more than 120 booths; the largest number in the college's history. More than 100 students visited the career fair to receive information on job opportunities. Couch and Garcia were able to individually speak with approximately 20-30 students who were very interested and excited about opportunities at FSIS. Some soon-to-be-graduates asked about opportunities for full-time employment, and several undergraduate students had questions regarding internships. Photo contributed by Dr. Ricky Couch, OFO.



Raleigh District

Dr. Ahmad Jilani participated in a career fair hosted by Senators Carper, Coons and Carney of Delaware on May 5, 2015, at Rehoboth Beach Convention Center. About 60-70 people stopped by to inquire about job availability, and all three Senators visited the FSIS table. Dr. Jilani explained to the Senators the roll FSIS plays in protecting public health. Dr. Jilani gave away informational materials and explained job opportunities with FSIS. Photo contributed by Dr. Ahmad Jilani, OFO.



Raleigh District

On May 16, FSIS employees from plants in Maryland and Delaware participated in a walk for cancer in Ocean City, Md. A total of 13 FSIS employees participated in the 2.5-mile walk, carrying a banner. This event takes place every year to raise awareness and collect funds for breast cancer research. Pictured, from left to right: Alexandria Kitchens, Lisa Harding, Lou Harding, Amanda Vannicola, Gwyn Vannicola, Mary Williams (organizer), Rosalinda Salinas, Jessica Castro, Rhonda Moore and Brandee Moore. Photo contributed by Rosalinda Salinas, OFO.



Resume Writing: Empowering Yourself to Win

By Cecilia Matthews, OM
Phone: (202) 205-4284

A lot has changed in the job application process over the past 20 years. Technology has changed the application process, and more creative approaches to job searches are surfacing, but a current and well-written resume is still crucial.

Have you ever felt that writing a resume is like doing your taxes? Some of us will do anything to avoid it. But keep this in mind, writing your resume is an opportunity for you to tell your unique story.

When writing your accomplishments, you should show achievements that are tied to Federal regulations and compliance; or that reduced costs, increased productivity or improved customer service. Quantify your accomplishments whenever possible. Even if you don't have specific numbers, try to quantify your actions by describing the outcomes as better, faster or lower cost outcomes. You should always be looking to highlight the tangible benefits of your contributions.

Here are four critical points to consider when writing a successful resume.

1. **Don't be generic, be unique.** Demonstrate that you are who they want for the job while being who you truly are; help HR and hiring managers see your value.
2. **Promote yourself – tell your story.** Your achievements and accomplishments are what employers are looking for most.
3. **Take advantage of the opportunity.** This is a chance to demonstrate your experience, achievements and ambitions.
4. **Be clear and proofread.** Incomplete sentences and simple errors in spelling can make you ineligible.

Employers view your job application as an example of the quality of your work. Careless mistakes will cast doubt on the quality of your work. Remember, your resume is a test of your knowledge, skills and abilities; as well as an opportunity to present your accomplishments and achievements! Tell the story about how unique you really are. Finally, many people miss this opportunity or back away from shining their light. Go ahead. Dazzle them with your talents!

What is Repetitive Stress Syndrome?

By Samilya Zurawski, OM
Phone: 1-800-370-3747

Repetitive Stress Syndrome is known by several different names including Repetitive Stress Injury/Disorder or Cumulative Trauma. All of these names describe an injury to a part of the body that is caused by overusing or exerting too much stress on a particular body part. According to WebMD, repetitive type injuries such as Bursitis, Swimmer's Shoulder or Knee, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, Tendonitis, Computer Vision Syndrome, Tennis Elbow, Deep Vein Thrombosis, Eye Strain, Vibration Syndromes, Trigger Finger, and Blackberry Thumb are among the most common injuries in the United States.

These injuries can be made worse by the repetitive actions of daily living. Simple everyday actions, such as throwing a ball, scrubbing a floor, or jogging, can lead to these types of injuries. Personal underlying health conditions such as chronic alcoholism, arthritis, diabetes, uremia, gout, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease can cause or exacerbate the injuries.

These conditions can be prevented or alleviated through daily exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, controlling underlying health conditions and avoiding smoking. Also, practicing proper body mechanics and using ergonomic guidelines at work is equally as important.



Donate to Feds Feed Families!

The campaign runs from July until October 2.

Everyone can contribute at the office, at home or on the farm. Let's work together to beat last year's FSIS record of 113,000 pounds. Go to usda.gov/fedsfeedfamilies for more information!



Photo contributed by Chile's SAG.

FSIS officials meet with inspection officials from a variety of South American countries at the FSIS meat inspection/equivalence seminar in Santiago, Chile.

International Equivalence Seminar in Santiago, Chile

By Dr. Juan F. Rodriguez, OIEA
Phone: (202) 205-4091

FSIS and USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) in collaboration with Chile's Ministry of Agriculture known as *Servicio Agrícola y Ganadero* (SAG), held a five-day seminar for 48 meat inspection officials from Chile, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Argentina from June 8 - 12 in Santiago, Chile. The seminar was co-sponsored by the U.S. Codex Office. The purpose of the seminar was to familiarize government meat inspectors with FSIS inspection regulations and procedures. The seminar, held in

Spanish, included presentations about the FSIS regulatory process; Meat Product Classification; Pathogen Reduction; Product Sampling Techniques; Regulatory Developments for Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC); Food Defense; Animal Welfare; U.S. Point of Entry Inspection; New Poultry Inspection System; and the joint United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization/World Health Organization International Food Standards Program, Codex Alimentarius. FSIS' Francisco Gonzalez and Juan Rodriguez conducted the classroom portion of the seminar while the Chilean Ministry hosted tours of one of their inspected facilities and one of their official laboratories.

Safety Corner

By Josh Spencer, OM
Phone: (214) 767-9122

Did you know that the Environmental Safety and Health Group has a safety webpage? To better serve you and help you succeed, the website features a wealth of safety and health information, tools, and resource. Most of all, we hope you will gain a better understanding of how safety plays an important role at FSIS.

Some of the tools you will find on the website are:

Monthly Injury and Illness Reports. These reports share information on recent injuries and illnesses throughout the

Agency and can be used as a tool during Circuit Safety Meetings.

Site Visits. Safety Inspection Reports (SIRs) are findings from recent establishment visits. The SIRs contain information about safety concerns and the related Directives and Regulations.

OSHA Recordkeeping. Electronic copies of all the required OSHA forms (e.g. OSHA 301) can be printed out, filed, or completed. They are kept there electronically.

Please take a moment to explore the website at www.tinyurl.com/FSIS-ESHG. The page can also be accessed by visiting the *InsideFSIS* intranet homepage. From the main *InsideFSIS* page, scroll to the bottom and find the box on the left hand side titled 'Employee Services'. Click on the 'Employee Safety & Health' link and this will bring you to the Environmental, Safety, and Health page.

“Buying Back” Military Time Towards Civilian Retirement

By Thomas Reimler, OM
Phone: 1-800-370-3747, Press 3

Military service in the Armed Forces of the United States is usually creditable toward an employee's Service

Computation Date (SCD). However, on January 1, 1957, the military went under Social Security. As a result, some individuals must “buy back” time to be given civilian service credit. If you have military service, you are encouraged to carefully review this article on military deposits.

Military Service <u>Before</u> 1/1/57			
IF	You were in the military <u>before</u> 1/1/57. AND You served under honorable conditions.	THEN	Your military service performed before 1/1/57 is creditable for retirement. No deposit is necessary.
CSRS Employees with Military Service <u>After</u> 1/1/57			
IF	You were first employed under CSRS <u>before</u> October 1, 1982. AND You are not yet eligible for Social Security (SS) and will not be eligible at age 62.	THEN	You will receive lifetime credit for military service performed after 1957. No deposit is necessary.
IF	You were first employed under CSRS <u>before</u> October 1, 1982. AND You are eligible for SS, or will be at age 62, but don't make a deposit before you retire.	THEN	OPM will credit your military service performed after January 1, 1957, until you reach age 62. At that time, OPM will recalculate your CSRS annuity, removing credit for military service. This will cause a reduction in your annuity.
IF	You were first employed under CSRS <u>before</u> October 1, 1982. AND You are not eligible for Social Security, you don't know if you will be at age 62, and plan to work in the private sector after retirement.	THEN	You may want to consider paying a military deposit before you retire. That way, if you earn enough credits to be eligible for Social Security at age 62, you'll preserve your lifetime credit for military service performed after January 1, 1957.
IF	You were first employed under CSRS <u>before</u> October 1, 1982. AND You are eligible for Social Security (or will be eligible at age 62) and you pay a deposit.	THEN	As long as you pay the deposit before you retire, OPM will give lifetime credit for your military service performed after January 1, 1957.
IF	You were first employed under CSRS <u>after</u> October 1, 1982. AND You pay a deposit before you retire.	THEN	OPM will give you credit for your honorable active military service (if you are not retired military).
FERS Employees with Military Service <u>After</u> 1/1/57			
IF	You were in the military <u>after</u> 1/1/57. AND You are covered by FERS.	THEN	You must make a redeposit to obtain retirement service credit for military service performed after January 1, 1957.

For FERS employees with military service after 1/1/57, retired military service employees will not receive any retirement credit for their active duty military service unless they waive their military retirement pay and pay a deposit.

If you have any questions on this issue, you may wish to contact a member of the Benefits Staff to pursue the possibility of “buying” additional service credit. They can be reached by phone at 1-800-370-3747, press 3, or by email at Ask.Benefits@fsis.usda.gov.

Civilian Deposit and Redeposit Service

By Thomas Reimler, OM
Phone: 1-800-370-3747, Press 3

If records show that you have not fully paid retirement deductions, you may be able to make a one-time civilian deposit or redeposit of those deductions. By making a deposit or redeposit to fully pay your retirement deductions, you may be able to increase your creditable service toward retirement.

Whether or not you are eligible to make a monetary deposit or redeposit depends on when you worked. It also depends on your retirement coverage, Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS).

The following chart provides a brief overview to help you determine if there is a possibility that you may be eligible to make a civilian deposit or redeposit.

Civilian Deposit Service			
IF	You worked at a time when retirement deductions were not withheld from your pay. (CSRS – anytime) (FERS – before January 1, 1989)	THEN	You <u>may</u> be able to make a deposit and receive retirement credit for that civilian service.
Civilian Redeposit Service			
IF	You got a refund of retirement deductions that were withheld from your pay.	THEN	You <u>may</u> be able to make a redeposit and receive retirement credit for that civilian service.

If you have civilian service that falls into either of these categories, deposit or redeposit, you may wish to contact a member of the Benefits Staff to pursue the possibility of

"buying" additional service credit. They can be reached by phone at 1-800-370-3747, press 3, or by email at Ask.Benefits@fsis.usda.gov.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE INFORMATION POSTERS AVAILABLE MATERIAL MANAGEMENT SERVICE CENTER (MMSC)

**"A harassment-free work environment
is not a privilege; it is a right.
No employee is expected to endure any form
of harassment in the FSIS workplace."**

–Deputy Under Secretary Almanza

To request workplace violence posters for your duty location, please fax the request to MMSC at 301-394-0300. Please provide your contact information, address, quantity and item number (AD-1135A). If you have any questions, please contact Venita Jacobs at 1-877-576-6329 or Pam Veal at 301-504-3995.

The Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Program is providing a resources label, which can be placed on the lower right corner of existing posters. To request a copy of the label, please email workplaceviolenceprevention@fsis.usda.gov.

Back-to-School FOOD SAFETY TIPS

Chances are you worry more about whether your children will eat the food in their lunch boxes than about whether that food will be safe to eat. But children are the most vulnerable to food poisoning, so it makes sense to take extra precautions when preparing the lunches they take to school.



1 IN 6 Approximate number of Americans stricken with food poisoning each year



128,000

Estimated annual hospitalizations from foodborne illnesses



42,000

Estimated annual reports of salmonella infections, the most frequent cause of foodborne illnesses

Of the estimated 42,000 annual salmonella infections, almost

50%

of those are infants and school-age children.



Because many milder cases are not diagnosed or reported, the actual number of salmonella infections may be 29 or more times greater. That's more than

1.2 MILLION

estimated cases annually.



Tips to keep your kids healthy

CLEAN



If you're making lunch the night before, be sure to wash your hands and use clean cutting boards, utensils and countertops. Making lunch on the same surfaces you used to prepare raw meat or poultry for dinner may result in cross-contamination and lead to salmonella-related illness.



SEPARATE



Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for meat and poultry.



COOK



Cook foods to the right temperature using a food thermometer.



CHILL



If the lunch contains perishable food items like luncheon meats, eggs, and yogurt, make sure to pack it with at least two cold sources (e.g., freezer packs and frozen water bottles).



Pack a Safe Lunch

Send your kids back to school with safe and satisfying lunches by following these simple tips:

Tip 1



Frozen juice boxes can also be used as freezer packs. By lunchtime, the juice should be thawed and ready to drink!

Tip 2



Perishable food can be unsafe to eat by lunchtime if packed in a paper bag. Use an insulated box or bag instead.

Tip 3



Children should wash their hands for 20 seconds with warm soapy water before eating. Have them sing the ABCs twice while washing if they sometimes finish early.

Tip 4



If possible, your child's lunch should be stored in a refrigerator. But leave the lid of the lunchbox or an insulated, soft-sided bag open in the fridge so that cold air can circulate and keep the food cold.

Tip 5



If you're packing a hot lunch, like soup, chili or stew, use an insulated container to keep it hot. Fill the container with boiling water; let stand for a few minutes, empty, and then put in the piping hot food. Tell your child to keep the insulated container closed until lunchtime to keep the food hot — 140°F or above.

Tip 6



After lunch, discard all leftover food, used food packaging, and paper bags. Do not reuse packaging because it could contaminate other food.

Additional source: CDC



For more Back to School Food Safety Tips go to

FoodSafety.gov

RECALLS <<<

July 3	Colorado firm recalls steak and ground beef products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 contamination. Canadian firm recalls beef products produced without benefit of import inspection.
July 10	Georgia firm recalls turkey sausage products due to possible foreign matter contamination. Maine firm recalls stuffed chicken products due to possible <i>Salmonella enteritidis</i> contamination.
July 15	Pennsylvania firm recalls chicken products due to <i>staphylococcal enterotoxin</i> contamination. Illinois firm recalls frozen, raw, stuffed & breaded chicken products due to possible <i>Salmonella enteritidis</i> contamination.
July 16	Nevada firm recalls sausage products due to misbranding. Washington firm recalls salad products that may contain nitrites in the bacon that were not declared on the product label.
July 23	Illinois firm recalls veal products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> contamination.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- Directive 9920.1, Reinspection of Imported Shell Eggs (Packed In Containers Destined for Consumers and For Breaking)
- Directive 7130.1, Verifying Nutrition Labeling for the Major Cuts of Single-Ingredient, Raw Meat and Poultry Products and Ground or Chopped Meat and Poultry Products
- Directive 7120.1 Revision 28, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used In the Production of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products
- Notice 40-15, Cancellation of FSIS PHIS

Administrative issues were also published.

- Notice 43-15, Annual Notice of Right to Request Union Representation
- Notice 42-15, Hiring Reforms
- Notice 41-15, Using Barcodes to Verify Eligibility of Imported Products with Missing or Completely Illegible Shipping Marks

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

“Kudos ...”

If you would like to thank, congratulate or give a shout out to someone in FSIS, send your kudo to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. You can also place a kudo on *InsideFSIS*. Just email it to intranet.manager@fsis.usda.gov. Keep your kudo to a few sentences.

Kudos to Paul Wolseley and Staff, OFO

The Office of Data Integration and Food Protection (ODIFP), Food Defense Assessment Staff (FDAS) would like to thank Paul Wolseley, Chicago District Manager, and his staff for their support of the food defense mission. On June 8-11, staff from the Chicago District Office met with a representative from FDAS to provide feedback on current food defense training, tools and resources. In addition, Frontline Supervisors Dr. Mohsen Aly, D’Juan Jenkins and Gary Tietz facilitated plant tours and meetings with plant owners and management allowing FDAS to see how industry implements food defense using resources provided by FSIS. We sincerely appreciate the time and effort Paul and his staff dedicated to making sure the visit was a success!

-Bryan Norrington, ODIFP

Kudos to Dennis Depperschmidt, OFO

Thanks to Dennis Depperschmidt, Management Assistant in the Denver District Office for providing the field with information, answering questions and pointing people in the right direction. Dennis is a knowledgeable and friendly voice.

-CSI Dale A. Benjamin, OFO

Kudos to CSI Warren Unger & CSI Kandy Evans, OFO

Everyone at the East Berlin Circuit would like to thank CSI Warren Unger for 39 years of Federal service. He retires on August 3, 2015. We would also like to congratulate Kandy Evans on her promotion to Consumer Safety Inspector (CSI). We wish all the best.

-Dr. Chelsea Faircloth, DVM

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.

Inside This Issue

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More Snapshots!

Because you asked for it, this month's issue includes **DOUBLE** the photos! Snapshots begin on page 8.



Photo contributed by Luis Delgadillo, OPACE.

The Food Safety Discovery Zone prepares to get on the road for the summer 2015 tour.

The Food Safety Discovery Zone: FSIS' Mobile Learning Lab

By Sarah Mullane, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9113

The Food Safety Discovery Zone (FSDZ) is a mobile, interactive food safety exhibit that teaches the public about safe food handling. The FSDZ travels anywhere in the U.S. and is focusing on the Midwest this summer. "Between FY10 and FY14, [more than] 3.8 million people visited the FSDZ," said Jason Waggoner, a Public Affairs Specialist on FSIS' Food Safety Education Staff (FSES). While the program has creative and educational material for children as young as 5 years old, people of all ages can learn from the materials and programs.

FSDZ visitors can participate in a 20-minute food safety demonstration describing the four steps everyone should practice when handling food: clean, separate, cook and chill. Visitors can pick up additional food safety resources including information about: the FoodKeeper smartphone

application, the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline, the live-chat through Askkaren.gov, the Foodsafety.gov website, and how to follow the latest and up-to-date messages provided at the @USDAFoodSafety Twitter account and Facebook page.

Luis Delgadillo, the FSDZ program manager, points out that FSES often reaches out to local field offices to assist with staffing the FSDZ at various events across the country. All FSIS employees are welcome to volunteer. "We are nothing without our colleagues from around the nation. Their dedication to the mission and their generosity is what makes this program successful," Delgadillo said. For more information on getting involved, please email foodsafetymobile@fsis.usda.gov. For a list of upcoming and past FSDZ events, please visit <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/usda-food-safety-discovery-zone-mobile/event-schedule-by-date>.

The Beacon is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

Nov. issue – due Oct. 1
Dec. issue – due Nov. 1
Jan. issue – due Dec. 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to email.

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN

As summer comes to a close, grilling season winds down, and kids head back to school, it's a good time to celebrate National Food Safety Education month. I know that FSIS employees don't need a month to recognize food safety—you are working hard to advance food safety every single day, every month of the year. But this month in particular, our Agency joins restaurants, consumer groups, schools and corporations to spread greater awareness about food safety to the public. I encourage all of you to become food safety ambassadors in your own communities and to promote this cause to your friends and family by demonstrating your safe food handling skills and sharing them with others.

There are many ways to get involved. You may have children who are just starting out a new school year. To avoid illness this year, it's important to educate kids about safe food-handling practices, such as proper hand-washing and ways to keep packed lunches fresh. Children are among the most vulnerable to food poisoning, so it's important that we ensure that they know how to protect themselves while packing their lunches and snacks before school. All of the items FSIS regulates—like meat, poultry and processed egg products—are perishable and should be kept cool with freezer packs or stored in refrigerators before a child's lunch time. To read more tips and pass them along to others, here is a helpful link with helpful lunch-packing tips: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/549475aa-c187-4151-b3d5-ac3bb5e819ac/Keeping_Bag_Lunches_Safe.pdf?MOD=AJPERES.

FSIS has a staff of dedicated professionals who are engaged in food safety awareness on a year-round basis to educate about foodborne illness and how to prevent it at home with four key behavioral messages—clean, separate, cook and chill. FSIS uses diverse multimedia materials to educate the public, such as public service announcements in partnership with the Ad Council, media tours and social media accounts through Facebook and Twitter. In addition to these efforts, the Food Safety Discovery Zone and the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline act as FSIS' direct line to educating Americans. In this month's newsletter you will read more about these food safety education initiatives.

For a more complete list of all the ways FSIS is educating the public including booklets, activity books, graphics, fact sheets, posters and videos, go to <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/teach-others/download-materials>.



Al Almanza

Take the Survey! Improve Agency Communications

Turn to pages 19-20 to take the survey and return via fax to (301) 504-0912 or email your response to OPACESurvey@fsis.usda.gov.

The survey is available online at <https://www.fsis.usda.com/se/5D6EC10B40EC3A32>.

All survey responses are due by September 30, 2015.



Marianne Gravely: Educating the Public through FSIS' Meat and Poultry Hotline

By Christopher Bernstein, Whitney Joy and Jason Waggoner, OPACE
Phone: (202) 692-0061

July marked the 30th anniversary of USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline. Hotline experts keep the public safe from foodborne illness by answering consumer questions on all sorts of food safety topics. In fact, since its inception in 1985, the Hotline has handled more than 3 million calls from the public.

27-year hotline veteran Marianne Gravely, a Technical Information Specialist in FSIS' Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education, has answered many of those calls. "I've probably answered certain questions thousands of times," Gravely said. "I started in April 1988. That's before the Internet! At the time, we provided food safety information only by phone because they couldn't look for answers on a website."

As technology and food safety has changed over the years, Gravely has watched that influence the way FSIS educates the public. When the Hotline started, it was the most up-to-date method of reaching consumers. "[Today] consumers are more savvy about the kinds of risks in their

food," Gravely said. Questions have become more complex over time and consumers are more aware of the types of pathogens that can threaten food safety.

Gravely feels that the Meat and Poultry Hotline, as well as other FSIS services such as Ask Karen, offer an invaluable service to the public. When people call or chat with an FSIS employee, "they appreciate the service because they don't know where else to go; there is so much information on the internet but they don't know what to trust and they feel we are a trustworthy source of information."

Outside of work, Gravely is known to her family and friends as a food safety expert, so people are cautious when serving food around her and reach out to her when they have food safety questions. Prior to working at USDA, Gravely was a Home Economist for Yokosuka Naval Base Family Service Center in Japan where she helped American families adjust to life in Japan, working directly with Japanese citizens who married American sailors and were moving to the U.S. Gravely graduated from Hood College with a Bachelor of Science in Home Economics and earned a master's degree in Human Nutrition and Foods from Virginia Tech.

Marianne Gravely (pictured) tests a young person's food safety knowledge with a quiz game at the USDA Farmer's Market at Night event in July.



Photo contributed by Maria Malagon, OPACE.

2015 Diversity Training Conference

The Civil Rights Staff in the Office of the Administrator recently hosted the Diversity Training Conference in Washington, D.C., August 24-27, 2015. Employees attended educational workshops that covered a wide-range of subjects including diversity, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), civil rights, career development and conflict management.



Conference participants attended Franklin Covey workshops, titled Working at the Speed of Trust and Championing Diversity. Photo contributed by Rowena Becknel, OPACE.



Secretary Tom Vilsack (pictured above) welcomes Diversity Training Conference participants. Photo contributed by Rowena Becknel, OPACE.



Franklin Covey's highly interactive classes had participants identify and address trust gaps in their personal credibility and relationships at work. Pictured above, from left to right: Sally Sheresh and Mike Sheldon both from Des Moines District. Photo contributed by Rowena Becknel, OPACE.



Pictured left to right: Jennifer Walker and Yolande Mitchell jot down notes during one of Franklin Covey workshops. Photo contributed by Rowena Becknel, OPACE.



Members of the FSIS Management Council discuss their program areas' diversity, cultural transformation and inclusion initiatives. Pictured above, from left to right: Jacqueline Myers, William Smith, Dr. David Goldman, Stephanie Wilkins, Carl Mayes. Photo contributed by Jeremy Emmert, OPACE.



Pictured right, from left to right: Al Almanza, Dr. Daniel Englejohn, Carol Blake, Terri Nintemann. Photo contributed by Jeremy Emmert, OPACE.



Diversity Training Conference participants take part in a group activity. Pictured, from left to right: Patrice Perkins, Katherine McFadden, Deena Ismail, Vickie Sulenes, Robert Purdy, Paul Calafiore, Debbie Dietz, Chris Molloy. Photo contributed by Jeremy Emmert, OPACE.



Aaron Lavallee (pictured, left) and Sara Symons (pictured, right) introduce a coming FSIS initiative, i-Impact, a tool which will help FSIS employees see how their work links to the performance goals of the Agency. Photo contributed by Jeremy Emmert, OPACE.

FSIS Collaborates with Local Officials to Investigate Potential Illegal Food Operation

By Michael Riccardi Jr., OIEA
Phone: (718) 244-5034

USDA Investigators met with state and local inspectors at the Central Atlantic States Association of Food and Drug Officials (CASA) quarterly meeting, in Jamaica, N.Y. Investigators discussed jurisdictional issues related to a plan to confront an alleged illegal food operation. The operator was suspected of running an uninspected operation using a previously defunct deli location. Inspectors had reason to believe the operator was preparing and selling meat and poultry products for a chain of fitness centers throughout Suffolk County.



Investigators Paul Calafiore, Michael Greco and Michael Alsworth (pictured, left) met with New York Suffolk County Principal Sanitarian Stephen Kane and N.Y. State Ag. and Markets Insp. Angela Montalbano (pictured, right).

CID Investigators Reach Milestone In Public Health Protection

By Don Anderson and Teresa Yenovkian, OIEA
Phone: (215) 430-6235

Compliance and Investigations Division (CID) investigators passed a milestone in May when they conducted their 100,000th in-commerce surveillance since the AssuranceNet (ANet)/In-Commerce System (ICS) application launched in 2008. Approximately 130 investigators in the Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit (OIEA) use the web-based application to capture and maintain information collected during surveillance, investigations, and other in-commerce activities. CID managers and analysts use the system to monitor program accomplishments and to report on Agency Performance Measures. OIEA enforcement personnel, OA misconduct investigators, and other Agency personnel along with about 20 state program investigators also use ANet/ICS.

Investigators on the Front Line

Nearly all products are handled by at least one warehouse, retailer or other business on their way to consumers. CID Investigators are responsible for ensuring food safety by verifying compliance in nearly a million businesses nationwide. Along with these 100,000 surveillance activities, CID investigators have initiated over 6,000 criminal and other investigations, coordinated with the Enforcement and Litigation Division in OIEA to initiate criminal prosecutions or other actions to address repeat or egregious violators, and detained almost 26 million pounds of adulterated, misbranded, or otherwise non-compliant products. Over

the same period investigators also collected ground beef samples for pathogen testing, coordinated with FSIS co-workers and others on foodborne illness investigations, and helped OFO during recalls.

ANet/ICS from an Analyst's Point of View

As a Program Analyst in CID's Philadelphia office, Teresa Yenovkian has been a major user of the in-commerce data, and has also been instrumental in furthering its reliability since 2008. Yenovkian said, "It's hard to believe that I've been a part of ICS since almost the beginning. I began running reports and adding Notice of Warning letters into the system in July 2009. Now almost 7 years later, our CID investigators have achieved some amazing accomplishments using the system. We have seen improvements in the modules that we use daily, the guidance that Investigators follow in the field, the business risk-tier structure, and many other features. Some of the biggest changes occurred behind the scenes honing the Performance Measures that ensure and demonstrate that we are indeed protecting public health."

Planning and Training for the Future

We can be proud of their landmark achievements, but the work that lies ahead is more challenging than ever. The meat and poultry industry is rapidly developing new ways of marketing and distributing food products. OIEA remains committed to keeping abreast of these trends to ensure the safety of meat, poultry and egg products.

PHOTOS OF THE MONTH

FI Stephanie Mendoza Velasquez encouraged both shifts at M208A in Liberal, Kan. to wear purple on May 15, 2015, which was National Lupus Day. She has a daughter who was diagnosed with this disease.



Pictured, front row, left to right: Brenda Thomlinson, Armando Gomez, Whitney Brown, Irene Hurst. Pictured, middle row, left to right: Rodney Robinson, Maria Perez, Donato Saucedo, Russell Sova, Marcela Barajas, Tammy Cortes, Dr. Katrina Fox. Pictured, back row, left to right: Patrick Russell, Jesus Vazquez Rojas, Jerry Rogers, Josh Hernandez, Adan Estrada, James Beck, Lucas Thompson, Mark Cullum, Steven Farris.

Pictured, left to right: Stephanie Mendoza Velasquez, Monica Aguirre, Terry Mossholder, Modesta Martinez, Beronica Catillo, Azucena Vital.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **Directive 10,010.1 - Revision 4, Sampling Verification Activities for Shiga Toxin-Producing *Escherichia Coli* (STEC) in Raw Beef Products**
- **Directive 10,010.2, Verification Activities for Shiga Toxin-Producing *Escherichia Coli* (STEC) in Raw Beef Products**
- **Notice 50-15, Clarifications for the Raw Chicken Parts Sampling Project for Legs, Breasts, and Wings**

Administrative issues were also published.

- **Notice 44-15, Extension of Nationwide Beef and Veal Carcass Microbiological Baseline Data Collection Program - Actual Study**
- **Notice 45-15, Partner Government Agency (PGA) Message Set**

- **Notice 46-15, Migration to the Enterprise Active Directory (EAD) for All OFO Employees**
- **Notice 47-15, Verification of Non-Food Safety Consumer Protection Regulatory Requirements-Poultry Class Standards**
- **Notice 48-15, Temporary Suspension of All Enterprise Active Directory (EAD) Migration Activities**
- **Notice 49-15, LincPass and Multi-Factor Authentication Requirements**
- **Notice 51-15, Submitting FSIS Form 5110-1, Services Rendered Notice 52-15, Time and Attendance Reporting Procedures for Pay Period 19**
- **Notice 53-15, Performance Award Distribution for Non-Bargaining Unit Employees**
- **Notice 54-15, Fiscal Year 2016 Pay Periods and Official Payday Dates**

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

SNAPSHOTS

Alameda District

On May 21, FSIS employees participated in the Red Nose Day fundraising campaign and brought awareness to young people living in poverty. Alameda District team members pictured, from left to right: Dr. Syed Ali, Palmer Lopez, Myrtis Richmond, Nathalie Mason, Karla Enriquez, Charles Alcorn, Charles Wheatley, Juan Ramos. Photo contributed by Myrtis Richmond, OFO.



Jackson District

On May 21, FSIS employees participated in the Red Nose Day fundraising campaign and brought awareness to young people living in poverty. Jackson District team members pictured, sitting, from left to right: Divard Nelson, Owene Laird, Patricia Owens, Enid Rodriguez. Standing, from left to right: Nathan Fox, Mark Spear, Wayne Ingalls, Helen Southern, Dr. Winston Felton, Dr. Jennifer Shupe, Mary White. Photo contributed by Helen A. Southern, OFO.



Jackson District

FLS Willis Wright, III presented certificates and pins to two FSIS employees who have achieved 20 years of service. Left photo, pictured from left to right: Willis Wright, III; Dianne Nance. Right photo, pictured from left to right: Willis Wright, III; Cody Pritchard. Photo contributed by Willis Wright, III; OFO.



FROM THE **FIELD**



Philadelphia District

On May 31, 2015, personnel from the Hatfield Circuit showed their support for friends and family suffering from multiple sclerosis by running the MuckFest MS Philadelphia 5k in Newtown Square, Penn. Pictured, from left to right: Emma Litwiller, Teresa Peachey, Melissa Garrick, Sarai Rivera-Garcia, Juan C. Pavez, Daryl Peachey, W. John Rorrer, Derek Dealy. Photo contributed by Sarai Rivera-Garcia, OFO.

Atlanta District

The inspection team at 332-M in Augusta, Georgia commemorated Asian and Pacific American Heritage during the month of May. The team put together a luau-inspired feast representing the Islands of Hawaii. Inspection personnel are pictured wearing Hawaiian leis, which are the symbol of Hawaii to millions of visitors from around the world. Back row, pictured from left to right: Dora Hart, Tony Merritt, Kathy Hall, Vincent Crawford, Dr. Sumbry, Rosa Davis. Front row, pictured from left to right: Dr. Kysha Hendricks, Dianne Hayden, Patricia Carter. Not pictured: Thomas Kuykendall. Photo contributed by Dr. Kysha Hendricks, OFO.



OIEA Southwest Region



On May 7, 2015, representatives from OIEA participated in Trade Day, an event sponsored by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). This outreach event gave OIEA staff the chance to meet with other sister agencies, including U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and CBP. The event was also open to industries such as importers, transporters, shipping lines, freight forwarders and brokers. OIEA staff answered questions regarding requirements, policy and regulations and helped familiarize attendees with the FSIS website. Pictured, from left to right: Daniel O'Rourke, Frances Hayes, William Kaile. Photo contributed by Frances Hayes, OIEA.

SNAPSHOTS



OIEA Southeast Region

On April 11, 2015, Miami Dade College's Homestead Campus and the School of Education celebrated the "Day of the Young Child." OIEA representatives and the "Fight BAC" mascot provided attendees with food safety information. Pictured, second from the left: Bill Kaile, fifth from left: Frances Hayes, sixth from left: Daniel O'Rourke. Photo contributed by Daniel O'Rourke, OIEA.



Atlanta District

May 30, 2015, was the last day of operation for Est. P477 in Buena Vista, Ga. Many described the plant as a "home away from home." Two senior inspectors spent their entire assignment at that location for over 20 years. Pictured, from left to right: Dr. Constance Williams, Nick E. Mandese, Joe Arline, Minda Rigdon, Kenny Brown, Dian King, AB Cook, Carla Woodson. Photo contributed by Dr. Constance Williams, OFO.



FROM THE FIELD

OIEA Northeast Region

On June 11, 2015, OIEA Investigator Nicholas Papapietro (pictured) gave a food safety presentation to students in the Universal Pre-K Class at Rush Nursery School.

Nick is seen here using a puppet to help explain: bad bacteria found on foods and hands; the importance of clean, separate, cook and chill; and proper hand washing.

Each student also received a packet containing food safety information to review with their families. Photo contributed by Nicholas Papapietro, OIEA.



Headquarters

On July 16, 2015, Al Almanza spoke to interns about his career path and gave career advice to the next generation of FSIS employees. Almanza also answered dozens of questions from interns both at headquarters and in the field on a variety of topics, including the Agency's mission and opportunities for advancement. Photo contributed by Erin Kersse, OPACE.

Atlanta District

Former EIAO Roger Chermak was recognized during a Fort Lauderdale Circuit Work Unit Meeting. Mr. Chermak retired after 38 years of service with FSIS. Pictured, front row, from left to right: Elizabeth Tomlinson, Melissa Oquendo, Amy Barker, Roger Chermak, Rose Coley, Mariana Mitrache, Tom Ortolivo.

Pictured, back row, from left to right: Steven Kirkendall, Dennis Poplin, Robert Miranda, Mike Vaupel, Peggy Tiller, Jeffery Gray, Vincent Urban, Mark Wengerd, Jefferson Pierce, Hazelphine Townsend, Dr. Zayas-Cruz. Not pictured: John Derringer. Photo contributed by Amy Barker, OFO.



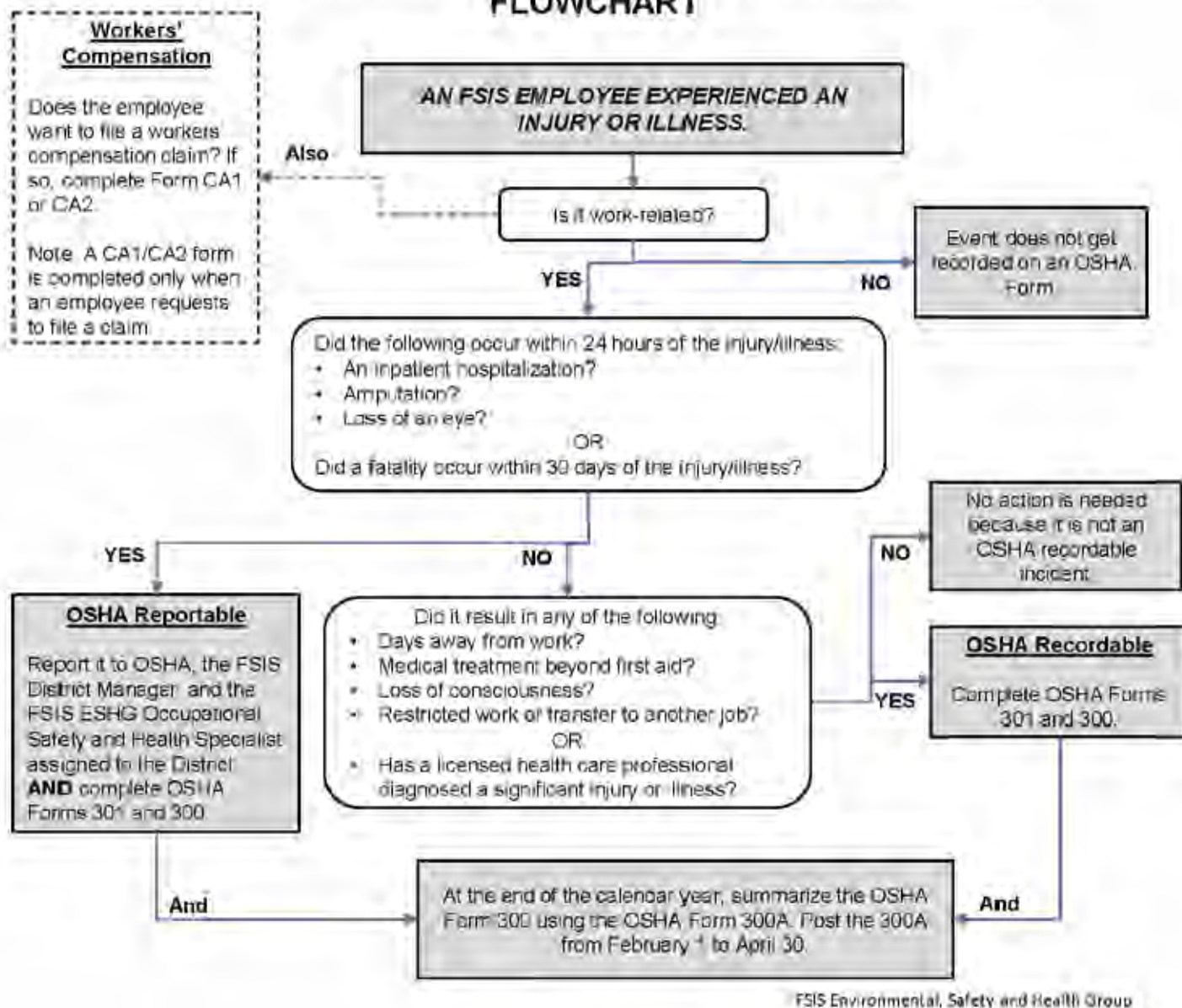
Recording Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses

By Josh Spencer, OM
Phone: (214) 767-9122

When an employee is injured on the job, supervisors have a responsibility to follow Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recordkeeping requirements. The

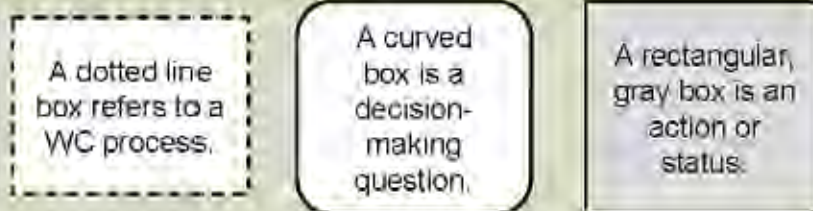
Environmental, Safety and Health Group (ESHG) has created the flow chart below to aid in determining if an injury should be recorded. It can be found on InsideFSIS at www.tinyurl.com/FSIS-ESHG under OSHA Topics and then OSHA Recordkeeping. Injury forms are also available.

FSIS EMPLOYEE INJURY AND ILLNESS RECORDKEEPING FLOWCHART



Instructions:

Please refer to www.tinyurl.com/FSIS-ESHG under OSHA Topics for supplemental information on the OSHA forms (301 report, 300 log, 300A summary). Further information on workers' compensation can be obtained by sending an email to: askworkerscomp@fsis.usda.gov or by calling 1-800-370-3747.



BlackBerry Transition to Smartphones – Update Network Password Cards

By Leigh Ann Acree, OCIO
Phone: (202) 418-8816

In December 2015, USDA will end support of BlackBerry Services. This means that FSIS BlackBerry users will transition from BlackBerry devices to new devices. Current BlackBerry users will be contacted to choose between two smartphone devices: Android Samsung Galaxy S5 or Apple iPhone 6. Once smartphones have arrived, users will be notified by email and provided with further instructions. Smartphones

are currently being deployed to current BlackBerry users, and this effort will continue over the next few months. In anticipation of the new smartphones, a foldable business card is being issued with instructions on how to update the network password on the smartphone. When the FSIS network password is changed (or upon a password reset), users will need to update that password on their smartphones in order to continue to receive emails through the mail apps.



New Web Ordering/Warehouse Management System

(For Field Personnel/Inspectors ONLY)

Effective Monday, October 5, 2015, the Materiel Management Service Center (MMSC) will be switching to a new field supply ordering system called the Warehouse Management System (WMS). It will replace the current Advanced Web Ordering (AWO) customer online system.

All existing customer numbers will remain the same; however, customers will need to use their email address for the initial sign-in. If you have problems logging into the new system, please contact MMSC at 1-877-576-6329 and a WMS technician will assist you.

2016 Calendar Orders

(For Field Personnel/Inspectors ONLY)

The 2016 office supply calendars will not be available until mid-October.

Due to the new field supply ordering system, the Materiel Management Service Center (MMSC) is asking customers not to submit any calendar orders until after Monday, October 12, to assure orders are received and delivered in a timely manner. For additional information please contact Inga McNeil, OM, at (301) 504-4227.

NPIS Notes

Question of the Month

Will current GS-8 Consumer Safety Inspectors have to compete for positions if their plant converts to NPIS?

If a plant converts to NPIS, GS-8 CSIs will not have to compete for positions.

NPIS Mailbox

FSIS has set up a mailbox for any employee inquiries about NPIS. The NPIS mailbox is a one-stop shop to find answers to questions regarding the new poultry inspection system.

All questions will be collected and triaged among four senior management officials, who will review them and provide responses in the shortest amount of time possible. Questions and responses are being tracked and posted on *InsideFSIS*.

If you have questions about NPIS, send them to askNPIS@fsis.usda.gov.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE INFORMATION POSTERS AVAILABLE MATERIAL MANAGEMENT SERVICE CENTER (MMSC)

**"A harassment-free work environment
is not a privilege; it is a right.
No employee is expected to endure any form
of harassment in the FSIS workplace."**

—Deputy Under Secretary Almanza

To request workplace violence posters for your duty location, please fax the request to MMSC at 301-394-0300. Please provide your contact information, address, quantity and item number (AD-1135A). If you have any questions, please contact Venita Jacobs at 1-877-576-6329 or Pam Veal at 301-504-3995.

The Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Program is providing a resources label, which can be placed on the lower right corner of existing posters. To request a copy of the label, please email workplaceviolenceprevention@fsis.usda.gov.

FSIS Laboratory Gets Accreditation

By Jenny Scifres, OPHS
Phone: (706) 546-2337

In April 2015, after 2 years of intense preparation, the Office of Public Health Science (OPHS) Accredited Laboratory Program (ALP) gained accreditation as a proficiency training (PT) Provider under the ISO/IEC 17043 standard.

The ALP accredits non-federal laboratories for the analysis of food chemistry and chemical residues in meat and poultry products. The ALP administers a rigorous PT program to evaluate laboratory performance. For this testing, the contaminant of interest is added to either meat or poultry samples. The samples are shipped to the participating laboratories where the samples are analyzed. The laboratories return the analytical results to the ALP for statistical evaluation for the PT event. The laboratories receive scores for their performance based their success at correctly identifying and determining the concentration of the contaminants in the sample. This evaluation ensures that participating laboratories deliver high quality and dependable results.

The ALP is the one of very few accredited PT Providers in the federal government and the only one for food chemistry and chemical residues in meat and poultry products. The ALP management and staff will continue to improve the program with the goal of expanding the available PT samples to analyze for veterinary medications. If you are interested in more information about this program, contact us at alp@fsis.usda.gov or visit the ALP website at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/science/laboratories-and-procedures/accredited-laboratories/accredited-laboratories>.



FSIS Retirees: Sept. 1-30, 2015

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Abramowicz, Christina, SVMO	Selbyville, DE	4	Hillman, James A., FI-S	Salisbury, MD	8
Adams, Susan E., Prog. Support Asst.	Washington, DC	11	Huggins, William C., SVMO	Ozark, AR	18
Bakeman, James C., FI-PP	Monticello, MN	29	Jagdish Babu, Kolar, SVMO	Butterfield, MN	29
Barnett, David M., SVMO	Athens, GA	31	Maher, Patrick R., LCSi	Austin, MN	29
Ferrell, Barbara, CSI	Chattanooga, TN	25	Musick, Randy, FI-S	Kelso, WA	3
Floyd, Darlene, CSI	Shelbyville, TN	21	Palmer, John M., CSI	Athens, GA	20
Guillot, Lydia M., SVMO	Lexington, KY	25	Pearman, Franklin D., FI-S	Arkansas City, KS	11
Harper, Beverly R., CSI	Batesburg, SC	30	Rodriguez, Jesus G., CSI	Lubbock, TX	30
Heflin, David A., CSI	Wilkesboro, NC	30	Tucker, Keith L., FI-S	Springdale, AR	17
			Unger, Warren E., CSI	New Oxford, PA	39

Feds Fighting Hunger in 2015!

By Jennifer Dallis, OCIO
Phone: (202) 692-4206

For many people, having food readily available can be a challenge. Feds Feed Families (FFF) helps food banks and pantries stay stocked during the summer months when there is a decrease in donations but an increase in need. Last year, federal employees donated 14.8 million pounds of food and we are asking for your help again this year!

You can contribute in several ways. You can bring both perishable and non-perishable items to local food banks. To

find a food pantry near you please visit www.ampleharvest.org/fff. You can also participate in various Agency or program area events.

Find additional information at <http://fsissp01/sites/Workgroups/FFF/default.aspx>. The SharePoint site contains pertinent information on what items to donate, links to local food banks and a calendar of events for the exciting activities we have planned for this year's FFF campaign. Let us work together to fight hunger!



Photo contributed by Robert Witte, OIEA.

Food Drive for Feds Feeds Family (FFF) Campaign

By Robert Witte, OIEA
Phone: (402) 344-5059

On June 30, 2015, FSIS staff in the Zorinsky Federal Building (Omaha, Nebraska) participated in a food drive event for the FFF campaign. The event was a pot-luck

style breakfast where volunteers donated various dishes for a breakfast buffet. All FSIS staff members were then encouraged to grab some breakfast food during their break, and donate non-perishable food items or make a cash donation for the campaign. The event generated more than 200 pounds of food!

More Ways to Donate

For more information on upcoming Feds Feed Families events throughout FSIS, please visit:

1. **SharePoint:** <http://fsissp01/sites/Workgroups/FFF/default.aspx>
2. **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/opace.fedsfeedfamilies?fref=ts>
3. **Local food bank:** FeedingAmerica.org
4. **Fresh Food Donations:** Visit AmpleHarvest.org to search for a local food pantry drop off location.
5. **Online Donations**
 - STEP 1: On your personal computer – Go online to your favorite online food retailer
 - STEP 2: Select the items you want to donate
 - STEP 3: Ship donation to your local food bank/pantry



Why an Individual Development Plan

By Mary Alvarez, OFO
Phone: (510) 337-5000

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a tool available to all federal employees that aligns training and competencies with employee's targeted goals. A strong IDP can assist you in training to reach the next step of your career plan. Even if you're just looking to gain a little more experience on a new procedure, an IDP is a great tool for organizing training with a more experienced colleague.

An IDP requires a supervisor and employee working together to chart desired goals. If you are interested in creating an IDP, start by having a conversation with your

supervisor. Make sure to explain your career goals and discuss what training you may need to accomplish those goals.

For more information about creating an IDP, see FSIS Directive 4410.3 or log on to AgLearn. Instructions for creating an IDP in AgLearn can be found at <https://aglearn.usda.gov/customcontent/USDA-AGLEARN-IDP/CreatingUpdatingSubmittingAnIDP-IM-v2%20TC.pdf>. For general information about training and using AgLearn, contact your designated training officer or point of contact listed at <http://www.aglearn.usda.gov/LandingPage/popups/contact.html>.

Preventing Equipment Theft During Travel

By Jennifer Dallis, OCIO
Phone: (202) 692-4206

At FSIS, within the past 2 years, 55 laptops were reported either stolen or lost. Never assume your laptop is safe in your car, hotel room, airport or conference center. Protect your laptop and sensitive data by following these guidelines.

Cars

Never leave your laptop in a vehicle where a potential thief can see it through the window. Place your laptop in the trunk and use your cable lock to secure it to the trunk lid so that thieves can't take it easily even if they manage to open the trunk.

Hotels

If you're going to leave a laptop computer in your hotel room, remember to secure it. A hotel safe can be used to secure the laptop when not in use. Alternatively, bring a secure laptop cable lock and use it. Remember: locks only work if you use them properly. Locks are secured in place with a key or combination lock attached to a rubberized metal cable. The end of the cable has a small loop that allows the cable to be looped around a strong immovable object, such as a heavy table. If you do not have a safe in your room or are unable to acquire a laptop cable lock, some hotels will allow you to use the hotel safe or safe deposit boxes at the front desk.

Protect Information

If your laptop is stolen, you could lose much more than just the hardware. Protect all of your data by backing it up.

You should use your individual local area network drives to store files to reduce the amount of data on your computer and also to prevent data loss as the information is backed up for disaster recovery. Your FSIS laptop has full disk encryption to prevent theft of data contents. When you step out of your room, make sure you lock your laptop screen. You can do this by pressing the Windows logo key (located to the left of the space bar) and L simultaneously.

Airports

It is reported that an estimated 637,000 laptops are stolen each year from airports. Do not pack your laptop in checked baggage. Carry it on the plane. The best way to protect your laptop is to keep it in your possession at all times and not let it out of your sight. There is no better security than a watchful eye.

Make Security a Habit

People are the weakest link in the security chain. Get into the habit of locking up your laptop when you're not working on it or when storing it. Use common sense when traveling and try to stay in physical contact with your laptop at all times.

If you have questions about laptop security, please contact the FSIS Security Operation Center (SOC) at OCIOSecurityOperationsCenter@fsis.usda.gov.

To report lost or stolen equipment, please contact the 24 Hour Incident Hotline: (866) 905-6890 or cyber.incidents@usda.gov.

>>> **RECALLS**

July 30	New Jersey firm recalls squab products produced without benefit of import inspection.
July 31	Massachusetts firm recalls turkey and pork products distributed without the opportunity for inspection.
Aug. 3	Illinois firm recalls sausage product due to misbranding.
Aug. 7	California firm recalls chicken products due to misbranding.
Aug. 11	Idaho firm recalls jambalaya products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Aug. 13	Washington firm recalls pork product due to possible <i>Salmonella</i> contamination.
Aug. 14	Illinois firm recalls steak and chicken products distributed without the benefit of inspection and due to undeclared allergens.
Aug. 17	Kentucky firm recalls beef tallow products produced without benefit of import inspection.
Aug. 25	South Carolina firm recalls turkey bacon products due to possible adulteration.
Aug. 26	California firm recalls duck products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Aug. 27	Washington firm recalls pork product due to possible <i>Salmonella</i> contamination.
Aug. 27	Minnesota firm recalls beef products due to misbranding.
Aug. 28	Washington firm recalls chicken wrap products due to misbranding and undeclared allergen.
Aug. 31	Florida firm recalls corned beef products produced without benefit of import inspection.
Aug. 31	Illinois firm recalls beef products due to misbranding.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

GET ANSWERS
AT **AskFSIS**

AskFSIS is a web-based technology and policy question-and-answer forum on topics such as exporting, labeling, inspection, programs and procedures.

In addition, askFSIS offers Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds that link back to the Q&As. Visit <http://askfsis.custhelp.com/> to view recently posted topics.

Improve Agency Communications: Take the Survey!

By Yolande Kennedy
Phone: (301) 504-0905

The Agency needs your feedback to improve internal communications! You can help by completing the survey below and faxing your response to (301) 504-0912 or emailing your response to OPACESurvey@fsis.usda.gov. The survey is available online at <https://www.fsis.usda.com/se/5D6EC10B40EC3A32>. All survey responses are due

by September 30, 2015. To assure anonymity, individual identification will not be documented. If you choose to email your completed survey, your responses and identity will remain confidential. The survey results and follow-up actions will be featured in upcoming editions of *The Beacon* and the Administrator's Blog. If you have additional questions or comments regarding this survey, please contact Yolande Kennedy at yolanda.kennedy@fsis.usda.gov or (301) 504-0905.

1. Please select which FSIS area/office in which you work.
 - ☐ Headquarters (Washington, D.C. and Beltsville, MD offices)
 - ☐ Field (including District/Regional Offices, In-plant, State Office)
 - ☐ Laboratory
2. Is your current position supervisory, manager, or non-supervisory?
 - ☐ Supervisory (rating)
 - ☐ Manager (non-rating supervisor or team-lead)
 - ☐ Non-Supervisory Field Employee
 - ☐ Non-Supervisory Headquarters Employee
3. Please select the Agency communication vehicles that you prefer to use.
(Please select your top three preferred methods of communication, in order of preference.)

Agency Communication	1st Preferred Communication	2nd Preferred Communication	3rd Preferred Communication
The Beacon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wednesday Newsline	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Town Halls	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
User Notices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Administrator's Blog	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
InsideFSIS Intranet website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FSIS main website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supervisor (email &/or at WUM)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
District/Regional Office e-mails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postal mail to your home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. In the last 6 months, how informed do you feel about current activities throughout the Agency?
 - ☐ Very Well Informed
 - ☐ Somewhat Informed
 - ☐ Not Very Well Informed
 - ☐ Not Informed at All

5. How do you feel about the frequency of Agency communications?

- ☐ Too often
☐ Just right
☐ Not often enough

6. Please rate your level of interest in the following topics.

Topics	Very Interested	Somewhat Interested	Not at all Interested
FSIS Program Policy Updates (e.g. inspection changes, sampling guidance)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Resources Policy Updates (e.g. staffing, pay/leave guidance, transit benefits)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Departmental/Agency Initiatives (e.g. employee engagement, special emphasis programs, CFC, Feds Feed Families)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outreach Activities (e.g. food safety education, community service)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training Information (e.g. Tech Tips, <i>AgLearn</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Features (e.g. FSIS Retirees, Photo of the Month, Awards) Please specify:_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Are you familiar with the Agency term “One Team, One Purpose” as it relates to you?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

8. Do you believe your daily work aligns and supports the goals of the Agency?

- ☐ Yes
☐ Somewhat
☐ No

9. Do you feel like you are an important part of the FSIS team?

- ☐ Yes
☐ Somewhat
☐ No

10. What suggestions do you have on how the Agency may improve communications with employees? What topics would you like to see more information about?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.

Inside This Issue

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



Photo contributed by Linda Eckrich, OPACE.

Current and past members of the Food Safety Education Staff pose for a group picture to celebrate USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline's 30th anniversary on September 28. Pictured, sitting from left to right, Bob Tuversen, Chris Bernstein, Barbara O'Brien, Diane VanLonkhuyzen and Susan Conley. Back row, from left to right, Marianne Gravely, Nadine Shaw, Cindy Roberts, Linda Eckrich, CiCi Williamson, Janice López-Muñoz, Clara Yuvienco, Tina Hanes, Sandy King, Kathy Bernard, Jason Waggoner and Eileen Ferruggiaro.

Healthy People 2020

By: Leo O'Drudy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-8693

The June issue of *The Beacon* highlighted two critical Agency planning documents that each employee should understand. Why? Because each employee's individual performance plan is shaped by the Annual Performance Plan (APP), which is shaped by the 5-year Strategic Plan (currently the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan). In turn, the Strategic Plan's Goal 1 initiatives (and other goals as they apply) are shaped by a broader, multi-agency initiative called Healthy People 2020, which *The Beacon* examines this month. All these plans use specific goals, some measured with numbers, to provide objective standards to see whether our Agency, our program areas, and/or each of us as individuals are succeeding in the various ways we all contribute to our mission of protecting public health.

So how does Healthy People 2020 fit into this picture? It provides science-based, 10-year

national objectives for improving the health of all Americans in fields as diverse as adolescent health, diabetes and violence prevention, and food safety is included too. Every 10 years, a new Healthy People initiative is released by our partners at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the wide array of goals are meant to broadly improve the health of all Americans. Naturally, USDA and all relevant agencies and partners had input into the goals as they were being crafted.

The food safety related targets in Healthy People 2020 come in six broad categories, most of which have specific goals within the category:

1. Reduce infections caused by key pathogens commonly transmitted through food;
2. Reduce the number of outbreak-associated infections due to Shiga-toxin producing

Continued on page 5 ...

The Beacon is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

Dec. issue – due Nov. 1
Jan. issue – due Dec. 1
Feb. issue – due Jan. 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to email.

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN

As we begin Fiscal Year 2016, I want to remind you about an opportunity to nominate colleagues for the 2016 Administrator's Awards for Excellence. These prestigious awards recognize contributions from FSIS employees who demonstrate hard work and go above and beyond to advance the Agency's mission to protect public health. Anyone in any position or grade is eligible to receive an award, whether they work in a plant, a lab or Headquarters. I am hoping to see many nominations from the field. **Please make sure to send your nominations soon, since they are due by close of business Friday, October 30, 2015.**

The 2016 Administrator's Awards categories are as follows: (1) Excellence in Mission Results, (2) Excellence in Workplace Harmony, (3) Excellence in Safety and Health, (4) Excellence in Civil Rights and Diversity, (5) Excellence in Labor Management Collaboration (6) Administrator's Award: Employee of the Year, (7) Administrator's Award: Leader of the Year, and (8) Administrator's Award: Customer Service.

After a lapse of the Administrator's Awards ceremonies for several years, we were able to restore the awards program last March and honored several teams and individuals who made significant contributions to FSIS. In addition, some of last year's recipients of the Administrator's Awards were recently selected to receive the Department-wide 2015 Abraham Lincoln Honor Awards, previously known as the Secretary's Honor Awards.

I strongly encourage you to nominate someone who has demonstrated a noteworthy accomplishment and has significantly contributed to the achievement of FSIS goals and objectives. Thank you for all of your hard work every day and I look forward to seeing you when we recognize 2016 Administrators Awards for Excellence recipients in the spring.

Nomination materials can be accessed at: <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=AdministratorsAwardsforExce1005&checkin=pass>.

For more information, please contact Hilton "Tre" Felton, HR Specialist, Performance Management Branch, by phone at (202) 708-8169 or by email at Hilton.Felton@fsis.usda.gov.



Al Almanza

Submit your 2016 Administrator's Awards for Excellence Nominations Today!

FSIS employees at all grade levels are eligible for Administrator's Awards for Excellence Awards. Nominations are due by close of business Friday, October 30, 2015, and the materials can be accessed at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=AdministratorsAwardsforExce1005&checkin=pass>.

Nomination form in PDF version available at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/DocumentViewerServlet?filename=FSISIntranet/News/Documents/fsisprdb20151001040949.pdf>.

For more information, please contact Hilton "Tre" Felton, Human Resource Specialist, Performance Management Branch, by phone at (202) 708-8169 or by email at Hilton.Felton@fsis.usda.gov.

Kristin Holt: Collaboration is an Important Component to Preventing Foodborne Illness

By Whitney Joy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 690-3881

Working with our public health partners across the federal government and with other stakeholder groups helps FSIS accomplish its mission. Dr. Kristin Holt has served as the FSIS liaison to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) since 2001. In this role, she facilitates communication between FSIS and CDC and provides scientific and technical input on public health and food safety issues related to FSIS-regulated products. Holt has been with FSIS since 1983 and has served in a variety of roles in FSIS Field Operations in Georgia, including Inspector-in-Charge at a poultry slaughter plant and Deputy District Manager.

Holt participates in numerous joint projects between FSIS and CDC as well as other organizations. She is a recipient of a FSIS Administrator's Award for Excellence in Mission Results for her contribution in FSIS' development of and participation in the Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration (IFSAC). IFSAC is a workgroup formed in 2011 between CDC, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and FSIS to investigate new attribution methods for food borne illness and develop a harmonized approach across all three



agencies. Part of Holt's duty in working with IFSAC is to serve as a team lead in developing a template for annual reporting for USDA/CDC/FDA attribution foodborne illness estimates. This is an important project because "as it is updated over time people will be able to track improvements in illness attribution," Holt said.

Holt also participates in other food safety initiatives, such as The Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network (FoodNet) which is an interagency agreement with CDC that tracks trends for infections transmitted commonly through food. She also takes part in the Integrated Foodborne Outbreak Response and Management (InFORM) Conference, which focuses on surveillance and outbreak detection of enteric diseases caused by contaminated food, water and animals. Additionally, Holt is a member of the Healthy People 2020 initiative, which she describes as a "CDC-led effort to create public health objectives in many areas that affect human health and [of] which food safety is only one area."

Holt holds a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from Louisiana State University and a Master of Public Health degree with a focus in epidemiology from Emory University.

Dr. Kristin Holt provides a briefing in San Diego, Calif., on FSIS collaborations with CDC.

Photos contributed by Dr. Kristin Holt, OPHS.



October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

By Mark J. Benedict, OPPD
Phone: (202) 205-7913

The National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) 2015 national theme is "Disability is only part of who I am." The Atlanta district office is taking the lead for FSIS in commemorating NDEAM on October 21, 2015, with a field-focused activity that will include an initiative to encourage employees to self-identify any disability. There will be a guest speaker from the USDA TARGET Center (via webinar), information packets, box lunches and a door prize drawing. For more information, contact Evette Manrique by email at Evette.manrique@fsis.usda.gov.

For 2015, USDA and FSIS have set a goal that 4 percent of new hires have a targeted disability and that 10 percent of new hires have some reportable disability. Those are very aggressive goals. The Agency wants all new hires, including those with disabilities, to look forward to a full career experience including advancement and empowerment.

The link to the closed captioned NDEAM video will be posted, NDEAM video will be posted to the USDA YouTube site once it is available; please watch for it. For further information or questions regarding the FSIS Disability Employment Program, please contact Mark Benedict, FSIS DEPM, at (202) 205-7913 or by email at DSEPM@fsis.usda.gov.



FSIS Retirees: Oct. 1-31, 2015

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Albenzi, Thomas G., CSI	El Paso, Texas	16	Kressley, Phyllis Elaine, CSI	Nashville, Ark.	17
Barr, Vickie R., CSI	Sedalia, Mo.	15	Lagrone, Jr., Kenneth W., SVMO	Beardstown, Ill.	27
Brockett, Candice, Mgmt. Asst.	Washington, D.C.	18	Lockman, James F., Lead CSI	Orland, Calif.	11
Cheshire, Keith W., FI-S	Dobson, N.C.	29	Maral, Cynthia A., CSI	Rome, N.Y.	29
Dawkins, Harold Dean, Security Splst.	Beltsville, Md.	40	Mockovciak, Dana E., CSI	Bridgewater, Va.	30
Duff, Walker J., CSI	Marion, Ind.	42	Mullins, Timothy W., CSI	Heavener, Okla.	9
Fentress, Cheryl, Financ. Syst. Analyst	Beltsville, Md.	34	O'Connor, Larry M., SVMO	Murrayville, Ga.	18
Fowler, Dorothy, FI-S	Athens, Ga.	25	Roby, Domenica M., CSI	Augusta, Ga.	4
Garrett, Melinda A., FI-S	Lufkin, Texas	13	Royster, Kim L., FI-S	Zanesville, Ohio	15
Hammonds, Martina, FI-S	Ashland, Ala.	30	Tudor, Jill E., FI-PP	Selbyville, Del.	10
Harper, Beverly R., CSI	Batesburg, S.C.	30	Turner, Rhoda A., FI-S	Chattanooga, Tenn.	19
Hessel, Michael D., CSI	Hudson, S.D.	30	Valentour, Archie, CSI	Batesville, Ark.	26
Kolemba, Charles, SVMO	Shelbyville, Tenn.	31	Vote, Loretta, CSI		
	Richlandtown, Pa.	29			

PHOTOS OF THE MONTH



Pictured, back row, from left to right: Tom Beacorn, Bill Cray, Carolyn McGaughey, Ron Blakely and Frankie Beacorn. Pictured, front row, from left to right: Tracey Hardy, Jenny Scifres and Kay Stapleton.



Photos contributed by Jenny Scifres, OPHS.

Kay Stapleton and Frankie Beacorn practice CPR and AED skills.

Office of Public Health Science (OPHS) employees at the Russell Research Center (RRC) in Athens, Ga., participated in First Aid/CPR/AED training. The course was taught in-house by an OPHS employee, Jenny Scifres, who is certified by the American Red Cross as an instructor. Jenny gained instructor status specifically to train employees at any FSIS laboratory location. More RRC OPHS employees volunteered to receive training that is scheduled in the near future.

Healthy People

... Continued from page 1

- E. coli* O157, or *Campylobacter*, *Listeria*, or *Salmonella* species associated with food commodity;
3. Prevent an increase in the proportion of nontyphoidal *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter jejuni* isolates from humans that are resistant to antimicrobial drugs;
 4. Reduce severe allergic reactions to food among adults with a food allergy diagnosis;
 5. Increase the proportion of consumers who follow key food safety practices including the Clean – Separate – Cook – Chill message;
 6. Increase the proportion of fast-food and full-service restaurants that follow food safety practices that prevent foodborne illness outbreaks.

Healthy People 2020 makes it easier than ever to use its information by replacing the traditional print publication with an interactive web site. The site allows users to "drill

down" into specifics about each goal, such as data for the objective, details about the methodology and measurement of the objective, direct links for comparison of that Healthy People 2020 element to the corresponding section (and data) from the previous version (Healthy People 2010), and, in an emphasis that is new for Healthy People, spotlights on social disparities and inequities in that area (if any) that the goal seeks to help address.

It's not just the federal government that uses Healthy People 2020. State and local government, private sector organizations such as companies and charities, all use it as a tool for to measure and compare progress. Drawing on the best available science, using challenging but measurable and achievable objectives, and driven a strong commitment to food safety and public health, we can all help achieve Healthy People 2020's objectives by continuing to do what we already do: work hard and smart to achieve the goals of our APP in our jobs each day.

For more on Healthy People 2020's food safety objectives, visit <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/food-safety/objectives>.

During National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 to October 15), we recognize the contributions made and the important presence of Hispanic and Latino Americans.



FSIS Strategic Performance Working Group: Identifying Challenges and Collaborating for Improvement

By Karen Hunter, OPACE
Phone: (202) 690-4166

The Strategic Performance Working Group (SPWG) was created by the Administrator to establish a process for performing critical performance reviews of public health information and data. These reviews help to identify deficiencies and successes that warrant particular attention or action from the Agency. The SPWG also solicits and coordinates ideas within the Agency on how to improve agency performance and support collaborative efforts to meet the Healthy People 2020 goals to improve food safety and reduce foodborne illness.

The SPWG focused its first series of activities on identifying potential interventions or actions to decrease FSIS-attributable Salmonellosis. It decided on that focus because: 1) *Salmonella* is the pathogen that contributes the most to the FSIS 'All-Illness' performance measure; and 2) since the All Illness Measure was created, *Salmonella* illness estimates had continued at a steady high or slightly increased rate despite FSIS interventions. To gather ideas about actions FSIS could take to decrease Salmonellosis, the SPWG hosted a series of agency teleconferences and an interactive blog with participation by FSIS personnel throughout the agency. On the basis of the ideas and input received via those teleconferences

and the blog, the SPWG developed a priority list of actions, which became the formal *Salmonella* Action Plan.

With the *Salmonella* Action Plan well underway, the SPWG took on a new challenge: implementing a multi-phase project to address *Listeria monocytogenes* (*Lm*) at retail. Although FSIS has made significant progress in driving down the level of *Lm* in FSIS-regulated products, the incidence of *Lm*-related illnesses is still above the Healthy People 2020 goal. In an effort to further control *Lm* along the farm to fork continuum, FSIS and the Food and Drug Administration jointly developed a risk assessment in 2013. This risk assessment identified practices in retail delicatessens that can increase the risk that food can be contaminated with *Lm*. In June 2015, FSIS released "The FSIS Best Practices Guideline for Controlling *Lm* in Retail Delicatessens." It is still unclear, however, how widely retailers have adopted the recommendations in the guideline or whether adopted actions have been effective in controlling *Lm*. The SPWG will be discussing how to best ensure that the materials are widely distributed, how to measure success and determine what oversight FSIS can (or should) provide to contribute to a decrease in illnesses caused by *Lm*.

As work progresses on both of these priority issues, the SPWG will continue to analyze data and seek out knowledge gaps and performance challenges in an effort to meet the Agency's mission to protect public health.

How the FSIS Enterprise Governance Process Benefits the Agency

By Gregory E. DiNapoli, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9945

For years, the FSIS management council received suggestions from staff on how to improve the way we do business. These ideas were vetted through ten different committees before being sent back to the full management council for approval or denial. In 2009, the FSIS Enterprise Governance Process was established to streamline the process and review proposals in a much more efficient manner, using three committees (also known as boards) instead of ten.

The Enterprise Steering Board handles primarily policy related activities. The Enterprise Architecture Board handles mostly IT related issues. The Enterprise Investment Board (EIB) manages all funding related issues. The entire process begins when an FSIS manager or employee submits a request that may require technological support or funding. The request is submitted to an Assistant Administrator

for entry into the governance process and vetting by the appropriate board. If approved, the proposal advances to the FSIS Management Council for final review.

The three boards meet once a week to prioritize the proposals received for review. Under the Enterprise Governance process, the Agency easily defines which issues may require a more corporate focus, or which ones can be managed with program area discretion. Because the proposals are vetted through the three boards, the Management Council can be confident of the merit and necessity of the proposals presented for final approval. The process is considerably more efficient and avoids costly hours spent trying to decide which initiatives to pursue. The process inherently lends itself to greater consistency. The Enterprise Governance process utilizes proper channels for the review of new ideas and proposals in a transparent environment for the Boards, the management council, FSIS staff and stakeholders.



Pictured, from left to right: Rodney Manson, Eboni Luck, Kim Toppin, Marnie Miller, Madonna Montgomery, Joseph Pishioneri, Gabrielle James, Valerie Dinkel, Angela Thomas, Megan Robey, Brenda Barber, Thomas Nasvytis, Donna Hardy and Paul Merritt.

Photo contributed by Dr. Quita Bowman Blackwell, OFO.

The Office of Administrative Services, Procurement Management Branch Receives an Award

*By Angela Thomas, OAS
Phone: (301) 504-4211*

On Thursday, June 11, 2015, the Office of Administrative Services (OAS) Procurement Management Branch (PcMB) received the 2015 USDA Special Achievement Award- Small Business Programs from USDA Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU). OSDBU established the Small Business and AbilityOne Award Program to recognize the outstanding

work achieved in the small business community to support USDA in achieving its mission.

The procurement team was recognized for their contribution to promote the participation of small businesses in helping USDA achieve its socioeconomic goals totaling 55 percent of contract awards. You may contact the procurement team at procurement@fsis.usda.gov to learn more about involving small businesses to support your program needs.

NPIS Train-the-Trainers Session

*By Dr. Quita Bowman Blackwell, OFO
Phone: (202) 205-0081*

These NPIS 3-day certified trainers are delivering the training to in-plant inspection program personnel (IPP) in establishments converting to NPIS. We appreciate their dedication and applaud their hard work to prepare the Agency for this significant transition.

Pictured, OFO NPIS 3-day trainers.

*Photo contributed by
Dr. Quita Bowman Blackwell, OFO.*



Working Together to Stop Domestic Violence

Contributed by Kesha Rawlings and Kerrie Tao, OM
Phone: (202) 403-0422
Source: www.ncadv.org

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Under the leadership of the Office Management's (OM) Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Program, several FSIS offices are collaborating to raise awareness of domestic violence, an often hidden and serious problem. To help inform FSIS employees of the realities and options available for victims, the Domestic Violence Awareness Committee will sponsor a campaign this October.

Domestic violence is often defined as the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault and/or other abusive behavior perpetrated by an intimate partner against another. There is no "typical victim." Victims of domestic violence come from all walks of life, varying age groups, all backgrounds, all communities, all education levels, all economic levels, all cultures, all ethnicities, all religions, all abilities and all lifestyles.

Did you know?

Nearly 3-in-10 women and 1-in-10 men in the United States have experienced rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner or former partner. All too

often, warning signs that are noticed by family, friends and co-workers are not questioned or acted on. And, tragically, domestic violence results in physical injury, psychological trauma and sometimes even death. However, you can do something to help.

We encourage employees to wear purple as a sign of solidarity with victims, and to spread the message of our activities. Please be on the lookout for Domestic Violence Awareness campaign materials that spotlight resources, which can assist victims and support systems in coping

with abusive relationships. Even if domestic violence doesn't affect you personally, please help us spread the word about this issue and community agencies and/or partners that provide victim assistance.



What are sources of help?

If you or someone you know is being abused, please contact The National Domestic Violence Hotline at: 1-800-799-SAFE(7233). The Hotline provides services in English and Spanish and is staffed 24/7 by trained counselors who provide crisis assistance and information about shelters, legal advocacy, health care centers and counseling. You can find more information about domestic violence at the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence website: <http://www.ncadv.org>.

If you need more information or have any questions, please contact the helpline at (877) 987-3747 or by email at workplaceviolenceprevention@fsis.usda.gov.

New Poultry Inspection System

NPIS Notes

Question of the Month

What will the rotation schedule be for CSIs in NPIS plants working in the CI and VI duties, every hour, every 2 hours?

There is no set time frame for the in-plant rotation for CSIs in NPIS plants. The rotational pattern will be worked out locally amongst inspectors in the plant and supervision, consist with the LMA.

Alameda District/OIEA Western Region

In May 2015, personnel from the OIEA CID Western Region, OFO Alameda District office, and the FSIS Human Resource office attended a recruitment event at Laney College in Oakland, Calif. Pictured, from left to right: Shaun Smith, Jaclynn Scrivner, Sharon Randle, Dr. Virginia Felix. Photo contributed by Shaun Smith, OIEA.



Des Moines District

On June 17, 2015, John Cottier, Kevin Wagner (pictured, far right) and Tommie Olson (pictured, second from right) conducted food safety outreach at Est. 00263M in Fort Atkinson, Wis. The FSIS personnel handed out and discussed food safety information in both Spanish and English pertaining to internal cooking temperatures, hand washing techniques and recommended refrigerator and freezer temperatures, as well as the Kitchen Companion booklet. Plant employees asked questions pertaining to food safety and shared personal stories about friends and family who have been affected by foodborne illness. Photo contributed by Tommie Olson, OFO.



OIEA Southwest Region

Federal/State Audit Branch staff members Dr. Donna Potts-Gill (pictured, right) and Deb Arthur (not pictured) attended the 13th Annual Preparedness Symposia in Omaha, NE on June 18, 2015. The symposium was sponsored by the Center for Preparedness Education to clarify local agency roles in a public health emergency. Photo contributed by Deb Arthur, OIEA.



FROM THE **FIELD**



Chicago District

On June 10-11, 2015, FSIS Human Resources Recruiting Specialists, Chicago District officials and the Canton Circuit Supervisor partnered with Ohio Means Jobs to recruit new FSIS Food Inspectors for hard-to-fill positions at a large poultry plant. Current FSIS personnel gave detailed information about Food Inspector duties and responsibilities, explained pay and benefits, and assisted candidates in applying through the USAJOBS website. Pictured, from left to right: Ben Tate, Corrine Calhoun, Ohio Means Jobs Recruiting Specialist Angie Francis, Robyn Eberly, Jeff Kish. Photo contributed by Charles Leslein, OFO.

Jackson District/OIEA Southeast Region

On June 24-26, 2015, Office of Data Integration and Food Protection (ODIFP), Food Defense Assessment Staff (FDAS) met with staff from the Jackson District Office and the Compliance and Investigation Division (CID) to promote awareness of food defense tools and resources, encourage adoption of food defense plans, and gather feedback to inform the food defense program at FSIS. The meeting included visits to nine establishments in the area, which provided insight as to how industry is implementing food defense plans and mitigation strategies. Pictured, from left to right: Angela Vivians, Dr. Lajoyce Hathorn, Sheryl Young, Dr. Philip Aman, China Pace, Edith Mitchell, Sheila Watts. Photo contributed by Carolyn Grant, ODIFP.



OIEA Southeast Region

Recently, OIEA CID Investigators presented Certificates of Appreciation for support provided by District 7 of the Tennessee Highway Patrol in food safety activities in the state of Tennessee for assisting in the investigation of a firm operating without federal inspection. Their assistance was instrumental in the positive outcome of the investigation. Pictured, from left to right: Marshall Williams, Lieutenant Greg Ragan (Tennessee Highway Patrol), Captain Wayne Sellers (Tennessee Highway Patrol), James Reed. Not pictured: Lieutenant Bill Ray, Trooper Nathan Henley, Trooper Travis Prater. Photo contributed by James Reed, OIEA.



FIRST SCRIPT PHARMACY BENEFITS PROGRAM

The initial correspondence package informs the injured worker, who completes a CA-1 for a Traumatic Injury of the program's benefits. For the employees' convenience, a temporary enrollment card is enclosed and can be utilized immediately. If the injured worker chooses to use the prescription plan, First Script will provide them with a package containing additional details about enrollment and benefits.

If you have any questions about the FIRST SCRIPT PHARMACY BENEFITS PROGRAM:
1-888-232-0791 Available 24/7

Understanding your Government Travel Charge Card

By Jeremy Roper, OCFO
Phone: (301) 344-0721

As a holder of a Government Travel Charge Card (GOVCC), you undertake the responsibility of spending government funds in your official capacity. You have the responsibility for:

- Maintaining your GOVCC in a safe and secure place when not on official travel;
- Monitoring your GOVCC statements and paying bill in full and on time;
- Tracking purchases while on official travel to ensure proper reimbursement to your account and identification of any fraudulent or unauthorized activity;
- Using your GOVCC while on authorized official travel for meals, lodging, rental cars and transportation.

The FSIS Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) performs oversight of your credit card use to ensure that cards are used appropriately and that delinquency for failure to pay your credit card bill does not take place. Specifically:

- Employees are required to pay their US Bank government charge card account in full by the end of the billing cycle, which ends on the 7th of each month

(unless the 7th falls on a holiday or non-business day, in which case the end of the billing cycle will be the following business day).

- The OCFO Financial Management Division (FMD) runs a delinquency report on the following business day after the end of the billing cycle.
 - o FMD will send out warning notices on the 22nd of each month to cardholders that are 15 -30 days past due and are at risk of becoming delinquent;
 - o All accounts over 30 days past due are considered delinquent, and cardholders will receive delinquency notices, via email, by the 13th of each month;
 - o Assistant Administrators and District Managers will be notified of delinquent cardholders within their programs/districts.
- The OCFO performs monthly audits of credit card transactions to identify suspect or unusual card activity, and may contact you for written justifications for specific purchases.

If you have any questions regarding use of your GOVCC, or your US Bank account please contact the Financial Services Center at 1-800-949-3964, or email at FSCGeneral@fsis.usda.gov.

CONCUR Resources for Every Traveler

Have you ever filed an interim voucher? What about changing your per diem entitlements because you decided to take annual leave? Some of the functions in Concur can be confusing the first time you complete them. Thankfully, there are resources available to help you when using Concur. All of these resources are located at <http://tinyurl.com/FSIS-CONCUR> (e-auth required).

Concur FAQ – Whether you're booking non-refundable tickets or adding lodging taxes, this document address common Concur issues and travel policy questions. It is constantly reviewed and updated by Financial Management Division (FMD) staff to ensure that it stays current.

Travel Tri-fold – This two page tri-fold covers the most common steps a user will encounter when using Concur. This is a nice guide to print out, fold and have at your desk for easy reference.

Concur User Manual – Do you have a nitty-gritty question about a process in Concur? This 120-page document might have the answer. This manual covers basic and advanced processes in painstaking detail. Whether you need help filling out an authorization, or preparing a pre-trip voucher with dynamic accounting, this is the document to pull up.

Pictorial Guides – Your Federal Agency Travel Administrators (FATAs) have designed pictorial guides that give step-by-step instructions on how to file a voucher and build an authorization. The pictures show what button to hit and when, ensuring you can complete basic tasks in Concur with confidence.

If you have gone through these resources and you haven't found an answer, you should contact your FATA. You can also contact the Financial Services Center (FSC) at FSCGeneral@fsis.usda.gov or 1-800-949-3964.

Utilizing the Employee Assistance Program Financial Services: Identity Theft and Fraud Resolution

By Jodi Hallstrom, OM
Phone: 1-800-222-0364

If you feel someone has used your identity to commit fraud, you must act quickly. There are a number of important steps that must be taken to protect yourself and your credit rating. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) has specialists standing by to help you navigate the complicated process of recovering from fraud. The comprehensive identity theft and fraud resolution program provides legal, financial and identity theft resolution services. You'll have one point of contact for resolving all your identity theft concerns.

EAP Financial Services is an interactive advocacy service that provides education, guidance, counseling and legal and financial assistance to victims of fraud-related crimes. These *free and confidential* EAP services can potentially save you thousands of dollars in legal expenses and countless hours of your valuable time.

- Fraud resolution counseling, deterrence and education;
- Assistance with notifying creditors and third parties of identity theft;
- Case file preparation;
- Notice and letter preparation;
- Assistance with identity theft affidavits, fraudulent account summaries and appropriate submission steps;
- Financial counseling;
- Legal document preparation assistance;
- Free legal consultations and discounts on legal services;
- Mediation assistance.

Expert Help When You Need It Most

Federal Occupational Health's (FOH) Identity Theft Specialists will also help you with the following emergency response activities:

1. Provide a Uniform ID Theft Affidavit and assist in completion/submission;
2. Furnish fraudulent account forms or letters for itemizing each fraudulent occurrence;
3. Direct you on where to report fraudulent activity and how to notify the local and Federal authorities, as well as creditor fraud departments;
4. Furnish contact information for the three major credit reporting agencies: TransUnion, Experian and Equifax;
5. Advise on how to obtain a free copy of your credit report now and every four months thereafter, and how to place a Fraud Alert and/or Credit Freeze (where allowable) on your file;
6. Provide an ID Theft Emergency Response Kit™
7. Educate you on how identity theft occurs and protective measures to avoid further damage to credit reputation and score

Identity theft assistance provides a variety of support services to guide employees and their family members through fraud-related emergencies. You can also call for tips on protecting your identity—an ounce of prevention can save you a lot of time and money.

Legal and Financial Help 24/7

Call the EAP 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at **1-800-222-0364** (TTY: 1-888-262-7848) or go online at www.foh4you.com and www.worklife4you.com. Specialists are standing by to assist you.

Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

Currently, many employees are in need of leave for personal or family medical emergencies. If you have annual leave that you could spare, you can help by donating it via the Leave Transfer Program. *The Beacon* will print the current list of leave recipients at various times but you can view the most current list now on InsideFSIS. In the "I Want To" box, select "Access Public Folders." Then click on the "Personnel" folder and select "Leave Transfer Program." In addition to a listing of approved leave recipients, you will find more information about donating leave, forms, rules, eligibility and requirements. For more information, contact Sonja Tomlinson in OM's Employment, Classification and Compensation Branch at (202) 690-0798.

CURRENT LIST OF LEAVE RECIPIENTS - Revised September 14, 2015

Recipient	Case Number	Program Area	State	Situation
(b) (6)	OFO-14-0061	OFO	VA	Serious Illness
	15-OFO-0037	OFO	NC	Surgery
	OFO-14-0025	OFO	KS	Surgery
	OFO-14-0015	OFO	CA	Family Illness
	OFO-13-0044	OFO	CA	Serious Illness/Surgery
	OCIO-14-0001	OCIO	VA	Family Illness
	15-OFO-0039	OFO	CA	Surgery
	15-OFO-0031	OFO	CA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0064	OFO	AR	Surgery/Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0039	OFO	AR	Serious Illness
	15-OFO-0048	OFO	TN	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0041	OFO	AR	Accidental Injury
	OFO-15-0004	OFO	MS	Surgery
	OA-14-0001	OA	MD	Maternity
	15-OPACE-0029	OPACE	DC	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0054	OFO	WA	Family Illness/Surgery
	15-OFO-0040	OFO	AR	Maternity
	15-OFO-0044	OFO	LA	Surgery
	OFO-14-0051	OFO	TX	Maternity
	15-OFO-0045	OFO	TX	Maternity
	OFO-14-0059	OFO	NC	
	15-OIEA-0051	OIEA	CA	Surgery
	OFO-15-0002	OFO	TX	Surgery/Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0017	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0043	OFO	OR	Surgery
	OFO-14-0058	OFO	LA	Family Illness
	OFO-13-0016	OFO	PA	Serious Illness
	15-OM-0034	OM	DC	Family Illness
	OFO-14-0052	OFO	NE	Surgery
	OFO-14-0040	OFO	OK	Surgery
	OFO-14-0037	OFO	DE	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0020	OFO	NY	Serious Illness
	15-OFO-0033	OFO	AR	Serious Illness
	OFO-15-0008	OFO	OH	Surgery
	15-OFO-0035	OFO	MD	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0026	OFO	AR	Serious Illness
	15-OFO-0027	OFO	MO	Serious Injury
	15-OFO-0026	OFO	LA	Surgery

Recipient	Case Number	Program Area	State	Situation
(b) (6)	OFO-14-0021	OFO	CA	Surgery
	OM-14-0001	OM	DC	Family Illness
	OFO-15-0003	OFO	GA	Surgery
	OOEET-13-0001	OOEET	MD	Surgery
	OFO-13-0045	OFO	TN	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0013	OFO	PA	Maternity
	15-OFO-0050			
	15-OFO-0042	OFO	MO	Surgery
	15-OFO-0041	OFO	AR	Serious Illness
	15-OFO-0016	OFO	LA	Serious Illness
	OFO-15-0009	OFO	GA	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0003	OFO	CO	Serious Illness
	OEIA-14-0003	OEIA	GA	Surgery
	OFO-14-0066	OFO	FL	Maternity
	OPHS-14-0002	OPHS	GA	Surgery
	OFO-14-0057	OFO	MO	Surgery
	15-OFO-0024	OFO	AR	Surgery
	OFO-15-0007	OFO	MD	Serious Illness
	15-OPACE-15	OPACE	DC	Surgery
	15-OFO-0023	OFO	NJ	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0030	OFO	TX	Family Illness
	15-OFO-0019	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0031	OFO	WA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0038	OFO	CA	Maternity
	OM-13-0004	OM	MD	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0007	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0029	OFO	CA	Serious Illness
	15-OFO-0030	OFO	TX	Surgery
	OFO-14-0016	OFO	NY	Surgery
	OPACE-14-0002	OPACE	DC	Maternity
	15-OFO-0022	OFO	LA	Serious Illness
	OFO-12-0064	OFO	KS	Serious Illness
	OM-15-0001	OM	DC	Serious Illness
	15-OFO-0025	OFO	DC	Serious Injury
	15-OFO-0047	OFO	OK	Surgery
	OFO-14-0065	OFO	NC	Surgery/Serious Illness
	OFO-15-0005	OFO	SC	Surgery
	15-OFO-0038	OFO	AL	Maternity
	OFO-14-0026	OFO	DE	Surgery
	OPPD-14-0001	OPPD	DC	Surgery
	OFO-14-0053	OFO	NC	Surgery
	OCIO-13-0002	OCIO	DC	Serious Illness
	15-OFO-0032	OFO	ID	Surgery
	15-OFO-0018	OFO	IN	Surgery
	OFO-14-0022	OFO	IN	Surgery
	OPPD-13-0002	OPPD	DC	Family Illness
	OFO-14-0045	OFO	MN	Maternity
	OFO-14-0018	OFO	AZ	Serious Illness

Recipient	Case Number	Program Area	State	Situation
(b) (6)	OFO-14-0027	OFO	WA	Surgery
	15-OFO-0014	OFO	VA	Surgery
	15-OFO-0028	OFO	GA	Maternity
	OFO-14-0032	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	OFO-15-0010	OFO	NY	Surgery/Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0055	OFO	TN	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0024	OFO	IL	Serious Illness
	OFO-13-0066	OFO	PA	Serious Illness
	OFO-14-0056	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
	15-OFO-0038	OFO	WA	
	OPHS-14-0003	OPHS	GA	Serious Illness
	15-ODIFP-0036	ODIFP	DC	Maternity
	*OFO-12-0055	OFO		
	*OM-14-0003	OM		
	*OFO-14-0024	OFO		
	*OFO-14-0034	OFO		
	*OFO-14-0035	OFO		
	*OFO-14-0044	OFO		Serious Illness
*OPHS-14-0005	OPHS-14-0005	OPHS		Surgery
*OFO-14-0060	OFO-14-0060	OFO		Surgery/Serious Illness
*OFO-14-0062	OFO-14-0062	OFO		
*OFO-14-0063	OFO-14-0063	OFO		Surgery
*OFO-15-0011	OFO-15-0011	OFO		Family-Serious Illness
*OFO-15-0012	OFO-15-0012	OFO		Accidental Injury
*15-OFO-0013	15-OFO-0013	OFO		Serious Illness
*15-OFO-0017	15-OFO-0017	OFO		Family Serious Illness
*15-OFO-0020	15-OFO-0020	OFO		Serious Illness
*OFO-14-0047	OFO-14-0047	OFO		Serious Illness
*15-OFO-0043	15-OFO-0043	OFO		
*15-OFO-0046	15-OFO-0046	OFO		Serious Illness
*15-OFO-0049	15-OFO-0049	OFO		

*These Leave Transfer Program (LTP) recipients declined to publish their names and can receive donations using the assigned case number.

>>> **RECALLS**

Sept. 2	Wisconsin firm recalls pork sausage products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
Sept. 8	California firm recalls pork products due to misbranding.
Sept. 8	New York firm recalls beef product due to possible non-O157 <i>E. Coli</i> contamination.
Sept. 10	South Carolina firm recalls pork products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Sept. 16	California firm recalls ham products produced without benefit of inspection.
Sept. 17	FSIS issued a public health alert on breaded chicken products produced by Aspen Foods.
Sept. 24	Mississippi firm recalls poultry products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
Sept. 25	California firm recalls chicken product due to misbranding and undeclared allergen.
Sept. 29	California firm recalls frozen food products produced without a fully implemented HACCP plan, containing an undeclared allergen, and missing the mark of inspection.
For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls .	

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **Notice 57-15, FSIS Sampling of Raw Ground Beef Products for Nutrient Content**
- **Notice 61-15, Inspection of Imported Egg Products at Official Import Inspection Establishments**
- **Directive 7120.1 Revision 29, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products**

Administrative issues were also published.

- **Notice 55-15, End of the Year Performance Management Instructions**
- **Notice 56-15, Updated 2015 Yearend Closing**
- **Notice 58-15, FSIS Standardized Evaluation Model for Non-Bargaining Unit Employees**

- **Notice 59-15, Updated Lincpass and Multi-Factor Authentication Requirements and Implementation Procedures**
- **Notice 60-15, Mistake in FSIS Notice 59-15**
- **FSIS Directive 1040.1, The FSIS Enterprise Governance Decisionmaking Process**
- **Notice 62-15, Replacement Certificates**
- **Notice 63-15, Standards and Procedures for Ordering FSIS Business Cards**
- **Notice 64-15 - Use of FSIS Government-Furnished Equipment**
- **Directive 2620.1 - FSIS Records Management Program**

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

Improve Agency Communications Take the Survey!

By Yolanda Kennedy, CFO
Phone: (301) 504-0905

The Agency needs your feedback to improve internal communications! You can help by completing the survey below and faxing your response to (301) 504-0912 or emailing your response to OPACESurvey@fsis.usda.gov. The survey is available online at <https://www.fsisusda.com/se/5D6EC10B40EC3A32>. To assure anonymity, individual

identification will not be documented. If you choose to email your completed survey, your responses and identity will remain confidential. The survey results and follow-up actions will be featured in upcoming editions of The Beacon and the Administrator's Blog. If you have additional questions or comments regarding this survey, please contact Yolanda Kennedy at yolanda.kennedy@fsis.usda.gov or (301) 504-0905.

1. Please select which FSIS area/office in which you work.
 - ☐ Headquarters (Washington, D.C. and Beltsville, MD offices)
 - ☐ Field (including District/Regional Offices, In-plant, State Office)
 - ☐ Laboratory
2. Is your current position supervisory, manager, or non-supervisory?
 - ☐ Supervisory (rating)
 - ☐ Manager (non-rating supervisor or team-lead)
 - ☐ Non-Supervisory Field Employee
 - ☐ Non-Supervisory Headquarters Employee
3. Please select the Agency communication vehicles that you prefer to use. (Please select your top three preferred methods of communication, in order of preference.)

Agency Communication	1st Preferred Communication	2nd Preferred Communication	3rd Preferred Communication
The Beacon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wednesday Newsline	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Town Halls	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
User Notices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Administrator's Blog	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
InsideFSIS Intranet website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FSIS main website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supervisor (email &/or at WUM)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
District/Regional Office e-mails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postal mail to your home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. In the last 6 months, how informed do you feel about current activities throughout the Agency?
 - ☐ Very Well Informed
 - ☐ Somewhat Informed
 - ☐ Not Very Well Informed
 - ☐ Not Informed at All
5. How do you feel about the frequency of Agency communications?
 - ☐ Too often
 - ☐ Just right
 - ☐ Not often enough

6. Please rate your level of interest in the following topics.

Topics	Very Interested	Somewhat Interested	Not at all Interested
FSIS Program Policy Updates (e.g. inspection changes, sampling guidance)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Resources Policy Updates (e.g. staffing, pay/leave guidance, transit benefits)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Departmental/Agency Initiatives (e.g. employee engagement, special emphasis programs, CFC, Feds Feed Families)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outreach Activities (e.g. food safety education, community service)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training Information (e.g. Tech Tips, <i>AgLearn</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Features (e.g. FSIS Retirees, Photo of the Month, Awards) Please specify: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Are you familiar with the Agency term “One Team, One Purpose” as it relates to you?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. Do you believe your daily work aligns and supports the goals of the Agency?

☐ Yes

☐ Somewhat

☐ No

9. Do you feel like you are an important part of the FSIS team?

☐ Yes

☐ Somewhat

☐ No

10. What suggestions do you have on how the Agency may improve communications with employees? What topics would you like to see more information about?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Volume
19

Number
10

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



30 YEARS OF SERVICE

Stanley Painter, President of the National Joint Council of Food Inspection Locals, receives his 30-year certificate, personally signed by Secretary Vilsack, and a pin from Deputy Under Secretary Alfred Almanza.

Photo contributed by Dana Barilla, OFO.

Hotline Open on Thanksgiving Day!

*By Kristina Beaugh and Jason Waggoner, OPACE
Phone: (202) 260-8572*

While most Americans will be spending their Thanksgiving watching football, making shopping lists or contemplating another slice of pumpkin pie, the dedicated FSIS Food Safety Specialists of the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline will be helping busy (and sometimes frantic) home chefs prevent foodborne illness at their holiday dinners.

The USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline is a group of trained professionals with backgrounds ranging from nursing, dietetics and home economics to microbiology and food science. On Thanksgiving Day, consumers can call or email Food Safety Specialists to get help with many different food safety topics. "It means a lot to consumers, and they are surprised to know such a government operated hotline is open on Thanksgiving," said Archie Magoulas, one of the Hotline specialists.

Last Thanksgiving Day, the Hotline received about 1,000 calls, of which more than 300 were answered directly by a Hotline specialist. Food Safety Specialist Janice Lopez-Munoz commented that the calls came in non-stop. Callers who did not speak to a specialist directly were able to

listen to pre-recorded food safety messages to answer their questions. Additionally, Ask Karen, a website with a database of thousands of food safety questions and answers, had more than 24,000 inquiries on Thanksgiving Day.

You can help minimize foodborne illness in your own home this Thanksgiving by using safe food handling practices and helping your friends and family do the same. Here are the most popular Thanksgiving Day questions and answers:

1. *How long will turkey last in the freezer? Is it safe to use a turkey I've had frozen since last Thanksgiving?* Turkeys can be kept in the freezer indefinitely; however, cook within 1 year for best quality.
2. *How should I thaw a turkey? How can I quickly thaw a turkey when time has run out?* Thawing a turkey in the refrigerator (one day for every five pounds) is the preferred method. If you're in a hurry, you can thaw the turkey in cold water or in a microwave oven, but it must be cooked immediately.

Continued on page 5 ...

The Beacon is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

Jan. issue – due Dec. 1
Feb. issue – due Jan. 1
March issue – due Feb. 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to email.

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN

This Thanksgiving, millions of Americans will eat turkey at their holiday dinners with friends and family. As FSIS employees, each of you should take pride in the role you play in ensuring the safety of the food consumers purchase for these holiday meals. FSIS also provides consumers with the tools they need to prevent foodborne illness while preparing these meals at home. Resources such as the FoodKeeper smartphone app provide consumers with information they need to safely prepare their dinners not only during the holidays, but year round. Consumers can also count on the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline experts who will be working, even on Thanksgiving Day, to answer food safety questions.

As the Deputy Under Secretary and as Administrator for FSIS, I've had the privilege to travel the globe and see many different food safety systems. I can assure you that ours is the safest and the most transparent system in the world. I attribute the safety of our food to the dedicated FSIS personnel who work in plants and offices across the nation. You work hard every day to ensure that meat and poultry products are safe before they reach the dinner table. Your work is often thankless, but I know everyone is appreciative of the safe turkey on their plates during their Thanksgiving dinners.

I've worked at FSIS for my entire career, and over the past 40 years, I've formed many important relationships. The friendships I have made in this Agency make FSIS feel like family to me. Americans spend almost one third of their waking hours at work, so it's very important to me that you feel at home when you are here.

We strive to make improvements that will enhance our ability to perform our Agency's public health mission. Just as importantly, we are committed to improving your experience as an FSIS employee. You devote much of your time to our Agency's success, and we want to ensure that your needs and recommendations are heard and considered. The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) is the best means that you have of communicating directly with Agency management. We just received this year's FEVS results, and will be taking them into consideration as we make future changes.

As I sit down for Thanksgiving dinner this year, I am most thankful for the rewarding career I've had at FSIS and to be leading such an amazing group of talented employees. Our abundance of safe food would be impossible without our Agency and the work that you do. Thank you for your selfless service to our country.



Alfred V. Almanza



Join Secretary Vilsack and make your Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) pledge today!

For more information, talk to your CFC Keyworker or visit www.cfcnca.org.

Lucy Touhey: Ensuring FSIS is Always Ready



By Jason Waggoner, OPACE
Phone: (202) 708-9535

As part of FSIS' mission to protect public health, the Agency must be ready and able to respond to significant food emergencies, such as large-scale food contamination or natural disasters that affect meat, poultry and processed egg products.

In the event of such an emergency, the Office of Data Integration and Food Protection's (ODIFP) Emergency Coordination Staff (ECS) facilitates FSIS' response and recovery efforts and works with other agencies to provide a coordinated response to the event.

Lucy Touhey, a Senior Emergency Response Specialist with ECS, plays a big role in FSIS' efforts to be prepared for an emergency. She is the administrator for the FSIS Incident Management System (FIMS), a web-based system that allows FSIS to manage and track significant incidents in real time. FIMS gives the Agency tools to respond to an ongoing event

and captures information that helps FSIS adapt and prepare for similar events in the future.

"A significant incident can be something as simple as an ammonia leak in a facility or theft of product from a trailer to something major like a natural disaster that affects multiple states," Touhey said.

As a duty officer, Touhey manages significant incidents reported through FIMS and prepares reports detailing the impact of a situation on FSIS facilities and personnel. She prepares maps that help determine what facilities could be impacted by an event such as a hurricane or chemical spill, and designs and conducts exercises to test and improve FSIS' procedures for incident response.

Touhey also works with the Emergency Management Committee (EMC), which consists of personnel from each program area with the authority to commit resources as necessary in response to an incident. "The EMC is only activated for incidents that involve a special policy question, need a special commitment of resources for response or have unique questions that need discussion from the program areas," Touhey said.

Touhey began working for FSIS 20 years ago as a secretary with the Egg Products Inspection Division. She spent several years with the Office of Field Operations (OFO).

"My time with OFO provided me with great opportunities for growth and I am able to adapt many of the skills I learned there in my position as an Emergency Response Specialist," Touhey said. "I love that I have the opportunity to work with so many great people from around the Agency. I really enjoy working with my friends in the field to ensure that the Agency's response goes right when things are going wrong. We have some great and very dedicated people in FSIS."

Touhey believes that employees should be open to new challenges. Shortly after joining FSIS, her supervisor asked her to do label reviews and approvals for egg products while another employee was on leave. "It was a great opportunity to learn, and I haven't said no to an opportunity since," Touhey said.

Outside of FSIS, Touhey is an avid reader, which she believes helps with her job. Several years ago, she read that some alcohol swabs were recalled because of bacterial contamination. She knew FSIS used swabs to clean thermometers in the plants. It turned out that FSIS had the recalled swabs. According to Touhey, the EMC was activated and all the swabs were pulled from FSIS supplies. "It was a great catch!" she said.

In the spirit of the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday, Touhey said, "I'm thankful for the opportunities that I have been presented with at FSIS and for the great people that I work with."



Photos contributed by Lucy Touhey, ODIFP.

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Butler, Jimmy, CSI	Albertville, AL	25	Lee, Daniel, Lead IT SPEC	Washington, DC	24
Culbert, Jackie, Lead CSI	Collinsville, AL	45	Mathis, Phillip, Lead CSI	Batesville, AR	35
Culbert, Jeffery, CSI	Powell, TN	23	McNair, Linda, CSI	Teachey, NC	10
Daniel, Joan Baker, FI-S	Farmerville, LA	14	Munoz, Benito A., CSI	Nixon, TX	45
Deibel, Cheryl, FI-S	Hazlehurst, MS	22	Pittman, Barry N., SVMO	Salt Lake City, UT	11
Emerson, Debbie, FI-S	Decatur, AL	24	Rader, Vicki J., VMO	Barron, WI	11
Gatter, Scott, IT Spec (Cust Spt)	Des Moines, IA	27	Sanchez, Northa, CSI	Hialeah, FL	21
Griffin, Brenda, Lead CSI	Moorefield, WV	22	Schneider, Irene J., CSI	Sioux Falls, SD	25
Harmon, Robert J., SCSi	Holcomb, KS	26	Stewart, Thomas R., CSI	Palmyra, PA	39
Harris, Jackie, FI-S	Morton, MS	14	Syers, Mary Elizabeth, SVMO	Loganton, PA	8
Heikens, Barbara A., SVMO	Ottumwa, IA	6	Talley, Gary Wayne, CSI	Fresno, CA	22
Hochstetler, Douglas, SVMO	Cornelia, GA	7	Thomas, Alicia D., CSI	Bridgewater, NY	30
Jessee, Jay Durell, CSI	Dayton, OR	7	Wasif, Fawzy, SVMO	Monroe, NC	12
Kendrick, Linda, CSI	Springdale, AR	25	Weakly, Dusty Hal, CSI	Potsdam, NY	25
Kenyon, Steven B., FI-S	Wyalusing, PA	11	Webb, Katherine, CSI	Athens, GA	19
Lawhorn, Priscilla, CSI	Bethlehem, GA	14	Wilson, Wesley, CSI	Wallula, WA	37
LeBourveau, David W., SVMO	Cincinnati, OH	8	Zamora, Luis, Supvy Complnc Invstgr	Dallas, TX	36

Stay up to date ...

The *Wednesday Newsline* is emailed to headquarters and field employees every Wednesday with important information about the Agency.

Be sure to read this valuable resource every week to stay up to date with Agency happenings. To submit an item to the Wednesday Newsline, please send it to wednesdaynewsline@fsis.usda.gov.



PHOTO OF THE MONTH

The Internal Controls Staff in the Office of the Administrator recently hosted a training meeting in New Orleans, La., on September 14-17, 2015. Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza spoke to the group on the state of the Agency and the new strategic goals being developed. Investigators received training from the Civil Rights Staff, Labor and Employee Relations Division, and OIEA. The Investigators also received a one-day refresher training on investigations from the Department.



Photo contributed by Ronnie Dunn, OA.

Pictured, back row, from left to right: Terrence Rose, Rob Westbrook, Mindy Orr, Bob Keating, Jeanne Murphy, Manuel Madrid, Toby Fontenot, Ronnie Dunn, Michael Adams, Beverly Ledford, Cassandra Hyer, Phil Brown, Kate Bercaw-Hartl. Pictured, front row, from left to right: Jaime Murphy, Katie Bloor, Al Almanza, Natalie Martin, Elizabeth Der.

Hotline Open on Thanksgiving Day!

... Continued from page 1

3. *Is it okay to stuff a turkey? What's the safest way to stuff a turkey?* For safety, stuffing a bird is not recommended. In fact, we recommend cooking the stuffing outside the bird. If you choose to stuff a turkey, use a food thermometer to make sure the center of the stuffing reaches a minimum internal temperature of 165 °F.
4. *Can I cook the turkey the day before Thanksgiving? How do I safely store it and then warm it up for dinner?* The turkey must be cooked to at least 165 °F in an oven set no lower than 325 °F if you plan to cook ahead of time. Once cooked, let the turkey sit for 20 minutes then carve the meat off, and put it in small, shallow containers for refrigeration. On Thanksgiving Day, reheat the meat to 165 °F and cover it with steaming gravy or broth.

The Meat and Poultry Hotline is part of the Food Safety Education Staff (FSES) of the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education (OPACE). In addition to staffing the Meat and Poultry Hotline, FSES offers food safety outreach services on Thanksgiving Day and throughout the year.



Photo Contributed by Kristina Beaugh, OPACE.

Marianne Gravely (pictured), member of the Meat and Poultry Hotline since 1988, finds working on Thanksgiving Day very rewarding. One thing she doesn't like is having to condemn someone's turkey. "We try our best to help, but we don't want anyone to get sick on the holiday!" Gravely said.

The Hotline is available for calls, emails and live chats Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. ET and on Thanksgiving Day from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. ET. Consumers can call 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) or visit AskKaren.gov to speak with a food safety specialist.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

By Leo O'Drudy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-8693

Americans of all careers cherish the ability to defend our rights in court, but often dread the time, effort and expense of lawsuits. In the federal sector, employees have access to a process designed to resolve disputes as quickly and informally as possible, with minimum paperwork and an emphasis on fairness and mutual agreement. Employees have the option to utilize the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process, provided by FSIS' Mediation and Conflict Resolution Group, (MCRG) which is part of the Civil Rights Staff, under the FSIS Office of the Administrator (OA).

As defined by FSIS, ADR is "a process designed to bring together the disputing parties in a complaint or dispute in order to provide them an opportunity to resolve the dispute themselves with the assistance of a neutral third party." ADR can be used at all stages of the complaint process. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) disputants may engage in resolution discussions during the EEO pre-complaint and formal complaint processes. In fact, ADR can be used at any time, regardless of whether there is a complaint or not; sometimes ADR is useful to resolve miscommunications or differences without a complaint.

It's important to know that ADR does not take away any of your rights as an employee; it simply adds to your resolution options. Although the Agency encourages ADR, and there are good reasons for individual employees to embrace it, no one at a nonsupervisory level can be forced to use ADR (however, supervisors and managers must participate in it if requested by the employee). You always have the option to choose to pursue a formal process, such as the Merit Systems Protection Board or the EEO complaint process.

ADR has the advantages of being informal and flexible. It's usually much quicker than a formal dispute resolution process. It's confidential. Rather than a process like a trial, which could be adversarial, ADR is a "win-win" scenario based on mutual agreement. ADR mediators are neutral third parties with no stake in the outcome. They can meet

with both parties individually and together to make sure everyone's side of the story is fully heard.

It is important to keep in mind that ADR is not the most effective or appropriate venue if the issue involves serious misconduct or criminal activity.

Within FSIS, ADR takes several forms, such as:

- EEO Mediation, which is the most popular and well-known form of ADR. It can be used pre-complaint or during the formal complaint process;
- Early Intervention Mediation, which is usually for non-EEO issues;
- Team Conflict Resolution, Conflict Management Training and Facilitation are all separate ways to help a group come together and set priorities, address issues and work more effectively together;
- Conflict Coaching/Consultation helps individual employees learn better to manage conflict and prevent conflict in future; and
- Conciliation is a way for a neutral person to help two people settle a dispute without those two having to meet face-to-face.

For more information about ADR in FSIS, please visit <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/informational/aboutfsis/civil-rights/eo-and-cr-complaints/alternative-dispute-resolution/adr>.

To see the FSIS FY 2014 YouTube training presentation on ADR, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0V5wICzTGhl&feature=youtu.be>.

If you have a dispute, or need any of the services they offer, contact MCRG by calling 1-800-860-8347 or emailing MCRG@fsis.usda.gov.

Employees with concerns about unlawful discrimination should first contact the Civil Rights Staff at 1-800-269-6912. The caller will receive an offer of mediation through the Civil Rights Staff's Equal Employment Opportunity Complaint Process.

**Employees with concerns about unlawful discrimination,
contact the Civil Rights Staff at 1-800-269-6912.**



National American Indian Heritage Month
Growing Native Leaders: Enhancing Seven Generations
November



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OIEA Northeast Region

On June 4-5, 2015, Compliance Investigators Nicholas Papapietro (pictured, left) and Kari Skiver (pictured, right) participated in a career fair at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station in Niagara Falls, NY. The 914th Airlift Wing Airman and Family Readiness Center hosted a large-scale career fair for local Reserve members; approximately 1,300 Reserve members and their family members attended the event. Papapietro and Skiver provided brochures about FSIS careers and discussed how opportunities could be found on the USAJOBS website. Photo contributed by Kari Skiver, OIEA.



Chicago District

Recently, CSIs William Imler III (pictured, left) and Angelina Schile (pictured, right) performed a food safety outreach activity at a local grocery store in Columbus, Ind. Approximately 350 people visited the table. Imler and Schile answered consumers' questions about food safety and provided food safety materials such as "Cooking for Groups" information books, "Is It Done Yet?" magnets and "He's Bac" children's books. Photo contributed by Angelina Schile, OFO.



Alameda District

The Alameda District Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee (EEOAC) July 2015 theme was patriotism. The inspection team at P-7632 showed their patriotism by wearing red, white and blue. Pictured, back row, from left to right: Octavio Rodarte, Jesus Martinez, Lorena Huerta, Ana Gaitan, Dr. Ahmed Darwish, Naguib Mikhael, Jeanette Garcia, Pamela Fields, Larrina Williams. Pictured, front row, from left to right: Juan Zamora, Tarek Abdelsalam, Sandeep Gill. Photo contributed by Larrina Williams, OFO.



FROM THE **FIELD**



Philadelphia District

On July 11-13, 2015, team members from the FSIS National Recruitment Program (NRP) attended the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Annual Convention in Boston, Mass. to promote Public Health Veterinarian (PHV) vacancies. Recruiters spoke with approximately 150 veterinarians and veterinary students. More than 30 attendees expressed interest in working for FSIS. NRP representatives also spoke at the convention's public health sessions and at the "Ask Us Anything - Peer Panel" at AVMA's Veterinary Student and Recent Graduate Lunch. Pictured, from left to right: Dr. Travis Nienhueser, Kamir Carrillo, Dr. Darin Holmes, Dr. Larry Davis. Photo contributed by Kamir Carrillo, OM.

Headquarters

On August 7, 2015, 18 supervisors and team leads graduated from the Catalyst Leadership Development Program (CLDP). Pictured, back row, from left to right: Dr. Kristen Gentzel, Dr. Tom Beacorn, Mark Crowe, Dr. Louis Bluhm, John Paul Antonetti. Pictured, middle row, from left to right: Dr. Heath Williams, Tracy Bryant, Dr. Laura Unkauf, Dr. April Prillaman, Dr. Beth Lehman. Pictured, front row, from left to right: Michael Watts, Dr. Angela McIntyre, Dr. Erin Moses, Frankie Beacorn, Dr. Lisa Powell, Dr. Valerie Justice, Dr. Marina Tutt, Dr. Michelle Kleppek, Dr. Prather McNeal-Hutchison, Salina Nájera, Al Almanza. Photo contributed by Gordon Wilson, OOEET.



Headquarters

On August 10-14, 2015, 26 FSIS employees completed the competitive Escalade Leadership Development Program. Pictured, back row, from left to right: Clarke Jones, David Carroll, Jonathan Weber, Jeff Wieners, Corey Van Winkle, Joel Bachert. Pictured, second row from back, from left to right: Deena Ismail, Sofiane Ghis, Michael Cano. Pictured, third row from back, from left to right: Diana Hayes, Dawn Chaney Walters, Oleg Shleyfer, Mark Brook, Sarah Davis, Thomas Collaro. Pictured, front row, from left to right: Richard Mandt, Cynthia Whitley, Lee Taylor, Stacy Tyralla,



Aphrodite Douris, Lisa Powell, Wanda Fuentes, Steven Lee, Ruth Gonzalez, Denise Felix, Anthony L. Thompson. Not pictured: Adrienne Nelson. Photo contributed by Gordon Wilson, OOEET.

Feds Feed Families



Chicago District - Letricia Calhoun led Feds Feed Families efforts in Lima, Ohio, Circuit 50-32. Circuit 50-32 donated a total of \$810 and 210.4 pounds of non-perishable food to area food banks. The \$810 monetary donation equates to 4050 meals provided to those in need. Letricia Calhoun joined David Dunn (highest individual contributor) as well as Elizabeth Marsh and Lora Rojas (highest contributing team) for a celebratory lunch. Pictured, back row, from left to right: Letricia Calhoun, David Dunn. Pictured, front row, from left to right: Elizabeth Marsh, Lora Rojas. Photo contributed by Michael Chiu, OFO.



Atlanta District - The day shift at est. 855 and 855D in Athens, Ga. donated 452 pounds of food to Greene County Pantry in July and August. Pictured, back row, from left to right: Emma Pittard, Carl Pitts, Frank Ross, Eddie Wise, Denise Compton. Pictured, front row, from left to right: Emma Hancock, Darren Holt, Patricia Lee, Virgie Griffith, Brunus Mickens, Dewayne Richardson. Photo contributed by Melinder Moon, OFO.



Denver District - FSIS employees at M5511 in Gibbon, Neb. donated 75 pounds of food to the local food pantry. Pictured, back row, from left to right: Rod Schuller, Ramiro Coronado, Martin Phillis, Roger Stander, Brian Stones. Pictured, front row, from left to right: Lisa Morris, Maria Cisneros, Simona Vaipan, James Wing, Connie Scarrow, Melanie Grube. Photo contributed by Melanie Grube, OFO.





Headquarters - On September 1, 2015, Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza (pictured, center) helped prepare ice cream sundaes at "Swapping Sundaes." Participants in the event donated nonperishable food items to Feds Feed Families in exchange for the sweet treats. Photo contributed by Adriana Rivera-Montalvo, OPACE.

Headquarters - On August 29, 2015, FSIS employees participated in a farmers market run to obtain fresh produce for Feds Feed Families.

ODIFP, OIEA, OCFO and OFO employees contributed funds and time, enabling the purchase of a combined total of 2,053 pounds of fresh produce and 208 pounds of dry goods and meat. All proceeds were donated to the DC Central Kitchen located Northwest Washington, DC. In addition to providing more than 5,000 free meals a day, DC Central Kitchen works towards reducing hunger with recycled food and trains unemployed adults for culinary careers. They also train student volunteers to implement their mission on high school and college campuses across America. Pictured, from left to right: Shannon Ashby, Carolyn Grant, Sharon Thomas, James Coulter. Photo contributed by Carolyn Grant, ODIFP.



Headquarters - On September 11, 2015, FSIS headquarters hosted the Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC). Approximately 30 FSIS volunteers assisted AFAC with bagging 2,500 pounds of rice so that it could be distributed to families in need. Photo contributed by Anne-Marie Waddell, OPACE.

Chicago District/OIEA Southwest Region - For the third consecutive year, the OFO Chicago district office and the OIEA Compliance and Investigations Division office located in Lombard, Ill. have collaborated on a Feds Feed Families food drive to benefit a Lyons, Ill. food pantry. The small, volunteer-operated pantry serves a community of people who do not qualify for food donations from other sources. The pantry receives no funding and depends solely upon donations. So far this year, the two offices have collected 400 pounds of nonperishable food items for the food pantry. Pictured, from left to right: Paul Wolseley, Dr. Tamara Mayberry Davis, Angela Draper, Sherry Toberman, Dr. Mounira Naguib, Mary Lewis, Deborah Hamilton, Gregory Harstick, Karen Higgs, David DeJaynes. Photo contributed by Mary Lewis, OIEA.

November is National Smoking Cessation Month

Now is the Time to Quit Smoking!

By Kerrie Tao, OM
Phone: (202) 403-0422

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), tobacco smoke contains a deadly mix of more than 7,000 chemicals. Hundreds of these chemicals are harmful, and about 70 of them can cause cancer. Smoking increases the risk for serious health problems and diseases that may lead to death. People who stop smoking greatly reduce these risks, and the long-term health benefits are greater the earlier you stop smoking. Don't be discouraged if you haven't quit yet. It's never too late to quit!

November is National Smoking Cessation Month. Quitting smoking is rarely easy, but there are tobacco cessation

programs available to help smokers and tobacco users take this important step. Quitline, for example, is a free telephone support service staffed by counselors trained specifically to help smokers quit. Quitline services deliver information, advice, support and referrals to tobacco users in all U.S. states. They can be reached at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).

Health insurance plans generally cover comprehensive tobacco cessation plans for members, including medications and counseling. Contact your healthcare provider to see what exactly your plan covers.

For additional information and helpful resources about smoking cessation and tobacco use prevention contact worklifeandwellness@fsis.usda.gov.

The Office of Personnel Management Announces 2016 Federal Employees Health Benefits Program Open Season

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM)
<https://www.opm.gov/>

The 2015 open season for health, dental and vision insurance and flexible spending accounts will be held from November 9, 2015 to December 14, 2015. The annual open season gives federal employees and retirees the opportunity to review their health plan choices and make changes for the following year. It also allows eligible employees to enroll for coverage. Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program enrollees should review the benefits and premiums for their health plan choices and decide what coverage will best fit their healthcare needs in the coming year.

This is the first year there will be a "plus one" opportunity for enrollment vice a self only or family plan option. Many two-person households will be able to lower their health care costs by switching to a self plus one plan.

Established in 1960, the FEHB Program is the largest employer-sponsored health benefits program in the United States. The government provides a weighted average contribution of 72 percent of premiums with a cap of no more than 75 percent of total premium cost. Approximately 90 percent of all federal employees participate in the program.

The OPM website provides a detailed breakdown on the FEHB Program premium rates at <https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/plan-information/premiums/>.

Information about dental and vision plans can be found at <https://www.benefeds.com/>.

You can find more 2016 federal benefits open season information on OPM's website beginning November 2, 2015.

If you need additional assistance, contact the Employee Service Section (formally Benefits), Human Resources Operations Division (HROD) Minneapolis at 1-800-370-3747, Option 3.



Pictured, back row, from left to right: William Threlkeld, Jordan Stoltz, Vince Fayne, Kenneth Cash, Scott Warren, Andrew Smith, Kris Kenne, Marcus Guyton. Pictured, middle row, from left to right: Ron Eckel, Donna Potts-Gill, Robert Zon, Cindy Whitley, Kim Gallahan, Elizabeth Starrett, Wanda Foster, Michelle Goodman, Jonathan Coleman. Pictured, front row, from left to right: Dawn Calhoun, Michael Gabriel, Robert Witte, Michael Lathrop, Linwood Pender.

Photo contributed by Mr. Jim Pellegrini (IIA course instructor).

OIEA Employees Complete In-Depth Internal Audit Training

*By Robert Witte, OIEA
Phone: (402) 344-5059*

Auditors from the OIEA Federal State Audit Branch (FSAB), along with staff from the Management Control and Audit Division (MCAD) and the Compliance and Investigation Division (CID) recently completed a 4-day internal audit training session in Omaha, Neb., provided by The Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA). Participants learned about the audit process from beginning to end, including how to identify risks and assess the rigor of internal controls (strategic, professional, financial, legal, etc.) Through team exercises, group discussion and facilitator presentations, the group built a foundation for preparing for and conducting a successful audit.

Many employees may be intimidated by the concept of an internal audit. They may worry that they will be kept in the dark during the process, that they will not be permitted to provide input or that they will ultimately have to face a list of negative findings. However, that is far from the truth. An internal audit is a review, but it is also an opportunity to have a conversation. It can be a great way to improve an organization by reaffirming that everyone is working towards a shared mission.

It may seem counterintuitive, but detecting discrepancies, inaccuracies and even fraud are not the main purposes of an internal audit. It is management's responsibility to design internal controls to prevent, detect and mitigate risk in an organization; the internal audit is designed to assess the effectiveness of what management has implemented. Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to improve an organization's operations. It helps bring a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

Internal auditing is a fundamental component of any organization. It is arguably even more important for large federal agencies like FSIS. Internal auditing allows an organization to evaluate the rigor of its own system controls for its overall benefit. The IIA training in Omaha allowed participants to fine-tune their work methods by teaching them how to ensure that the risks within the Agency are well-studied, and to assess the effectiveness of the systems in place to manage them.



LET'S TALK TURKEY

Unsafe handling and under-cooking your holiday bird can cause foodborne illnesses. Here are a few tips from the USDA to keep your Thanksgiving safe and delicious!

Types of turkeys regulated by the USDA:



*For more information about each type of turkey, visit fsis.usda.gov.

3 WAYS TO THAW

While frozen, a turkey is safe indefinitely. As soon as it begins to thaw, bacteria that may have been present before freezing will begin to grow again. Here are three ways to safely thaw your bird:

Refrigerator:

Safe to store the turkey for another 1 – 2 days in the refrigerator.

This is the USDA recommended thawing method.

How to thaw:
Allow approximately 24 hrs. for every 4-5 lbs of bird.

Cold water:

Cook immediately after thawing.

How to thaw:

Submerge the bird in cold water & change every 30 mins.

Microwave:

Cook immediately after thawing.

How to thaw:

Use defrost function based on weight

For more information on safe thawing methods, visit fsis.usda.gov

DID YOU KNOW?

It's safe to cook a frozen turkey though cooking time will be 50% longer!

Clean

Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm water.

Utensils
Plates
Countertops
Cutting boards

SHOULD ALSO BE WASHED

Bacteria, which can be present inside and outside a turkey, can't be washed off the bird! Cooking is the only way to destroy this potentially dangerous bacteria.

SO DON'T WASH YOUR TURKEY!!

SEPARATE

Separate raw turkey from fresh food, and use separate cutting boards, plates, and utensils.

Keep dishes that touch raw food separate, too!

Wash items that touch raw meat with soap and warm water.

COOK

Your bird is not safe until it reaches 165 °F — you cannot tell by the color.

Remember to ensure any stuffing cooked with the bird reaches 165 °F, too!

Use three places to check the temperature.



When turkey is removed from the oven, let it stand 20 minutes before carving to allow juices to settle.

CHILL

Take your time around the dinner table, but refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours!

Safe in fridge 3-4 days

Safe frozen, but use within 2-6 months for best quality

Day	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Next day
Safe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Thawing turkey from the fridge
Safe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	



Leftover turkey should be cut into smaller pieces and stored separately in smaller containers.



Be sure to pack leftovers in a cooler if traveling.



Reheat thoroughly to a temperature of 165 °F.

Remember, bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses can't be smelled or tasted!

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Visit foodsafety.gov

If you have a specific question, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHOTLINE or visit AskKaren.gov. Visit PregunteleKaren.gov for questions in Spanish.



USDA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER

Kudos ...

"To the Inspection team at Est. 32130, thank you for your hard work."

–Susana Martinez, OFO

"In May 2015, FSIS Alameda district personnel answered the call to help when a food inspector fell ill while on duty during a temporary detail at P-2882 in Petaluma, Calif. The Alameda district "family" supported their colleague, who was several hours away from family and friends, by visiting the inspector in the hospital, bringing the inspector food, helping the inspector refill prescriptions and arranging for the inspector's safe transportation home. Thanks to the selflessness and compassion of Alameda FSIS personnel, our colleague is now at home and recovering."

–Dr. Sheryl Beckett, OFO

"The ODIFP Food Defense Assessment Staff (FDAS) would like to extend a special thanks to DDM Dr. Samuel Dragoi and FLS Ijaz Qazi, as well as local CSIs who provided valuable feedback on food defense issues and activities during Marianne Elbertson's visit to the Dallas District Office the week of June 22, 2015. Special thanks also to RD Luis Zamora, CI Larry Belk and CI Olaya Valadez in the Dallas CID Regional Office for their helpful insights and comments. They all are our first line of defense to prevent intentional contamination of the food supply and an integral part of FSIS' mission to provide safe food and protect public health. We applaud their efforts to raise awareness and encourage implementation of food defense plans."

–Marianne Elbertson, ODIFP

>>> **RECALLS**

Oct. 2	Illinois firm recalls frozen, raw, stuffed & breaded chicken products due to possible <i>Salmonella</i> Enteritidis contamination.
Oct. 18	Colorado firm recalls beef, pork, and poultry products produced without a fully implemented HACCP plan, and misbranded.
Oct. 20	New Jersey recalls turkey meatloaf products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Oct. 22	North Carolina firm recalls turkey products packaged without the benefit of inspection.
Oct. 22	California firm recalls packaged soup products produced without benefit of inspection.
Oct. 24	Massachusetts firm recalls curry chicken salad product due to possible <i>Listeria</i> adulteration.
Oct. 26	Connecticut firm recalls assorted deli meat due to possible <i>Listeria</i> adulteration.
Oct. 30	Canadian firm recalls beef, chicken and pork products produced without benefit of import inspection.
Oct. 30	New Jersey firm recalls gluten-free turkey meatball products due to misbranding.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **Notice 65-15, PHIS Slaughter Profile Enhancement**
- **Notice 66-15, Instructions for Training on the Final HACCP Systems Validation Guidelines**
- **Directive 5420.1 Revision 9, Food Defense Verification Tasks and Threat Notification Response Procedures for the Office of Field Operations**
- **Directive 7120.1 Revision 30, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products**
- **Notice 67-15, Verification of Labeling of Imported Products Named Beef Cube Roll**

Administrative issues were also published.

- **Directive 1040.1 Rev. 1, FSIS Enterprise Governance Decisionmaking Process**
- **Notice 68-15, Additional Instructions for Attending a Training Webinar on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) Systems Validation**
- **Notice 69-15, Restoration of Forfeited Annual Leave**
- **Directive 4610.2, Office Coverage, Government Office Closures, and Telework at FSIS**

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



**Food Safety and
Inspection Service**

Volume
19

Number
11

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

Inside This Issue

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More Snapshots!

Because you asked for it, this month's issue includes **DOUBLE** the photos! Snapshots begin on page 8.

Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

CFC DRIVE

On Dec. 1, 2015, FSIS HQ gathered to support the Agency's annual Combined Federal Campaign on the Whitten Patio with BAC and Thermo in attendance.

*Photo contributed by
Katherine Scheldt, OPAE.*



Coming Soon: FSIS 2017-2021 Strategic Plan

*By Leo O'Drudy, OPAE
Phone: (202) 720-8693*

For the last 4 years, the Agency has been working diligently in pursuit of eight strategic goals that are laid out in the FSIS Strategic Plan. Those goals support three main themes:

Theme 1: Prevent Foodborne Illness

Theme 2: Understand and Implement the Farm-to-Table Continuum

Theme 3: Empower People and Strengthen Infrastructure

We have made some very good progress in pursuit of our goals since the plan's inception in 2011.

As readers of *The Beacon*, you may recall several articles about how the Strategic Plan helps share and prioritize the Agency activities through the Annual Performance Plan (APP). Each Program Area has its own APP, which then roll up into a single Agency APP. The APP in turn shapes the standards by which our performance as employees is measured and the day-to-day tasks we all carry out in our jobs.

With the current Strategic Plan sunsetting at the conclusion of FY 2016, the Agency has

been working to develop its next plan, one that leverages the current Plan's successes and doubles down on areas where we need more focus. The new plan will guide the Agency's priorities from FY 2017 to FY 2021. While the existing Strategic Plan has eight goals, the upcoming Strategic Plan has narrowed the number and broadened the focus of the major goals set for the Agency to three:

Goal 1: Reduce Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health

Goal 2: Modernize Systems, Policies and the Use of Scientific Approaches

Goal 3: Achieve Operational Excellence

Each goal will be further broken down into specific outcomes, with specific objectives and measurable targets.

The upcoming Strategic Plan will lay out the background of each objective. It will describe how the objective will be implemented and the performance measures (often providing specific tasks or numbers) that will be used to determine whether the objective is being carried out as planned. This helps the Agency know if its

Continued on page 6 ...

The Beacon is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

Feb. issue – due Jan. 1
March issue – due Feb. 1
April issue – due March 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to email.

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN

Despite the political climate in Washington, FSIS has remained strong and dedicated to public service and protecting public health. We've accomplished a lot this year, and I want to thank you for your commitment and hard work. Every year, you are the reason that I am able to go before Congress and testify that we are making progress and improvements to our country's food safety system.

During the holidays, I like to think about our accomplishments from the previous year. This was a busy year for FSIS, as we worked to implement the updates to our 60-year-old poultry inspection system and updated the first ever pathogen reduction standards for chicken parts. These new standards are expected to prevent 50,000 cases of food poisoning by targeting items consumers purchase frequently.

I appreciate your patience and resilience during change and challenges. No matter what is happening in the background, you've stayed committed to our primary goal—protecting public health and providing safe food for consumers. Your commitment to our mission is what makes the Agency effective and successful throughout the years.

So thank you for your patience, tolerance and flexibility, despite the challenges that you have faced. Your work is not always acknowledged by others. I encourage you to remain focused on the larger picture and to remember the important work you are doing to make a difference in the life of others every single day. Thank you and Happy Holidays to you and your families.



Alfred V. Almanza

GET ANSWERS AT **AskFSIS**

AskFSIS is a web-based technology and policy question-and-answer forum on topics such as exporting, labeling, inspection, programs and procedures.

In addition, AskFSIS offers Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds that link back to the Q&As.

Visit <http://askfsis.custhelp.com/> to view recently posted topics.

Dr. Angela McIntyre: On the Front Line of Food Safety



Dr. Angela McIntyre and Inspector Rodney Thompson perform a Good Commercial Practices check.

Photos contributed by Dr. Angela McIntyre, OFO.

*By Jason Waggoner, OPACE
Phone: (202) 708-9535*

Did you know that FSIS is the largest employer of veterinarians in the United States? There are approximately 1,100 veterinarians in FSIS, and their responsibilities are critical in protecting public health. Most, but not all, FSIS veterinarians work in meat and poultry plants to ensure that food animals are healthy and treated humanely. FSIS veterinarians also advise academia, industry and professional groups on the effectiveness of food safety controls.

Dr. Angela McIntyre is a Supervisory Public Health Veterinarian/Enforcement, Investigative and Analysis Officer (EIAO) in the FSIS Office of Field Operations Atlanta district office. She wears many "hats" in order to help the Agency meet its mission. For example, in her role as an EIAO, McIntyre conducts comprehensive food safety assessments for the establishments in her district. These assessments include a thorough examination of processes in place to ensure that the establishment's food safety system is valid and working properly. She also serves as a recruiter for the Agency.



Dr. Angela McIntyre

McIntyre started working for FSIS in 1997 as a Veterinary Medical Officer after graduating from Tuskegee University's School of Veterinary Medicine. Prior to her graduation, she participated in two summer internships with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). While working with APHIS as an Animal Health Technician, she realized the many opportunities available to veterinarians in the government. "Once I was able to view each opportunity, I decided that FSIS' mission was more appealing to me because of the huge influence and impact veterinarians have on America's food supply, which is mind boggling when you think about it. I'm just as motivated and excited to meet FSIS' mission now as I was when I first started 18 years ago," McIntyre said.

Through recruitment opportunities and travel to different facilities throughout the Atlanta District, she talks to many veterinarians, inspectors and industry personnel about the importance of the Agency's mission. These activities have also allowed her to reach out to different groups such as military personnel, veterinary students, college students and children. She has also educated the public as a volunteer with the USDA Food Safety Discovery Zone.

According to McIntyre, a typical day ensuring food safety at a poultry or red meat slaughter establishment for her begins with verifying that the establishment is clean and sanitary, and adequately staffed with FSIS inspection personnel. FSIS inspectors inspect every animal and bird, and all products that are processed in the establishment to ensure all products are wholesome and unadulterated prior to being released into commerce. Even before the animals or birds enter into an establishment, as a Public Health Veterinarian, McIntyre ensures the health of the animals and birds by performing ante mortem inspection. She ensures that all animals are handled in a safe and humane manner or according to good commercial practices for poultry. She also ensures that the inspectors are performing their duties properly according to regulations and are able to work in a safe environment.

McIntyre's duties are performed to ensure that all products produced in an FSIS inspected establishment are safe and wholesome for the consuming public.

"I enjoy everything about my job, and I am very passionate about what I do. I especially enjoy my role as a Supervisory Public Health Veterinarian. I look forward to meeting and interacting with different people as I perform my duties in the establishments. I find pleasure in helping others grow in their respective position in every way possible," she said.

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Barajas, Tony L., FI-S	Sanger, Calif.	9	Lockman, James F., Lead CSI	Beardstown, Ill.	27
Broadie, David F., FI-S	Storm Lake, Iowa	21	Louie, Henry K., CSO	Stockton, Calif.	40
Bucholz, Ronald, CSI	Ronan, Mont.	24	Maral, Cynthia A., CSI	Orland, Calif.	11
Child, Dennis, CSI	Rochelle, Ill.	25	McKeeman, Karl Reed, VMO	Marshalltown, Iowa	7
Curtis, Irene Faye, CSI	Salisbury, Md.	30	McTamney, Lauralee, CSI	Rio Grande, N.J.	10
Curtis, James, CSI	Selbyville, Del.	53	Mockovciak, Dana E., CSI	Rome, N.Y.	29
Daniel, Joan Baker, FI-S	Farmerville, La.	14	Moore, Mark A., FI-S	Springdale, Ark.	15
Davis Jr., Arvin M., CSI	Sumter, S.C.	47	Mullins, Timothy W., CSI	Bridgewater, Va.	30
Duff, Walker J., CSI	Marion, Ind.	42	O'Connor, Larry M., SVMO	Heavener, Okla.	9
Dunlap, Alton, CSI	Vernon, Calif.	27	Priest, Gerald, Resource Mgr.	Lakewood, Colo.	18
Epperley, Lisa, CSI	Livingston, Calif.	13	Prior, Ross N., VMO	Green Bay, Wis.	10
Fentress, Cheryl, Financ. Syst. Analyst	Beltsville, Md.	34	Rice, Tommie J., CSI	Cornelia, Ga.	30
Fowler, Dorothy, FI-S	Athens, Ga.	25	Richard, Mark L., CSI	Macon, Mo.	30
Garrett, Melinda A., FI-S	Lufkin, Texas	13	Robinson, Hazel Laverne, Economist	Washington, D.C.	32
Gaudreau, Teri Lynne, Compl Invstgtr	Denver, Colo.	22	Roby, Domenica M., CSI	Murrayville, Ga.	18
Hamar, Luan FI-S	Livingston, Calif.	26	Royster, Kim L., FI-S	Augusta, Ga.	4
Hammonds, Martina, FI-S	Ashland, Ala.	30	Sada, Martin, Food Inspector	Laredo, Texas	28
Harper, Beverly R., CSI	Batesburg, S.C.	30	Scott, Corazon, Microbiologist	Alameda, Calif.	26
Herrington, Betty M., FI-S	Douglas, Ga.	18	Smith, Catherine, CSI	Collinsville, Ala.	23
Hessel, Michael D., CSI	Hudson, S.D.	30	Stephens, Lonnie, CSI	Fort Smith, Ark.	12
Hoeldt, Jack R., CSI	Iron River, Mich.	29	Tittsworth, Clara L., CSI	Berryville, Ark.	30
Horner, DeMichael L., CSI	Fort Smith, Ark.	13	Tudor, Jill E., FI-PP	Zanesville, Ohio	15
Hostetter, Linda, CSI	Lenhartsville, Pa.	27	Turner, Rhoda A., FI-S	Selbyville, Del.	10
Hudnall, William, CSI	Louisville, Ky.	34	Valentour, Archie, CSI	Chattanooga, Tenn.	19
Hunt, Alonza, FI-S	Perry, Ga.	21	Vote, Loretta, CSI	Batesville, Ark.	26
Jacobs, Daryl Lynn, VMO	Wendell, Idaho	11	Westbrook, Loretta G., FI-S	Springdale, Ark.	30
Jones, Larry R., SVMO	Arcadia, La.	20	White, Thomas L., CSI	South West City, Mont.	19
Kolemba, Charles, SVMO	Shelbyville, Tenn.	31			
Kressley, Phyllis Elaine, CSI	Richlandtown, Pa.	29			
Lagrone, Jr., Kenneth W., SVMO	Nashville, Ark.	17			
Leonard, Roger, CSI	Topeka, Kan.	31			

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



FSIS scientific liaison Dr. John Johnston was recently honored and inducted as a Fellow of the American Chemical Society (ACS). With a membership of more than 155,000, the ACS is the largest scientific society in the world. Currently there are about 900 (0.6 percent of members) ACS Fellows. ACS Fellow selection criteria require excellence and leadership in science and to the ACS community. Johnston was nominated by three of his peers – two researchers from the USDA Agricultural Research Service and one scientist from the agrochemical industry. Thomas Barton, President of the ACS (pictured left) with Dr. John Johnston (pictured right).

Photo contributed by John J. Johnston, OPHS.

New Employee Page on the Internet

An "Information for FSIS Employees" webpage is now available on the public website at www.fsis.usda.gov/employees. The page will be especially helpful to employees who do not have level 2 eAuthentication.

The page was built to be employee-centric. You will find news, career development information (such as detail opportunities), and highlights from *The Beacon's* latest issue. Content will be updated frequently.

Employees who do have level 2 eAuthentication will continue to find all the latest news and information on *InsideFSIS*, the employee intranet.



FSIS Personnel Raise Awareness on World Suicide Prevention Day

By Kesha Rawlings and Felicia Thompson, OM
Phone: (202) 690-1999

The Office of Management's Employee Safety, Health and Wellness Staff, Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Program encouraged all FSIS employees to wear yellow on September 10, 2015, in recognition of World Suicide Prevention Day. World Suicide Prevention Day aims to raise awareness of suicide prevention and to decrease the stigma that prevents people from seeking help. The wearing of yellow symbolizes "a bright bridge that connects those in need to those who help."



Est. M1131 in Souderton, Pa. Pictured, back row, from left to right: Travis Pettis, Phillip McMahon, Rosana Perez, Ellen Robinson, Lynda Lilyestrom. Pictured, front row, from left to right: Liliana Gutierrez, Tracee Ramirez, Sally Erickson.



Est. P912 in Union Springs, Ala. Pictured, from left to right: Angela Arthurs, Savannah Youngblood, Ebony Woods. Not pictured: Howard Yeager, Stephanie Thomas, Sadiq Nadeem.



Est. P912 in Union Springs, Ala. Pictured, back row, from left to right: Deonta' Brooks, Adrienne Nelson-Reynolds, Nancy Renfroe, Doug Carmichael. Pictured, front row, from left to right: Tracey' Seward, Tina Wheeler, Kathy Morrow. Not pictured: Pamela Patterson, Celecia Palmer.

Strategic Plan

... Continued from page 1

resources are being used effectively. It can also be a resource to show employees how their valuable work specifically contributes to the Agency's success.

There's a lot to look forward to, to be proud of, and even to be excited about with this plan. It's not just that it paves the way to enhancing and improving every facet and aspect of FSIS operations. It's also the fact that this is not just a plan, it is our plan, everyone's plan, a plan that was not put together in a vacuum but rather is the result of the widest consultation and most open process that has yet been used for an FSIS Strategic Plan, including our partner agencies (FDA and CDC), stakeholders of all kinds such as industry and consumer groups, and most importantly of

all, employee work groups with involvement from field and headquarter employees.

What we all do matters. Each of us has—you have—an impact on protecting the American people. And if we meet the Strategic Plan's challenge to make noticeable strides forward in how we do our jobs, we will save more lives than ever.

The Beacon will continue to provide coverage of the strategic planning process and will provide more information regarding the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan as it becomes available. The FSIS Strategic Plan for FY 2017-2021 will be released later in 2016 both in paper form and released online at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/informational/aboutfsis/strategic-planning, where the current 2011-2016 Strategic Plan can be found right now.

NPIS Notes

Question of the Month

During a Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) or Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP) window, what happens if the number of applicants exceeds the number in the VERA/VSIP allocation? Where can we find VERA/VSIP User Notices?

Priority will be given to individuals with the most service, as reflected by their Service Computation Date for Retirement. More VERA/VSIP information will be in the *Wednesday Newsline* and at the Agency's Modernization of Poultry Slaughter Inspection Page at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/regulatory-compliance/haccp/haccp-based-inspection-models-project/himp-study-plans-resources/poultry-slaughter-inspection.

NPIS Mailbox

FSIS has set up a mailbox for any employee inquiries about NPIS. The NPIS mailbox is a one-stop shop to find answers to questions regarding the new poultry inspection system.

All questions will be collected and triaged among four senior management officials, who will review them and provide responses in the shortest amount of time possible. Questions and responses are being tracked and posted on *InsideFSIS*.

If you have questions about NPIS, send them to askNPIS@fsis.usda.gov.



The night shift at est. P476, in Carrollton, Ga., wore pink and created a poster board with messages recognizing friends and relatives who are currently battling breast cancer, survivors of breast cancer, or those lost to the disease. Pictured, back row, from left to right: Salita Stephens, Sammuel Pruitt, Haki Reed, Henry Briggs. Pictured, middle row, from left to right: Kathy Larrieu, Jacqueline Johnson, Sherifatu Osibanjo, Timna Jones, Patricia Crocker, Constance Williams. Pictured, front row, from left to right: Monica Gregory, LaTanya Cary. Photo contributed by Constance Williams, OFO.

Breast Cancer Awareness

During the month of October, FSIS personnel across the country raised awareness for breast cancer.



The inspection team at est. M320 in Milan, Mo., wore pink to raise awareness on National Mammography Day. Pictured, standing, from left to right: Tammy Reynolds, Suzanne Riddle, Rodney McDonald, Stanley Heck, Karen Moyer, Kerry Lake, Tony Hines, Julie Lunsford, and Russell Lewis. Pictured, seated: Kyle Buckingham. Photo contributed by Karen Moyer, OFO.



Alameda District

On July 31, 2015, Frontline Supervisor Nashante S. Barnes (pictured, left) presented a Certificate of Merit to CSI Gustavo Pedrin (pictured, right) for exemplary work during the performance of his official duties. Photo contributed by Nashante S. Barnes, OFO.

Jackson District

New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS) Training was conducted in August 2015 at Est. P758 in Carthage, Miss. Instructor 5PHV Dr. Linda Riggs covered the essential information FSIS personnel need to implement NPIS guidelines. Pictured, back row, from left to right: Philip Aman, Angelia Moore, Alfonzo Steward, Edith Mitchel, Jerry Bounds, Felecia Jones, Billy Reed, Lucious Thomas, Gerald Wolverton,



Don Coley, LaJoyce Hathorn, Ronnie Hubbard. Pictured, front row, from left to right: China Pace, Angela Vivians, Lana Collins, Sheryl Young, Eboney Conway, Linda Riggs. Photo contributed by Eboney Conway, OFO.



Atlanta District

On July 23, 2015, Orlando, Fla., Circuit personnel held a work unit meeting and enjoyed a potluck luncheon with Atlanta Deputy District Manager Dr. Jan Brown and Atlanta District Analyst Rick Halteman. Pictured, from left to right: Kenny Pryor, Norberto Roig,

John Nagy, Vishnu Ramnarine, Rick Halteman, Jan Brown, Doug Fulgham, Lou Hernandez, Al Elosge, Castillo Grant, James Gossett, Bob McClure, Michelle Espeut, Paulette Griffith, Sabrina Wiggins, Edwin Lopez, Steven Johnson. Photo contributed by James Gossett, OFO.

FROM THE **FIELD**

OIEA Northeast Region

On August 13, 2015, Supervisory Investigator Lauren Behar presented OIEA Compliance and Investigations Division personnel with awards. Michael Riccardi was awarded for 10 years of service. Joseph Ndungu was awarded a Certificate of Merit in recognition and appreciation of contributions that improved effectiveness within FSIS. Pictured, from left to right: Michael Riccardi, Lauren Behar.



Pictured, from left to right:
Lauren Behar, Joseph Ndungu.
Photos contributed by
Joseph Ndungu, OIEA.



Headquarters

On July 24, 2015, there were 28 supervisors from field and headquarters locations who completed the New Supervisor Training Program. Pictured, back row, from left to right: Vaughn Taylor-Lehman, Gaylan Schroder, Lacey Crowley, Kelsey Ness, Beth Cunningham, Christopher Allen, Joshua Gibbs, Kimberly Holifield,

Deidre Giltner, Arianne Perkins, Rivkah Bradsky, Amber Talley, Scott Huse, Michael Watts. Pictured, front row, from left to right: Anthony Thompson, Medhat Barsoum, Frederick Samadi, Joseph Callicutt, Stephanie Larson, Emily Tolle, Robin Mesta, Chelsea Faircloth, Karin Lupo, Nashante Barnes, Lynne Craine, Valerie Henao, Baljeet Grewal, Shayla Belton, Willis Wright. Photo contributed by Gordon Wilson, OOEET.



Raleigh District

On August 9, 2015, FSIS personnel conducted outreach at the 21st annual Festival Hispano in Millsboro, Del. The festival offered music, dancing, food and children's entertainment. The FSIS personnel distributed food safety information and discussed FSIS job opportunities with potential applicants. Pictured, from left to right: Rosalinda Salinas, Ahmad Jelani, Mary Williams. Photo contributed by Ahmad Jelani, OFO.

OIEA Southeast Region

On September 1, 2015, FSIS recruiters participated in the 5th Congressional District "For the People" Jobs Fair, sponsored by Congressman John Lewis. The job fair attracted approximately 300 people. The FSIS booth had about 125 visitors. Pictured, from left to right: Jeanetta Tankson, Congressman John Lewis, Dana Maxwell. Photo contributed by Dana Maxwell, OIEA.



Des Moines District

On September 3, 2015, the Des Moines District and the University of Minnesota (UM) held a Food Safety Summit in St. Paul, Minn. The goal of the summit was to educate, exchange information and open lines of communication between industry, public health officials and regulatory agencies. Topics included poultry rules, jerky compliance guidelines, food defense/allergens, *FSIS Best Practices*



Guidance for Controlling Listeria monocytogenes (Lm) in Retail Delicatessens and *Lm* compliance guidelines. Pictured, from left to right: Ryan Cox (UM), Dawn Sprouls, Scott Seys, Tom Webber (Buddies Kitchen, Inc.), William K. Shaw Jr., Tiffany Pierce, Brian Hansen, Randy Kumpost, Clarke Jones, Arcenia Oliver. Not pictured: David Baumler (UM). Photo contributed by Patrick Stillwell, OFO.

Dallas District

During the recent Internal Controls Staff meeting in New Orleans, La., Investigator Jaime Murphy (standing) gave a presentation on Hispanic Heritage Month. Murphy's presentation included the history behind the celebration and many interesting facts, as well as a fun trivia game. Photo contributed by Ronnie Dunn, OA.



FROM THE **FIELD**



Philadelphia District

On August 27, 2015, FSIS recruiters participated in the Fort Drum Transition Summit Hiring Our Heroes Career Fair in Fort Drum, N.Y. Paul Brinig (not pictured) and Joshua Rupert (pictured, far right) spoke with approximately 75 service members, veterans and military spouses about FSIS career opportunities and the application process. Photo contributed by Kamir Carrillo, OM.

Philadelphia District

On August 27, 2015, EIAO Wanda Fuentes and FLS Marilu Simeone conducted an outreach activity at the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Mid-Atlantic Regional Office located in Robbinsville, N.J. Several programs operate out of this office, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); National School Lunch Program (NSLP); School Breakfast Program (SBP); and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). The FSIS personnel discussed their roles, and demonstrated the Foodkeeper app and Ask Karen. The FNS personnel, who often work with nutrition and food service staff, found this information very helpful. Pictured, from left to right: Marilu Simeone, Kelly Mannherz (FNS), Wanda Fuentes. Photo contributed by Marilu Simeone, OFO.



Atlanta District

From July 5 - July 17, 2015, the inspection team at est. P476 in Carrollton, Ga., collected personal hygiene items for the homeless. More than \$400 worth of items was donated. Pictured, from left to right: Gary Lambert, Samuel Pruitt, Jacqueline Johnson, Sherifatu Osibanjo, LaTany Cary, Ellen Alphabet, Kathy Larrieu, Henry Briggs, Salita Stephens. Not pictured: Betty Burnam, Carol Helton, Brenda Akles, Sarah Ivey, Patricia Long, Mildred Billingsley, Willie Jones, Sophie Engram, Sheryl Talley, Toria Davis-Foster. Photo contributed by Salita Stephens, OFO.



Rosetta Stone: Interested in Learning a New Language?

By Denise Gallman, OOEET
Phone: (301) 504-3346

If you're interested in learning a new language, *AgLearn* has the answer: Rosetta Stone! Rosetta Stone is a flexible, online language learning program with over 30 languages available to choose from. FSIS continues to offer free access to Rosetta Stone with basic features.

FSIS has also acquired 10 Rosetta Stone TOTAL e licenses, which include additional features such as speech-recognition software, interactive games and opportunities to talk directly with other learners with the help of a tutor. Once learners have completed the basic learning program in a language, they can request access to the TOTAL e features.

Did you know Rosetta Stone is also now accessible via mobile devices? The application offers you the experience of the same speaking, reading, grammar and pronunciation activities that you're practicing on your computer. The app is a free download and mobile device instructions are available.

The languages that FSIS currently has licenses for are: Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Dutch, English (British), English (American), Farsi, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese (Brazil), Russian, Spanish (Spain), Spanish (Latin America), Swedish, Tagalog, Turkish, and Vietnamese.

To begin using Rosetta Stone, talk with your supervisor about participating and complete the application. The application can be found on the Intranet at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/employee/training/eLearning/eLearning.jsp> or email RosettaStone@fsis.usda.gov for more information.

Protocols to Address Emergencies or Imminent Danger in Your Workplace

- ☑ Stay calm
- ☑ Find a safe place (protect yourself)
- ☑ Call 911
- ☑ Call private or local security personnel
- ☑ Call your supervisor
- ☑ Call OIG at 1-800-424-9121 if there is criminal activity

**Workplace Violence Prevention & Response
Program Hotline:**
1-877-987-3747

Employee Assistance Program (EAP):
1-800-222-0364
(TTY: 888-262-7848)

E-mail:
workplaceviolenceprevention@fsis.usda.gov

www.FOH4you.com

Document all incidents of assault, harassment, interference, intimidation or threat per Directive 4735.4.

Correction: *The Beacon incorrectly published CSI Timothy Mullins with 9 years of service in the October FSIS Retirees section. Instead, Mullins of Bridgewater, Va., retired with 30 years of service. We sincerely apologize for this error.*

Available Now: FSIS Competency Models and Resource Guides

By Ellyn Blumberg, OOEET
Phone: (202) 690-3158

Did you know that your job position connects directly to the FSIS Strategic Plan and U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) competencies?

Have you thought, "it would be nice if FSIS had a resource guide to help me identify references, materials, training opportunities and activities that I could use to help build and develop my competencies?"

FSIS has developed Competency Models to build upon and sustain a foundation of qualified and trained professionals like you to meet our current and future needs. The models include customized FSIS competencies that directly link to essential FSIS job functions, strategic plans and organizational mission. Each model also has a companion Resource Guide that contains detailed information regarding the critical knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviors required for each competency as well as an array of tools, suggestions, and

training materials FSIS personnel can use to develop these competencies in themselves and others.

FSIS has posted seven competency models for your reference on the Competency Model Website. The first model, titled *Paths to Success: FSIS Leadership Competency Model* includes 18 customized FSIS leadership competencies that cross all occupations. Specific technical competency models are also available for Public Health Veterinarians, Enforcement Investigations and Analysis Officers, Consumer Safety Inspectors, Auditors, Information Technology Specialists, and Economists. Additional competency resources are provided for Human Resource Specialists and Contract Specialists.

Take a little time as you develop your Individual Development Plan to review these resources and references. If you have questions or would like more information on the training materials discussed in the documents, please contact us at CEDL@fsis.usda.gov or 1-800-336-3747.



Field Service Laboratory Customer Survey Results

By Tracey Hardy, OPHS
Phone: (706) 546-3559

Results from the FSIS Laboratory Customer Feedback survey are in. The Field Service Laboratories (FSLs) formed a committee to review the results and explore ways the laboratory system could provide better service. The following concerns were identified from the survey:

- Inspection Personnel Program (IPP) would like to be notified of results the same time the plant is notified.
- More space needed in LIMS-Direct to provide detailed information about discards.

The FSLs are accredited to comply with the International Standards of Operation (ISO-17025). This certification means the FSLs follow international guidelines that assure sample test results are accepted internationally. Testing

requirements (example: a sample submitted for KIS or campylobacter testing) deem the sample has to be received at a certain temperature and condition. Discard criteria is determined by headquarters and field managers. Therefore, FLSs must follow the Agency guidelines when making the decision to discard samples. FSIS laboratories are required to accept the sample under conditions specified to assure results are accurate and can be legally defended. The FSLs strive to test every sample received. However, if the sample arrives at the lab in an unacceptable condition, the laboratory must discard the sample.

Discards have been greatly reduced over the past few years and we have every expectation the trend will continue. Please take the time to provide feedback by responding to a condensed version of the FSIS Laboratory Customer Feedback survey in January 2015 .



Photo contributed by SENASICA.

FSIS officials and SENASICA inspection officials at the FSIS meat inspection seminar in Aguascalientes, Mexico.

Meat and Poultry Inspection Seminar in Mexico

By Dr. Francisco A. González, OIEA
Phone: (202) 720-0592

FSIS and USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) in collaboration with Mexico's Servicio Nacional de Sanidad, Inocuidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria (SENASICA), held a two-day seminar for 78 veterinary inspection officials from Mexico, September 10-11 in Aguascalientes, Mexico. The purpose of the seminar was to familiarize

SENASICA's inspectors with FSIS inspection regulations and operational procedures. The seminar, held in Spanish, included presentations about Food Defense; Verification of Sanitary Dressing and Process Control Procedures in Slaughter Operations; In-Plant Performance System; Poultry Postmortem Inspection; and Fundamentals of a Food Safety System. FSIS' Francisco Gonzalez, Juan Rodriguez, and John Linville conducted the seminar.

Feeling Blue During the Holidays?

By Kerrie Tao and Jodi Hallstrom, OM
(202) 403-0422/(612) 659-8597

The holidays are supposed to be the "most wonderful time of the year"; yet for some, they trigger deep feelings of sadness, anxiety, stress or loneliness, commonly called "holiday blues." These feelings may occur or become worse due to stressors like holiday financial strain, family events or remembering a lost loved one.

Keep in mind that these feelings could also be a sign of seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which may be caused by the lack of sunlight during the winter months, or other forms of depression or anxiety. If you're experiencing signs of depression, anxiety or stress, it is important that you talk to your doctor.

For many, focusing on positive relationships and rewarding activities can help alleviate the stress of the holiday season. Here are some tips to help you get through the holiday season happily and beat those holiday blues:

- Try to stay consistent with your schedule and don't over-schedule. Stick to your regular family routine as much as possible, keeping bed times and meal times the same, even when away from home.

- Bundle up and take a long walk, hike or bike ride. Fresh air and physical activity is a quick way to feel better.
- Start new traditions or find special ways to enjoy time with family and friends.
- Volunteer for those who need an extra hand at shelters, toy drives, food pantries, etc.
- Do your best to stay positive. Make a list of the things that you are grateful for or that are going well in your life.
- Remind yourself that you are allowed to experience joy and happiness.

If the holiday blues start feeling like too much to overcome, let the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and WorkLife4You help.

Call FOH EAP/Worklife4You at **1-800-222-0364** (TTY 1-888-262-7848) or go online at www.foh4you.com and www.worklife4you.com for free and confidential services, **24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

For more information, contact Jodi Hallstrom at (612) 659-8597 or jodi.hallstrom@fsis.usda.gov.

Avoid Holiday Weight Gain

By Kerrie Tao, OM
Phone: (202) 403-0422

It's that time of year when extra calories lurk around every corner. From turkey and stuffing to cookies, chocolate and eggnog, all of these extras add up! As easy as it is to put on a few pounds by New Year's Day, it can be tough to lose that extra weight. Over time, the pounds continue to add up, which can make holiday weight gain a contributor to obesity.

Here are few tips to avoid holiday weight gain:

- Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so you don't arrive hungry.
- Divert your attention away from unhealthy temptations, and instead choose healthier options like fruits and vegetables.
- Bring healthy treats to parties to share with others.
- Pace yourself when eating and drinking.
- Track your calories.
- Limit your alcohol consumption.
- Get plenty of exercise!

Tips for a Wholesome and Safe Holiday

1. Thawing the turkey or any meat product on the counter might seem easier, but it's not safe. **Thaw your turkey in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave oven.**

2. As tempting as it is to leave out for all to admire, your pumpkin pie contains milk and eggs, so first bake it to the safe minimum internal temperature of 160 °F, then refrigerate after baking.

3. Using the same spoon for stirring and tasting is bad manners and oh yeah, it can spread bacteria and viruses.

4. No matter how good it looks, you can only tell if a whole turkey is safely cooked when the internal temperature reaches 165°F. Always use a food thermometer.

5. Wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers, or handling pets.

6. Never stuff your turkey the night before cooking it. To avoid harmful bacteria growth and food poisoning, the wet and dry ingredients can be prepared the night before and refrigerated separately. Mix the ingredients and stuff the turkey just before cooking.

7. More leftovers than usual? Refrigerate leftovers in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking and use within 3-4 days or freeze. Reheat thoroughly to 165 °F.

Learn more about holiday food safety at:
www.foodsafety.gov



>>> RECALLS

Nov. 1	Nebraska firm recalls ground beef products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 contamination.
Nov. 1	California firm recalls salad kit products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Nov. 6	Ohio firm recalls steak fiesta beef products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Nov. 6	Canadian firm recalls boneless pork products produced without benefit of import inspection.
Nov. 7	North Dakota firm recalls beef and pork bratwurst due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Nov. 7	Colorado firm recalls beef, pork, and poultry products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Nov. 17	Arkansas firm recalls chicken wing product due to possible adulteration.
Nov. 19	Illinois firm recalls pepperoni pizzas products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Nov. 25	Missouri firm recalls beef products due to misbranding and undeclared allergen.
Nov. 27	California firm recalls beef and chicken empanada products produced without benefit of inspection.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- Directive 7120.1 Revision 31, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products
- Notice 70-15, Control of Products Tested by the Agency for Adulterants
- Directive 9500.1, Contingency Plan For Import Reinspections When The Public Health Information System (PHIS) Is Not Available
- Directive 9900.1, Imported Product Shipment Presentation
- Directive 9900.2, Import Reinspection of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products
- Directive 9900.3, Prestamping Imported Product

- Directive 9900.5, Label Verification of Imported Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products
- Directive 9900.6, Laboratory Sampling Program for Imported Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products
- Directive 9900.7, Laboratory Sampling Program for Imported Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products
- Directive 9900.8, Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products Refused Entry Into The United States

Administrative issues were also published.

- Notice 72-15, Special Provisions for the End of the Leave Year
- Notice 71-15, Cutoff Dates for Yearend Purchases Fiscal Year 2016

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



United States Department of Agriculture

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Volume
20

Number
1

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

January 2016

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More Snapshots!

Because you asked for it,
this month's issue includes
DOUBLE the photos!
Snapshots begin on page 6.

Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



2015

A Year in Pictures

See more photos on page 3.

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN

Reflect on the past – Look forward to the future

Each new year, we have an opportunity to reflect on the past and consider new ideas for improvement. In 2014, FSIS released an Employee Engagement Action Plan, which identified several key areas of improvement, including employee recognition. The Agency has identified 17 questions in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) that specifically address how well we are doing in the area of employee engagement. These 17 questions were specifically targeted for improvement in the Agency's Employee Engagement Action Plan. I am happy to report that in the 2015 FEVS, 16 out of those 17 questions showed improvement from the previous year's scores. We continue to analyze data from the 2015 FEVS as we look for ways to further ensure that our employees

stayed connected to not only the mission but also to each other.

Through feedback from the FEVS and Agency-level employee engagement activities, we learned that employees would like more opportunities to recognize their peers. One of the ways that we've provided peer recognition has been through the Kudos page in *The Beacon*. This is a forum for you to thank and congratulate your peers for their excellence in FSIS.

In addition, the Office of Management is working on a new, non-monetary Peer Recognition Program for employees to recognize colleagues who perform exceptionally, demonstrate outstanding dedication or show extraordinary commitment to teamwork.

Continued on page 2 ...

The Beacon is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education for FSIS employees.

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The deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

March issue – due Feb. 1
 April issue – due March 1
 May issue – due April 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 720-9113
 Fax: (202) 690-0460

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

Supervisors

The Beacon is mailed monthly to field employees; however, please remember to print and post The Beacon for employees without access to email.

Meet the FSIS Management Council

By Jeremy J. Emmert, OPACE
 Phone: (202) 205-3058

Are you familiar with the FSIS Management Council (MC)? The MC consists of the FSIS' Administrator, Deputy Administrator, Chief Operating Officer, Assistant Administrators (AA) and Deputy Assistant Administrators (DAA). The MC meets weekly and is the senior decision-making body through which the Agency obtains internal approval and authorization for all investments, projects, proposed policy initiatives and changes to existing policy decisions and other Agency initiatives that impact FSIS' mission and goals. It is the members of the MC who are responsible for implementing the vision of FSIS' goals, priorities and values. They assess and adjust to changing situations with innovative solutions ranging from incremental improvements to major shifts in direction or approach, as appropriate. Three governance boards were established to advise the MC. Those boards serve as the subject matter experts to review the broad range of issues that come before the group. Learn more about the FSIS Enterprise governance decision making process at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/informational/aboutfsis/strategic-planning/enterprise-governance.

The FSIS Management Council

Office of the Administrator

Alfred V. Almanza, Acting Administrator
 Phil Derfler, Deputy Administrator
 Carmen Rottenberg, Chief Operating Officer
 Jane Doherty, International Coordination Executive
 Chief Information Officer: Janet B. Stevens
 Deputy Chief Information Officer: Jennifer V. Sisto
 Chief Financial Officer: Steve Fisher

Office of Data Integration & Food Protection (ODIFP)

AA: Terri Nintemann
 DAA: Soumaya Tohamy

Office of Field Operation (OFO)

AA: William C. "Bill" Smith
 DAA: Ronald Jones

Office of Outreach, Employee Education, & Training (OOEET)

Assistant Administrator: Michael Watts
 Chief Training Officer: Stephanie Wilkins

Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education (OPACE)

AA: Carol Blake
 DAA: Aaron Lavallee

Office of Management (OM)

AA: Jacqueline Myers
 DAA: Gabrielle Y. James

Office of Investigation, Enforcement & Audit (OIEA)

AA: Carl Mayes
 DAA: Pete Bridgeman

Office of Public Health Science (OPHS)

AA: David Goldman
 DAA: Vivian T. Chen

Office of Policy & Program Development (OPPD)

AA: Dan Engeljohn
 DAA: Rachel Edelstein

DUS COLUMN

... Continued from page 1

The goal of this program will be to provide employees with an opportunity to express their appreciation to a colleague who has helped them in an exceptional way. Look for additional details about this program in upcoming editions of the Wednesday Newsline and The Beacon.

"Your work and the work of your peers is important to the Agency. A few words of appreciation can have a great impact on a person's performance, confidence and motivation. This program will represent a new way for employees to make sure that each and every deserving person gets the chance to be recognized for the good things they are doing for the Agency. In the end, a positive work environment with encouragement from colleagues will make us all stronger.

I'm looking forward to seeing your nominations for these awards and working together to build a strong and positive work environment in 2016. Have a happy and healthy New Year!"

BRAZIL: On April 11-17, 2015, DUS Alfred Almanza was in Lins, Brazil to discuss their food safety programs and international cooperation.



Photos contributed by Katherine Scheidt, OPAE.



CHINA: On Nov. 4, 2015, DUS Almanza spoke at the China International Food Safety & Quality (CIFSQ) Conference Expo in Beijing, China. Each year the CIFSQ offers regulatory officials, food executives, scientists and other stakeholders an opportunity to come together to discuss key issues and explore viable solutions. You can review AI's remarks on the FSIS website at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/ffsis/newsroom/speeches-presentations/archive/2015-speeches/speech-almanza-cifsq-110415.



CHILE: In October 2015, DUS Almanza and the Chilean Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Claudio Ternicier, sign documents representing their country's intent to cooperate on issues related to food safety.

FSIS & Food Safety Around the Globe



AUSTRALIA: On May 4, 2015, DUS Almanza gave the opening remarks to the Beef Australia 2015 Official Symposium in Rockhampton, Australia. Among other topics, he spoke about food safety modernization, the Public Health Information System (PHIS), and international food safety laws. You can review his remarks on the FSIS website at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/ffsis/newsroom/speeches-presentations/archive/2015-speeches/speech-almanza-beef-australia-050415.

"Count Your Steps" Challenge

In January, the Office of Management will conduct "Count Your Steps," an Agency-wide fitness competition where the three top "steppers" will win prizes, along with recognition of their efforts in *The Beacon*, the *Wednesday Newsline* or OM's newsletter, *News Bytes*. All employees are encouraged to participate. To track your steps, the count your step log is located at <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/centerContent/fsisPage.jsp?keyword=WellnessProgram3130>. Please remember to use your personal smart phone if you choose to participate. For information on protecting yourself when using mobile apps, go to www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0018-understanding-mobile-apps. Please contact Kerrie Tao, Wellness Program Manager, at (202) 402-0433 or via email at worklifeandwellness@fsis.usda.gov for additional information.

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Abdur-Razzaq, Ahmed R., SVMO	Newark Valley, N.Y.	13	Henry, Wanda, CSI	Decatur, Ala.	39
Ali, Magdi AM, FI-Procsd Products	Elizabeth, N.J.	15	Ibraheim, Mohamed, Prog Analyst	Washington, D.C.	38
Anderson, LeRoy, Supvy CSI	Cornelia, Ga.	34	Johnson, Harry A., FI-S	Sumter, S.C.	30
Ard, Raymond L., SVMO	Huntingburg, Ind.	26	Kelley, James Michael, Int'l Issues Analyst	Houston, Texas	38
Balderas Salas, Colleen M., FI-S	Cactus, Texas	26	Knight, Shirley, Supvy IT Spec	Washington, D.C.	32
Blomendahl, Herbert, FI	Wakefield, Neb.	30	Lewis, Steven W., FI-PP	Waelder, Texas	37
Botsford, Robert, CSI	McCook, Neb.	32	Lorberau, Charles D., Chemist	St. Louis, Mo.	30
Bratkiewicz, Lucian, Supvy CSO	Storm Lake, Iowa	44	Mann, Charles R., CSI	Farmerville, La.	21
Butler, Steve B., CSO	Omaha, Neb.	33	Maxam, Kevin J., CSI	Whitehall, N.Y.	26
Calvert, Janice, Office Autom Clerk	Springdale, Ark.	12	McLeroy, Gina E., Chemist	Athens, Ga.	37
Casarez, Rose V., FI-S	Fresno, Calif.	21	Meagher, Michael J., CSI	Long Prairie, Minn.	30
Collins, John T., Microbiologist	Alameda, Calif.	27	Moore Jr., Cleo, FI-S	Broken Bow, Okla.	30
Crowley, Kevin, IT Spec.	Washington, D.C.	30	Morris, Robert G., SVMO	South West City, Mo.	11
Day, Robert W, CSI	Chelsea, Mass.	24	Morrow, Roy, CSI	Albertville, Ala.	46
Debrow, Christell, CSI	Douglas, Ga.	14	Mushock, Thomas A., CSI	Easton, Pa.	38
Douglas, Clarence, FI-S	Hazlehurst, Miss.	16	Navarro, Antonio Suzuki, CSI	Madera, Calif.	30
Dow, Albert, CSI	Green Forest, Ark.	31	Puette, Michelle, VMO	Athens, Ga.	32
Drayton, Marion Collins, FI	Millsboro, Del.	33	Resweber, Paul, District Manager	Ridgeland, Mich.	26
Edberg, Duane, CSI	Denver, Colo.	33	Sheaffer, Roger Dale, CSI	Springs Mills, Pa.	34
Gober, Geraldine, FI-S	Cornelia, Ga.	16	Spraggins, Michael, CSI	Gadsden, Ala.	28
Gossett, James P., SVMO	Orlando, Fla.	32	Stevenson, Joyce Mae, CSI	Voorhees, N.J.	25
Grandy, Evelyn L., Chemist	St. Louis, Mo.	33	Swint, Ronald E., CSI	Chapel Hill, N.C.	36
Graves, Gail C., Prog Anal	Athens, Ga.	41	Westbrook, Loretta G., FI-S	Springdale, Ark.	30
Gregory Jr., Phillip, FI-S	Seguin, Texas	7	Urban, Oto, VMO	Washington, D.C.	28
Hanna, Ramzy Said, FI-S	New Holland, Pa.	7	Valencich, Kenneth, CSI	Delta, Colo.	17
Hartman, Janet, Prog Asst	Urbandale, Iowa	14	Waldrop, Stephen M., Lab Supprt Wrkr	Athens, Ga.	15
Hausman, Dennis D., CSI	Nashville, Ark.	15	Washington, Aaron, CSI	Forest, Miss.	32
Hayes, Diana, Supvy CSI	Montgomery, Ala.	31	Waterbury, Mark, FI-PP	Sioux Center, Iowa	13
Henderson, Julianne, Mgmt & Prog Analyst	Hot Springs, Ark.	28	Weyand, John H., CSI	Johnstown, Pa.	23
			Williams, Reginald, CSI	Kapolei, Hawaii	20



Omaha, Neb.

FSIS personnel at the Zorinsky Federal Building in Omaha, Neb., showed their team spirit and wore their favorite team jerseys or shirts to celebrate the kickoff of the 2015 football season. Back row, from left are Steve Perigo, Jose Gabiola, Mike McCann, Carrie Leathers, Ron Eckel, Tammy Swotek, Pete Duryea, Joel Willnerd, Jon Coleman. Front row, from left are Elizabeth Starrett, Jim Holterman, Ilene Arnold, Deb Arthur, Christyn Stumps, Bob Witte and Tom Vermeersch. Photo contributed by Deborah Arthur, OIEA.

Jackson, Ala.

On September 15, 2015, the inspection team at est. P7485 presented their frontline supervisor, Dr. Winston Felton, with an award in recognition of his support of employee wellness, health, safety and work-life balance. From left are Carolyn Grantham, Angela Carlisle, Tammy Foley, Mary Wiley, Teresa Carpenter, Lynn Luckenbaugh, Steven Nathan, Winston Felton, Charlotte Archie, Ellen Shipman and Becky Adkins. Photo contributed by Teresa Carpenter, OFO.



Palestine, Texas

On October 19, 2015, inspection personnel at est. P51179 honored loved ones who are fighting breast cancer or other types of cancer. The team wore pink and brought pink items for lunch, including a breast cancer awareness cake with their names and names of their loved ones written on it. From left are Rosemary Rich, Jason Jones, Meka Johnson, Carl Franklin, Denise Phillips, Carrie Teetz, Jennifer McKean and Marco Cervantes. Photo contributed by Carrie Teetz, OFO.



FROM THE **FIELD**

Heavener, Okla.

SPHV Dr. Randy Daily (left) pose with CSI William Phillips, who is proudly holding a pin and certificate for 40 years of service. Photo contributed by Randy Daily, OFO.



Forest, Miss.

On September 24, 2015, personnel at est. P164 wore red to raise awareness for sickle cell disease. From left are Anthony Patrick, Dorothy Crawford, Ella McClendon, Tasha Hudson, Lorraine Smith, laneitha Amos, Briggett Hughes, Phyllis Lampkin, Chris Derricks. Not pictured: Janice Sanderson, Wayne Cox, TJ Dear, Charles Gray, Jerry House, Joseph Callicut, Elliott Bufkin. Photo contributed by Elliott Bufkin, OFO.



Union Springs, Ala.

In September, personnel at est. P912 held an event to raise awareness about sickle cell disease. Back row, from left are Tracey' Seward, Nancy Renfroe, Celecia Palmer, Abdelmoniem Hassan and Adrienne Nelson-Reynolds. Front row, from left are Pam Patterson, Doug Carmichael, Tina Wheeler. Photo contributed by Adrienne Nelson-Reynolds, OFO.



SNAPSHOTS



Shelby, Mont.

In October 2015, CID Investigator Victoria Sulenes represented FSIS at the Toole County Health Fair. She spoke to visitors regarding FSIS' food safety messages (Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill). She also distributed educational materials and answered food safety questions. Photo contributed by Victoria Sulenes, OIEA.

Omaha, Neb.

Last Fall, FSIS personnel participated in an 8-week sand volleyball league. Participants included staff from OPPD and OIEA. The league provided the participants with an opportunity to exercise and enjoy the outdoors. In addition, the group donated food items to a local food bank, in support of the Feds Feeds Families campaign.

From left are Cindy Whitley, Carrie Leathers, Robert Witte, Tammy Swotek, Kris Kenne and Ron Eckel.

T teammates not pictured: Jon Coleman, Joe Dowling, Dr. Tom Vermeersch, Isabel Arrington, Kevin Gillespie.

Photo contributed by Joe Dowling, OA.



Dallas, Texas



On October 5-8, 2015, Beth Leopold of FSIS, along with personnel from the Department and nine other USDA agencies, presented a booth at the 2015 Out and Equal Workplace Summit. In this photo, Dr. Leonard is holding a porpoise stress toy, to symbolize "One Team, One Porpoise"! Front row, from left are Bill Aley (APHIS), Jim Lootens-White (FS), Erica Woodland (FSIS) and Tremayne Wilson (NASS). Back row, from left are Anika Patterson (OASCR), Cheryl Simmons (NRCS), John Payne (APHIS), Kimberly Mounce (FSIS), Jeremy Woods (APHIS), Joe Leonard (OASCR), Beth Leopold (FSIS), Nicola Sakhleh (FAS), Meghan Walter (NRCS), Slade Childers (FSA) and Ashlee Davis (OASCR). Photo contributed by Beth Leopold, OIEA.

FROM THE **FIELD**



St. Paul, Minn.

On September 30, 2015, Dr. Katherine Dantzler-Olson (right), attended the University of Minnesota – St. Paul Campus Job and Internship Fair and Employer Meet and Greet. Dantzler-Olson met students from fields including agriculture, food science/nutrition, animal science and veterinary science. Dantzler-Olson has been recruiting at University of Minnesota job fairs for approximately 15 years. Photo contributed by Pam Johnson, OFO.

Carrollton, Ga.

In honor of Veterans Day, the inspection at est. P476 prepared treats for their veteran colleagues. From left are Willie Jones, Norman Morse, Sheryl Talley and Bruce Brim. Photo contributed by Sheryl Talley, OFO.



Augusta, Ga.

During the month of October, the inspection team at est. M332 observed Purple Thursday to raise awareness about domestic violence prevention. They wore different shades of purple at work to honor victims and support survivors of domestic violence. Front row, from left are Kathy Hall, Kysha Hendricks and Morella Joseph. Back row, from left are Rosa Davis, Dora Hart, Thomas Kuykendall and Vincent Crawford. Photo contributed by Kysha Hendricks, OFO.



Step Into the Zone!

Food Safety Discovery Zone Rolls into 2016

In fiscal year 2015, the Food Safety Discovery Zone (FSDZ) received more than 30,000 visitors at 17 different events in 8 states across the U.S. This program could not have been so successful without the help of volunteers.

For fiscal year 2016, the FSDZ exhibit will once again hit the road to enhance public education and outreach to improve food handling practices.

So how can you help us out this year?

- The FSDZ travels to high-attendance events that have a focus on food, public health and/or Hispanic community outreach. If you know of such an event in your area, tell us about it. You can email the FSDZ staff at luis.delgadillo@fsis.usda.gov or adam.ghering@fsis.usda.gov with the details. The FSDZ exhibit may not make it to every suggested event, but the Food Safety Education Staff will work to dispatch a Food Safety Ambassador and materials to suggested events when possible.
- If you're interested in volunteering at an event, keep an eye out for more information and a call for volunteers in upcoming editions of the *Wednesday Newsline*.

The FSDZ program links the Agency's most valuable asset, its people, with the public whom we serve. Together we can work to reduce the rate of foodborne illnesses nationally! Thanks to those who volunteered with the Discovery Zone in 2015: Tammy Herring (OFO), Angela Draper (OIEA), Trinisa Williams (OFO), Brent Limoges (OIEA), Kelly Welin (OFO), Louis Tate (OIEA), Beatrice Aguado (OFO), Mounira Naguib (OFO), Bogdan Semtchichin (OFO), Gary Tietz (OFO), D'Juan Jenkins (OFO), Joseph Woltz III (OIEA), Jeremy Emmert (OPACE), Tim Tice (OFO), Dan Jozofowski (OFO), Clark McKimmy (OIEA), Michael Barta (OIEA), Yolande Mitchell (OPACE), Sarah Lichtman (OPACE), Clara Yuvienco (OPACE), Jeffery Griess (OIEA) and Alan Shadduck (OIEA).



COMING SOON

Strategic Plan Review 2011- 2016

Did you know that FSIS has a dedicated web page where you can view future and past strategic planning documents? Visit www.fsis.usda.gov/strategic-planning to view past plans and current plans.

February	Goal 1
March	Goal 2
April	Goal 3
May	Goal 4
June	Goal 5
July	Goal 6
August	Goal 7
September	Goal 8

Beginning in February 2016, *The Beacon* will introduce a series of articles covering each of the 2011-2016 Strategic Plans eight goals. Submissions from readers are welcome!



We Want You to Write for *The Beacon*!

In 2016, The Beacon editorial staff seeks original content from personnel across the FSIS program areas on mission related topics, such as policy initiatives, innovations and projects. Use The Beacon to help inform your colleagues around the country about the innovative ways you are protecting public health. In the first quarter of 2016 we are seeking articles related to the following topic areas:

First Quarter of 2016	
Microbiology Chemistry APP Goals 1 to 3	Budget Testimony Agricultural Outlook Forum Consumer Safety Inspection

Please submit your articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Articles must be original work, cleared by your supervisor, and include your name and contact information. Please limit your submission to 250 words. The Beacon editorial staff will edit submissions for content and length. Due to the number of submissions received each month and the limited amount of space, submissions are not guaranteed placement in *The Beacon*.

>>> RECALLS

Dec. 3 Pennsylvania firm recalls pureed meat products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.

Dec. 9 Arkansas firm recalls pork products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.

Dec. 18 New York firm recalls pork products produced without benefit of import inspection.

Dec. 19 Kentucky firm recalls pork products produced without benefit of inspection.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- Directive 1310.1, Electronic Communications Operations Persons (E-COP) Procedures
- Notice 73-15, Reinspection Procedures for Product Presented for Export at Official Establishments
- Notice 80-15, Updated Instructions for the Raw Pork Products Exploratory Sampling Project (RPPESP)
- Notice 81-15, Import Residue Sampling
- Notice 82-15, Country of Origin Labeling, Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) Final Rule
- Directive 9530.1 Rev 2, Importation of Live Canadian Cattle, Sheep, and Goats into the United States (U.S.)

Administrative issues were also published.

- Notice 75-15, List of Electronic Communications Operations Persons (E-COPs)
- Notice 76-15, Cancellation of FSIS Directive 4430.1, Performance Evaluation Plan
- Notice 77-15, Holidays in 2016
- Notice 78-15, Instructions for Verifying Validation Requirements during Performance of the Hazard Analysis Verification (HAV) Task and Food Safety Assessments
- Notice 79-15, Cancelling FSIS Notice 62-15, Replacement Certificates

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Photo contributed by Katherine Scheidt, OPACE.

Personnel from the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education (OPACE) collected holiday food, decorations and gifts to donate to a family in need. From left are Kristen Booze, Carol Blake, Brittany Woodland, Fatima Weaver, Gabrielle Johnston, Julie Schwartz, Adriana Rivera-Montalvo, Anne-Marie Waddell, Nina Anand and Richard McIntire.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

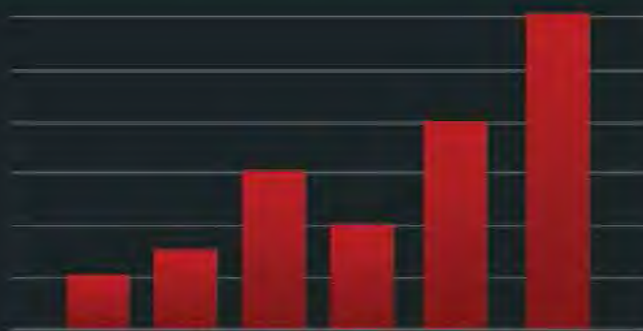
Volume 20
Number 2

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

February 2016

Annual Performance Plan FY 2016



One Team, One Purpose

Inside This Issue

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

Soon, FSIS will be reporting out on the Agency's 2015 accomplishments. This information will be captured in the annual "Year in Review" document. These accomplishments are also a part of FSIS' budget request to Congress. The FSIS Annual Performance Plan (APP) for 2015 can be found online at www.fsis.usda.gov/APP2015. The new APP for 2016 can be found online at www.fsis.usda.gov/strategic-planning. The FSIS Fiscal Year 2011- 2016 Strategic Plan can be found online at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portallinformationallaboutfsis/strategic-planning.

Gearing Up for the New Strategic Plan

By Leo O'Drudy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-8693

On October 1, 2015, we entered fiscal year 2016, which comes to an end on September 30, 2016, and is also the final fiscal year in which we will use our current 2011-2016 Strategic Plan. As we move forward into calendar year 2016, one of the most important events coming up will be the release of the new Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2017-2021. This document will be an important foundation for everything we do in the Agency, setting our course for years to come. It will shape our Annual Performance Plans, which in turn shape the standards by which our job performance is measured.

While it's too soon to know all of the details, we know that the process is already using lessons learned from the previous plan – like

getting more early input from stakeholders and employees through focus groups, as well as a planning work group on specific topics of emphasis. The process will also make sure that the new Strategic Plan's measures are things that we really can and should measure. The new plan aims to be more streamlined and focused, enabling the Agency to better concentrate its resources and efforts, and maximize the odds of success. It also aims to better reflect the work we do and how we all fit into the overall picture. Keep watching *The Beacon* as well as other official sources for the details of the new plan as it emerges.

The current Strategic Plan can be found online at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portallinformationallaboutfsis/strategic-planning.

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

The Beacon Mission Statement

The Beacon newsletter is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education to provide relevant mission critical information to all FSIS employees. *The Beacon* provides employees information about the Agency's proposed regulations, policies, and programs; training opportunities; and important employee welfare initiatives to connect employees to the mission and build a cohesive community.

The Beacon enables employees to stay up to date with the latest events and see the Agency's mission executed in action.

Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education

Carol Blake, Assistant Administrator

Aaron Lavallee, Deputy Assistant Administrator

Eshael M. Johnson, Director

Jeremy J. Emmert, Editor-in-Chief

Sarah Lichtman, Deputy Editor

Rowena M. Becknel, Designer

Editorial Board:

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Peggy Riek

Julie Schwartz

Jason Waggoner

Brittany Woodland

Deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

April issue – due March 1

May issue – due April 1

June issue – due May 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 690-8881

Fax: (202) 815-2707

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

The FSIS Management Council

Alfred V. Almanza

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Rachel Edelstein

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN

This month, I will testify before Congress during our annual budget hearing. When I do this, I share with members of Congress the reasons why FSIS should continue to operate and receive federal funds that allow us to run our programs, pay for equipment and support your salaries. As you can imagine, members often ask me questions about why we should continue to operate the way we do.

Our Annual Performance Plan and our Strategic Plan are roadmaps for achieving our goals and help me answer these questions. As we prepared the 2016 FSIS budget request, we used these roadmap documents to evaluate current and future activities, streamline areas for savings and find new and innovative methods to achieve targeted outcomes. In the next few months, you will be hearing more about our 2016 Annual Performance Plan and our upcoming Strategic Plan that will cover 2017-2021.

At each opportunity, I tell Congress about the exceptional work that you do to ensure that the nation's supply of meat, poultry and processed egg products is safe, wholesome, and properly labeled. Your work is the reason that I can speak with confidence and pride when questioned by congressional committees. Every single day, I think about the contributions that you make and what you do. Thank you for your hard work and commitment to the FSIS mission.



Alfred V. Almanza



Image courtesy of U.S. Department of Labor

CELEBRATE HISTORY

Anthony Thompson

Modernizing Training Programs



Photos contributed by Anthony L. Thompson, OOEET.

Anthony L. Thompson provided training to the Office of Management (OM) employees on "Increasing Your Relevance in Uncertain Times" during a Customized Learning Trove session requested by OM leadership.

*By Jason Waggoner, OPACE
Phone: (202) 708-9535*

Anthony Thompson is a Training and Program Analysis Specialist with FSIS' Office of Outreach, Employee Education and Training (OOEET). OOEET provides consolidated access, resources and technical support for small and very small plants to better assist them in providing safe and wholesome meat, poultry and processed egg products. OOEET is also responsible for directing outreach, education and training programs designed to ensure public health and food safety through both inspection and enforcement.

Since joining FSIS in 2010, Thompson has been responsible for managing several of the Agency's leadership and career development programs, including the FSIS New Supervisor Training Program (NSTP), the FSIS Experienced Supervisor Training Program, the FSIS Escalade Leadership Development Program, the FSIS Learning Trove and the FSIS Gateway.

In particular, the NSTP provides combined training sessions with employees from both field and headquarters locations, which allows participants to get a holistic perspective of the challenges their colleagues face in a variety of situations. These programs are mandated by USDA's Departmental Regulation 4040-412-002, which supports succession planning by developing future government leaders. Under these programs, supervisors receive the training they need

to effectively mentor employees; improve employee performance and productivity; conduct employee performance appraisals in accordance with Agency appraisal systems; and identify and assist employees with unacceptable performance. "We are constantly on a quest to improve all employees' development programs. We conduct evaluations of all programs on a continual basis to ensure that the training delivered is competency-based and adds value to the Agency and the employee," Thompson said.

Thompson believes that the key to the success and strength of these programs is understanding the FSIS mission and using core competencies to increase employee engagement. All FSIS training as well as training provided by USDA's Cultural Transformation Initiative incorporates the FSIS Foundational and Core Competencies. Thompson, along with other OOEET employees, participates in the Strategic Planning Committee and other committees aimed ensuring that employees are provided with both required and desired training.

Prior to joining FSIS in October of 2010, Thompson spent 24 years in the U.S. Navy as an Independent Duty Hospital Corpsman. In this role, he ensured that food supplies were inspected for safety and wholesomeness, and that they were stored at the correct temperature. Thompson's time with the Navy prepared him for his role in FSIS' public health mission. In his spare time, Anthony is working on his master's degree in Human Resources Development and plans to complete his studies in 2017. He currently holds a national certification from the Society of Human Resource Management as a Senior Certified Professional in Human Resources and a national certification in human resources from the HR Certification Institute.

Funding FSIS and Our Food Safety Mission

By Josh Stull, OPACE
Phone: (202)690-3112

The budget and appropriations process is how our Agency receives funding to carry out our food safety mission.

Within FSIS, the process starts with the Agency's budget request. Each spring, the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) begins to develop a budget. This spring, OCFO will meet to discuss funding for fiscal year 2018. OCFO gathers information directly from each program area on what funding is needed. Then, OCFO takes proposals to the Management Council, which identifies FSIS priorities. The draft budget proposal is then reviewed by the Department's Office of Budget and Program Analysis (OBPA) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Once approved by all, the President submits the overall budget proposal to Congress, typically by the first Monday of February.

For the House and Senate, the first legislative step in the appropriations process is for each chamber to approve a budget resolution early in each calendar year, which gives respective appropriations committees the numbers on how much each can appropriate, or fund. Each appropriations committee has subcommittees that have their own jurisdiction over federal departments and agencies.

FSIS' Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education (OPACE) drafts testimony and prepares both Department and Agency leadership during this time. As the liaison between the Agency and Congress, OPACE's Congressional team ensures that Department and Agency leadership knows what is important to Representatives and Senators, especially those on committees that have jurisdiction over FSIS.

The testimony of both Department and Agency leadership is crucial, since it's the official record of what is important

to FSIS. It also focuses on policy and accomplishments, not necessarily just on specific numbers that were included in the budget request.

After the budget request is sent to Congress, the leadership of all departments and agencies, including FSIS, are asked to testify before appropriations subcommittees at hearings to discuss respective funding requests. Additionally, the hearings provide an opportunity for members to ask questions about specific department and agency policies, as well as issues important to their individual states or congressional districts, including USDA offices or FSIS-regulated establishments.

When the budget hearings have concluded and the testimony examined, each subcommittee staff drafts funding legislation for the departments and agencies under their jurisdiction, which is then brought to the entire subcommittee for consideration. This step is referred to as a mark-up. Throughout the committee process, members have the opportunity to offer and ask for votes on amendments. Once the full committees agree on a funding bill by passing it, the respective leadership of the House and Senate schedule the legislation for more debate and consideration in each respective chamber. This is when the bills are actually brought to each floor to be debated and voted on.

A conference committee reconciles the differences between House and Senate appropriations bills. A final funding bill is then sent to the House and Senate for final passage. At that point, no amendments can be offered, as it would require the whole process to start over. If the conference appropriations legislation passes both chambers, then the President can either sign the bill into law or veto it. If it's vetoed, then Congress must re-approve and re-send another funding bill for approval.

Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

Many employees are in need of leave for personal or family medical emergencies. If you have annual leave that you could spare, you can help by donating it via the Leave Transfer Program. You can view the most current list on *InsideFSIS*.

In addition to a listing of approved leave recipients, you will find more information about donating leave, forms, rules, eligibility and requirements. For more information, contact Sonja Tomlinson in OM's Employment, Classification and Compensation Branch at Sonja.Tomlinson@fsis.usda.gov or (202) 708-8179.

Correction: *The Beacon* incorrectly published District Manager Paul Resweber's state in the January FSIS Retirees section. Resweber retired from Ridgeland, Miss.

We sincerely apologize for this error.

FSIS Plans Internal Communications Improvements

By Kristen Booze, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-7887

Thank you for your participation in the internal communications survey, published in the September and October issues of *The Beacon*. As we enter the new year, FSIS is committed to improve the ways our personnel connect to the mission of the Agency and ensure that everyone has a voice within the Agency.

We want you to know your feedback is heard. Since 2013, survey results have shown that FSIS employees' preferred methods of communication are *The Beacon*, *Wednesday Newsline* and information provided by supervisors. We're glad these internal communication methods are successful, and we will continue to utilize and improve these channels. Some feedback that we have received to date has already affected the way we produce internal communication products like *The Beacon*. In the most recent internal communications survey, respondents indicated that they wanted to see more pictures of their FSIS colleagues and what they are doing around the country. In response, we included more photos in the December issue of *The Beacon* and aim to continue incorporating photos of our mission in action as much as possible. While this is just one small change, we are committed to understanding the feedback we receive and effectively implementing further changes to address that feedback.

This is just the beginning. In fiscal year 2016, we are going to try some new strategies to shine the spotlight on our personnel. One of these is FSIS' latest employee engagement initiative, i-Impact. i-Impact is an interactive workshop that will be delivered to all FSIS personnel. In the workshop, through interactive multimedia materials and guided group discussions, we will explore the various and unique ways our daily work activities contribute to the strategic goals of the Agency, directly supporting our mission. You will also have another chance to provide your feedback. Count on i-Impact rolling out in the spring or summer of 2016!

We are exploring other new and innovative approaches that have never been used within FSIS. The goal is for every employee to relate to and see how they fit into the Agency's public health mission.

To obtain additional input, the internal communications survey is going to be e-mailed to a random sample of FSIS employees for completion. If you receive the survey, we ask that you participate, as this data will help us further improve our internal communications for the future. We will be sure to follow up in coming editions of *The Beacon* with information about the results of this survey and the actions that are being taken to implement the feedback we receive. We look forward to hearing your feedback!

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Altstatt, Janita M., CSI	Huntsville, Ala.	24	Jawid, Mohammad S., SVMO	Waterloo, Iowa	33
Anstett, Thomas, CSI	Lakewood, Colo.	32	Johns, Sheree L., Phys Sci Technician	St. Louis, Mo.	33
Beatty, Freddie, FI-S	Morton, Miss.	41	King, Timothy B., VMO	Des Moines, Iowa	20
Bogan, Timothy P., CSI	Springdale, Ark.	27	Kuamoo, James, CSI	Kahaluu, Hawaii	21
Carreon, Bernard, CSI	Madison, Wis.	51	Olds, Jr., Kenneth, CSI	Honolulu, Hawaii	21
Choragwicki, Casey, FI-S	Momence, Ill.	21	Ramzan, Mahmood, Deputy Dist. Mgr.	Raleigh, N.C.	33
Cockerham, Steven D., Supry CSI	Grand Island, Neb.	37	Smith, Lanny D., FI-S	Mt. Pleasant, Texas	12
Gutierrez, David, CSI	Greeley, Colo.	32	Westen, Linda, FI-S	Chattanooga, Tenn.	9
Hall, Shirley, Mgmt. & Prog. Analyst	Washington, D.C.	32	White, Juanita, CSI	Broken Bow, Okla.	24
Hausman, Dorothy A., CSI	Hope, Ark.	20	Williams, Shirley, CSI	Omaha, Neb.	34
Hudson, Sharon, Mgmt. Analyst	Washington, D.C.	29			

SNAPSHOTS



Madison, Wis.

On November 17, 2015, the Des Moines District Office, in conjunction with University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW), participated in the Wisconsin Food Safety Summit. The goals of the summit were to educate, exchange information and open the lines of communication between the different segments of the industry, public health officials and regulatory agencies. Some of the topics covered included Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points validation, a systems approach to food safety

and food defense. Pictured, from left: Scott Seys, Andy Milkowski (UW), Tiffany Pierce, Dana Ewald, William K. Shaw, Jr., Dawn Sprouls, Kelly A. Mowell, Clarke Jones, Madi Potratz (UW), Doug Hanks (Thrushwood Farms Quality Meats, Inc.), Jeff Sindelar (UW). Photo contributed by Kelly A. Mowell, OFO.

Carrollton, Ga.

Inspection personnel from the Carrollton, Ga. Circuit recently hosted a Thanksgiving luncheon. The luncheon recognized both the Thanksgiving Day holiday and Native American Heritage Month. Each employee prepared food items for the luncheon.

Pictured, front row, from left: Donna Savage, James Robinson, Donald Roth, Yvette Assem, Dinon Phillips.

Pictured, back row, from left: Trevell Stanbrough, Harold Davis, Robert Daniel. Photo contributed by Donna Savage, OFO.



Athens, Ga.

On November 28, 2015, personnel at est. P855 and P855D hosted a party in honor of Inspector Idella Redd's (pictured) more than 18 years of service. Photo contributed by Susan Kelley, OFO.



FROM THE **FIELD**

Vincennes, Ind.

On November 12, 2015, Cassandra Purcell (pictured, left) and Bimla Laura (pictured, right) participated in the Internships and Externships Fair at Vincennes University.

Laura and Purcell talked to students about different programs and opportunities within FSIS and USDA. Photo contributed by Cassandra Purcell, OFO.



Carrollton, Ga.

During October 2015, Atlanta District employees welcomed Karen Jackson into her position as Atlanta Deputy District Manager. Employees from the Carrollton Circuit met with Jackson as she and Front Line Supervisor Donna Savage visited establishments within the circuit. Pictured, from left: Billy Peru, Karen Jackson, Donna Savage, William Carmichael. Not pictured: Robert Daniel. Photo contributed by Donna Savage, OFO.



San Juan, Puerto Rico

On November 19, 2015, Investigator William Tirado participated, along with representatives from 11 other federal agencies, in an Import Safety Meeting. Some of

the other participating agencies included U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP), The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The meeting strengthened working relationships and communication among the

federal partners to support our mission of protecting consumers. The meeting also welcomed the new Assistant Director for Trade at the CBP San Juan Field Office. Photo contributed by William Tirado, OIEA.



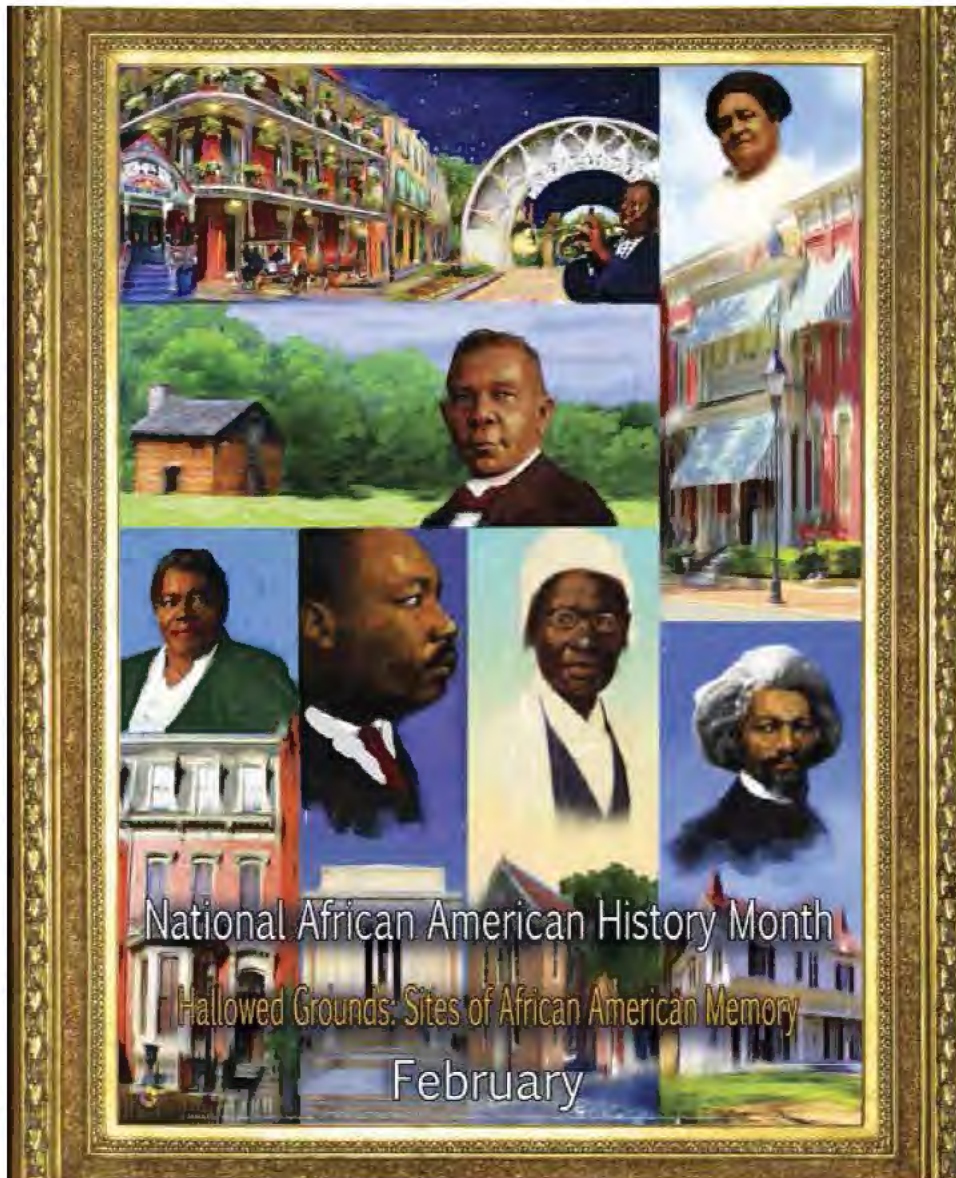
PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Photo contributed by Donna Savage, OFO.

Inspector Robert Daniel is assigned within the Carrollton, Ga., Circuit. While on his patrol assignment, he spotted a downed National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather balloon in a wooded area. Understanding the importance of the data that might be on the balloon, he took it upon himself to collect the balloon. After his duty day ended, Daniel followed the directions attached to the balloon and mailed the package back to NOAA. Weather balloons provide weather information used by NOAA to provide forecasts across the nation. If you want to learn more about what to do if you find a downed weather balloon, visit the NOAA website at www.nws.noaa.gov/ops2/ua/radiosonde/. Congratulations to Inspector Daniel for ensuring that critical information was returned to NOAA!

CELEBRATE



HISTORY

FSIS Donates to the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)

On December 1, 2015, FSIS held a rally to raise funds for the 2015 CFC! This year's fundraising activities included thumb wrestling, corn hole, flick football and hula hooping. CFC charities are a true lifeline to many people in our communities and federal employees have led the way with compassionate support of CFC charities.



Photos contributed by Katherine Scheidt, OPACE.

Dr. David Goldman, OPHS AA (pictured, left), participates in the thumb wrestling with Janell Kause (pictured, right).



FightBAC!®, the Partnership for Food Safety Education's mascot, attends CFC rally. Pictured from left: Benjamin Tate, Ina Mendoza-Wilson, Stephanie Proctor, Lisa Wigfall.

FSIS Holds New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS) Training Sessions

NPIS training is being given to inspection personnel assigned to the plants converting to NPIS. This ensures that inspection personnel will have all the information needed to ensure food safety under this new system prior to the conversion date of the establishment.



Photo contributed by Chelsea Buckley, OFO.

NPIS training for both Consumer Safety Inspectors (CSI) and Public Health Veterinarians (PHV) was held in New Oxford, PA. The training for CSIs focused on their duties in the on-line (Carcass Inspector) and off-line (Verification Inspector) roles. The training for PHVs focused on the new responsibilities of PHVs with NPIS. Pictured, from left: Charles Dorsey, Julian Moore, Kristy Legerton, Joe Pauley, Chelsea Buckley, Jay Hampton, Dean Ebling, A. J. Snyder and Marie Phillips.



Photo contributed by Letricia Calhoun, OFO.

Field inspection personnel in Kidron, Ohio, trained on the duties of Consumer Safety Inspectors (CSI). The duties include the Carcass Inspector and the Verification Inspector. Pictured, from left: David Contini, Scott Konsulis, Geneann Miranda, Ken Hance, Anthony Yancy, Greg Morrison, Letricia Calhoun, Brian Ford, Jeff Kish, Martin Overholt, Paul Wolseley and Mike Zimmerly.

"Go Red for Women" Campaign Brings Attention to Deadly Disease

By Kerrie Tao and Felicia Thompson, OM
Phone: (202) 403-0422

The American Heart Association (AHA) wants to draw attention to one of the leading killers of women: coronary heart disease (CHD) and stroke. To bring more attention to this deadly disease the AHA encourages Americans to wear red on February 5, 2015. CHD is a disease in which a

waxy substance called plaque builds up inside the coronary arteries. Risk factors include smoking, unhealthy blood cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, insulin resistance, diabetes, obesity and family history. To learn more about CHD and how to prevent it visit the National Institute of Health (NIH) website at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/cad. Information about the AHA campaign can be found at <https://www.goredforwomen.org/>.

Annual Safety Requirements

1. Lockout/Tagout Program

A. **Training:** Training must be provided to inspection personnel before they perform pre-operational process verification inspection, verification of pre-operational or operational corrective action (refer to FSIS Directive 4791.11, Rev. 1 Part IX).

B. **Inspection:** An inspection of the energy control procedures must be conducted annually (refer to FSIS Directive 4791.11, Rev. 1 Part XII).

C. **Retraining:** Retraining must be provided whenever a change occurs in the employee's assignment, machines, equipment, energy control procedures or processes. Additional training is also required if the annual inspection reveals a deviation or inadequacy in the employee's knowledge or use of the approved procedure (refer to FSIS Directive 4791.11, Rev. 1 Part XIII).

2. Hearing Conservation Program

A. **Noise Monitoring:** Monitoring must be repeated if there is a change in production processes, equipment or controls that increase noise exposures (refer to FSIS Directive 4791.1, Rev. 2 Part Three).

B. **Audiometric Testing:** Annual audiometric testing must be offered to inspection personnel who work in environments that are at or exceed 85 decibels for an 8-hour time-weighted average.

C. **Annual Training:** Annual training must be provided to inspection personnel who work in environments that are at or exceed 85 decibels for an 8-hour time-weighted average.

3. Workplace Safety and Health Inspections

A. **Offices:** Conduct annual office safety and health inspection using Form 4791.23, Safety and Health Inspection

Checklist for Office Facilities, and post completed form on bulletin board (refer to Directive 4791.13, Part One).

B. **Establishment Facilities:** Conduct annual plant facility safety and health inspection using Form 4791.24, Safety and Health Inspection Checklist for Plant Facilities, and post completed form on bulletin board (refer to Directive 4791.13, Part One).

4. The OSHA 300, 300A and 301 Forms:

OSHA Recordkeeping begins January 1 using the OSHA 300 and 301 forms. Post the OSHA 300A summary page February 1 to April 30 from the previous calendar year.

5. Hazard Communication Program Training:

Training must be provided to employees exposed, or potentially exposed to hazardous chemicals. Additional training must be provided whenever a new hazardous chemical is introduced to the work area (refer to FSIS Directive 4791.5, Part V).

6. Occupant Emergency Plan Training:

Training must be provided when the plan is first developed; when new employees, relief employees and visitors come to the workplace; when new equipment, materials or processes are introduced and when emergency procedures are updated or changed (refer to FSIS Directive 4791.6, Rev. 2, Part XVI).

If you have any questions regarding annual safety requirements, please contact the Occupational Safety and Health Specialist assigned to your district.

2016 Ag Outlook Forum to Cover Critical Food Safety Topics

By Karen Hunter, OPACE
Phone: (202) 690-3882

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will host the 92nd Annual Agricultural Outlook Forum on February 25-26, 2016. The theme for this year's forum is "Transforming Agriculture: Blending Technology and Tradition." The 2-day meeting will be held at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel in Arlington, Va. The Forum is an annual opportunity for agricultural producers, policy makers, business, government and industry leaders to exchange ideas and discuss timely issues impacting American agriculture.

Al Almanza, Deputy Under Secretary for the Office of Food Safety and FSIS Acting Administrator, will facilitate a session on February 26 entitled "FSIS' Collaboration with Stakeholders Improves Outbreak Response." The session will highlight FSIS' advances in foodborne illness outbreak detection. FSIS' modernization efforts include a concentrated focus on improving collaboration with its public health partners. Improved collaboration will ensure that public health decisions are better informed and more effective. The session will cover the roles of federal and state entities in investigating foodborne illness outbreaks, the unique challenges they face and opportunities for increased collaboration.

The panel includes three speakers: Dr. Carlota Medus, a principal epidemiologist with the Foodborne Diseases Unit within the Infectious Disease Epidemiology, Prevention, and Control Division at the Minnesota Department of Health;

Dr. Robert Tauxe, the Deputy Director for the Division of Foodborne, Waterborne and Environmental Diseases at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); and Dr. David Goldman, Chief Medical Officer, U.S. Public Health Service and Assistant Administrator, Office of Public Health Science with FSIS.

Medus will relate her experiences collaborating with federal agencies during foodborne illness outbreak investigations and share lessons learned during her presentation, "A State-Level Perspective on Collaborating with Federal Partner Agencies." Tauxe will discuss detection and investigation and explain how CDC works with state and local health agencies and federal regulatory partners during illness outbreaks during his presentation entitled "Making Food Safer: Better Ways to Detect and Investigate Foodborne Outbreaks." Goldman will wrap up the session with his discussion on "Improving Collaboration for Informed Public Health Decision Making." He will also cover challenges that FSIS faces when making public health decisions and share FSIS' efforts to improve collaboration with public health partners, specifically featuring traceback coordination as a critical activity—one which is often problematic.

Together, the panelists will illustrate the working relationship between state and federal partners, and share some of the advances made in foodborne illness detection and investigation, as well as the mutual benefits gleaned from collaboration and cooperation.

Coming Soon: A New FSIS Quarterly Publication

Be on the lookout this Spring for the new Agency publication! This new publication to be named by FSIS employees, will focus on off-duty employee activities, personal accomplishments and creativity. From employee profiles, salutes to long-time service and inspiring community service projects to original art and literary works, the new publication aims to highlight the spirit of 'One Team, One Purpose' while showcasing the talent and dedication of the very real personalities that make up the Agency. Stay tuned!

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **Directive 4430.3, Rev. 4, In-Plant Performance System**
- **Notice 04-16, Pilot Project - Control of *Listeria Monocytogenes* (LM) in Retail Delicatessens**
- **Notice 05-16, Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures at Official Import Inspection Establishments**
- **Directive 4430.3, In-Plant Performance System (IPPS) - Revision 4**
- **Directive 9530.1, Importation of Live Canadian Cattle, Sheep, and Goats into the United States**
- **Directive 8021.1, Investigative Methodology for Conducting Misconduct, OIG Hotline, and Other Investigations - Revision 1**

- **Directive 7020.1, Verifying Donation of Misbranded and Economically Adulterated Meat and Poultry Products to Non-Profit Organizations**

Administrative issues were also published.

- **Notice 01-16, Sampling Project Codes for the Fiscal Year 2016 National Residue Program**
- **Notice 02-16, 2016 Mileage Reimbursement Rates**
- **Notice 03-16, Cancellation of FSIS Directive 4713.3, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Counseling and Complaints Program**
- **Notice 06-15, Peer Recognition Program (PRP)**
- **Notice 07-16, Student Employment Program**

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

>>> RECALLS

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Dec. 22 | Ohio firm recalls boneless pork rib frozen entree products due to possible foreign matter adulteration. |
| Dec. 31 | Utah firm recalls ready-to-eat pocket sandwich products due to possible cooling/process deviation. |
| Jan. 4 | Minnesota firm recalls beef products due to possible foreign matter contamination. |
| Jan. 5 | Louisiana firm recalls pork products due to possible <i>Listeria</i> contamination. |
| Jan. 5 | New York firm recalls chicken products produced without benefit of inspection. |
| Jan. 6 | California firm recalls meat and poultry products produced without benefit of inspection. |
| Jan. 8 | California firm recalls pork products due to misbranding. |
| Jan. 16 | Massachusetts firm recalls chicken sausage products due to misbranding. |

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



United States Department of Agriculture

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Volume
20

Number
3

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

March 2016

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



Photo contributed by Paul Klecker, OFO.

Introducing The DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT

Beginning this month, *The Beacon* will be highlighting each FSIS District Office. Turn to page 5 to learn more about the Springdale District.

i-Impact: A Conversation About How YOU Impact Food Safety

Kristen Booze, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-7887



You may have heard the term "i-Impact" during a town hall meeting, in training, in *The Beacon* or during a staff meeting, but do you really understand what it is? i-Impact is a new employee initiative to help us reconnect to the mission of our Agency and to demonstrate how each of us has an impact on food safety. i-Impact assists employees in every job description with connecting the dots from our daily work activities to the mission of FSIS. i-Impact demonstrates how the Agency's statutes, Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plan shape and guide the public health mission and in turn drive our daily activities across the Agency.

i-Impact was first revealed at FSIS' New Supervisor training in August 2015 and then at FSIS' Diversity Conference. Since this soft launch, i-Impact has been presented at Front Line Supervisor meetings, all-hands meetings and other trainings. The goal is for every employee to have the opportunity to participate in an i-Impact workshop. The workshop consists of a presentation, a video, a workbook and an exercise to help you establish your "line of sight" from your work tasks to the mission of the Agency. The workshop environment promotes interaction and dialogue about your work and the work of your colleagues. It is a time to learn how every FSIS employee plays a role in food safety, regardless of grade, title or program area. Every employee should be able to proudly proclaim "I impact food safety." If you have any questions about i-Impact, please email iimpact@fsis.usda.gov.

The Beacon Mission Statement

The Beacon newsletter is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education to provide relevant mission critical information to all FSIS employees. *The Beacon* provides employees information about the Agency's proposed regulations, policies, and programs; training opportunities; and important employee welfare initiatives to connect employees to the mission and build a cohesive community.

The Beacon enables employees to stay up to date with the latest events and see the Agency's mission executed in action.

Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education

Carol Blake, Assistant Administrator

Aaron Lavalley, Deputy Assistant Administrator

Eshael M. Johnson, Director

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Gabrielle Johnston

Richard J. McIntire

Leo O'Drudy

Peggy Riek

Julie Schwartz

Brittany Woodland

Deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

May issue – due April 1

June issue – due May 1

July issue – due June 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 690-8881

Fax: (202) 815-2707

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

The FSIS Management Council

Alfred V. Almanza

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Jane Doherty

Janet B. Stevens

Jennifer V. Sisto

Steve Fisher

Terri Nintemann

Soumaya Tohamy

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Rachel Edelstein

Deputy Under Secretary's Column

This March, we recognize the admirable service of FSIS employees who have gone above and beyond in their commitment to protecting public health. Our annual Administrator's Awards Ceremony on March 16 will include the following categories of awards: *Excellence in Mission Results, Excellence in Workplace Harmony, Excellence in Safety and Health, Excellence in Civil Rights and Diversity, Excellence in Labor Management Collaboration, Employee of the Year, Leader of the Year and Customer Service.*



Alfred V. Almanza

The awards are a reminder that the goals outlined in our Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plan are concrete objectives that require dedication from our employees across the country. These goals also involve collaboration within our Agency in order to fully enable our mission and achieve the greatest results.

Whether you receive an award or not, you contribute to our mission of protecting public health. The awards are just a sample of the outcomes of hard work that you put into the ongoing projects at FSIS. The teams and individuals who receive these awards are leading efforts that prevent foodborne illness, empower people, strengthen infrastructure and use advanced science techniques to modernize our approach to food safety.

During this year's awards program, I will be thinking about all of the employees across the country who contribute to our important food safety mission. The work that FSIS employees perform every day is fundamental to the Agency's ability to accomplish its mission. Regardless of your office or location, I am forever grateful for your service and year-round commitment to our mission. I would be remiss without noting the retirement of my Deputy, who has contributed greatly to the FSIS mission. Phil Derfler has served as Deputy Administrator for FSIS since 2011. Before becoming Deputy Administrator, Phil was the Assistant Administrator for FSIS' Office of Policy and Program Development for 11 years. Phil has an in-depth knowledge of food safety that few will ever attain and he has spent his entire career by working to protect public health. In addition to being a technical expert on everything related to food safety, I've been proud to call Phil my good friend, confidante, counsel and advisor. It's hard to explain the influence he has had over the past 16 years. While we congratulate him on his retirement, his presence will be sorely missed.

Dr. Randall Kumpost, DVM

By Richard J. McIntire, OPA
Phone: (202) 690-0417

Dr. Randall Kumpost is a Supervisory Enforcement, Investigation, Analysis Officer/Supervisory Public Health Veterinarian (SEIAO/SPHV) serving in FSIS' Des Moines district.

Together with another SEIAO, Dr. Kumpost supervises and directs the energy of 21 Enforcement, Investigation and Analysis Officers (EIAOs) stationed throughout the district. The team conducts public health risk evaluations, performs food safety assessments, conducts recall effectiveness checks, and investigates foodborne illness outbreaks and consumer complaints. Their varied activities include ensuring that recalled products are no longer on store shelves and working with producers to fully comply with sanitation and other inspection requirements, all with the aim of making sure meat, poultry and egg products are safe for human consumption and do not spread foodborne illness. They also do food safety outreach projects and coordinate food safety summits in conjunction with land grant universities in the district.

Tantamount in their duties is making supportable recommendations on enforcement actions and implementing those actions at federally inspected establishments in the Des Moines district. These duties impact public health by ensuring that meat food products

produced at federally inspected establishments are safe to eat.

"There are several things that I like about this job," Kumpost said "The first being working with highly motivated, enthusiastic and forward thinking EIAOs. I also like being able to use my knowledge of microbiology and pathobiology to help ferret out and solve issues related to food safety in the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) systems at establishments."

Prior to joining FSIS in 2003, he ran his own private veterinary practice which prepared him for his role in FSIS' public health mission. His first duty station with the Agency was as a SPHV in a two-shift beef establishment in Nebraska. His simple response to a solicitation related to a shortage of veterinarians led to his government career.

On experiencing workplace success, Kumpost's suggestion to fellow FSIS colleagues is, "Be proactive, not reactive!"



Photo contributed by
Randall Kumpost, OFO.

March is National Women's History Month!



FSIS Issues Notice Defining New Public Health Regulation Alerts

By Bill Smith, OFO
Phone: (512) 834-6760

On February 8, 2016, FSIS issued Notice 12-16, "Public Health Regulations and Alerts for Use by Inspection Program Personnel." The notice defines the new Public Health Regulation (PHR) alerts in the Public Health Information System (PHIS) and instructs inspection program personnel (IPP) to review any alerts and determine whether there are patterns of noncompliances.

This notice is an important accomplishment for PHIS, since it is the first to be specifically geared towards inspection personnel. The idea for the alert goes back to 2007, when the initial concept of PHIS was to have an inspection system with information and analytics that the Agency can use to make decisions in real time. Up to this point, we've used the information from PHIS for data analysis within other FSIS offices, but inspection personnel have not benefitted from

PHIS other than through PHIS reports. Reports are valuable, but they require time to create and inspectors have not been trained to analyze this data. The alert gives IPP a tool on the status of a plant's compliance.

Currently, a targeted Public Health Risk Evaluation (PHRE) is performed if the PHR limit is exceeded after three standard deviations. With the new alerts, FSIS is taking a new approach to detect if problems exist more quickly and determine whether action is needed sooner. This protects public health and gives inspectors supplemental tools. The new alerts create a win-win situation for all.

In the months to follow, we will be paying particular attention to how the new alerts are working for field employees. We will be setting up an inbox for comments and encourage you to submit your thoughts and ideas for the alerts. Thank you for your hard work and commitment to public health.

FedEx is the FSIS OCIO Information Technology Shipping Vendor

By Leigh Ann Acree, OCIO
Phone: (202) 418-8816

FedEx is now providing shipping services for FSIS OCIO Information Technology (IT) equipment. Please destroy any existing UPS shipping labels. You may request replacement labels from the Depot through a FootPrints ticket. Once the FedEx labels arrive, you can schedule a pickup via the following instructions:

1. Call FedEx at 1-800-463-3339 or 1-800-GoFedEx;
2. At the automated speech phone system, say "customer service representative" to any questions that are asked;
3. The automated phone system will eventually inform you of being transferred to a customer service representative;
4. When asked if it is "express or ground shipping," say "express;"
5. Once transferred to a live customer service representative, state "I have a prepaid express return package and need to schedule a pickup;"
6. The customer service representative will collect your information: address, number of packages, package weight, pickup hours, etc.;
7. The customer service representative will then provide you with a confirmation number.



Photos contributed by Paul Kiecker, OFO.

The Springdale district Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee. Pictured, from left: Jose Rios, Lakeisha Davis, Paul Kiecker, Julie Lunsford, Travis Nienhueser, Dawn Dulaney, J.R. Swan, Jane Rozum, Liz Simmons, Carla Miller, Kimberley Smith, Amanda Bohanan.

*By Paul Kiecker, OFO
Phone: (608) 628-8297*

Springdale

The Springdale district is home to nearly 1,000 FSIS employees working hard every day to accomplish the FSIS mission of food safety at 320 federally inspected facilities. Geographically, it encompasses Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri and the Northeast portion of Oklahoma.

The district places a high importance on communications with all personnel and encourages questions. When you call the Springdale district office you should expect to speak with a person and to get the assistance you need. "Customer service is our business," said Sue Nelsen, Resource Manager, "If we cannot assist them directly it is our job to find someone who can. In order for that to happen everyone needs to be able to contact us when needed."

Springdale offers positions in all types of slaughter including some of the largest chicken, turkey, beef and swine operations in the country. Springdale was the first district to convert a plant to the New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS) and since that time has been instrumental in a smooth transition of nine NPIS plants.

The Springdale district places a high importance on its employees. This is demonstrated daily by progressive recruiting and hiring strategies in all areas. The most beneficial recruiting and hiring strategy employed by the Springdale district has been the onsite use of computers in conjunction with human resources and recruiting personnel



Est. 31965 second shift inspection team in St. Joseph, Mo. Pictured, from left: Travis Nienhueser, Teri Keller, Mike Wallace, Misty Rainey, William Barber, Brandon Line, Gary Riggs, Nathan Shrieves, Lonnie Erickson. Not pictured: Shawn Guffey, Shunderick Thompson.

to provide direct assistance and feedback to applicants, which helps them navigate USAJOBS and the hiring process.

The Springdale district has also developed key strategic partnerships with the Kansas Department for Children and Families and USDA's Food and Nutrition Service. This partnership program has resulted in the hiring of nearly 100 food inspectors and has garnered national attention. The program has been recognized with an Abraham Lincoln Award and an Administrator's Award. These innovative hiring strategies have resulted in the Springdale district having vacancy rates that are among the lowest in the Agency.

The Springdale district has two regular publications, which are sent via email and printed for those who may not have access to email. *The Voice* focuses on employee awareness and engagement issues and a quarterly publication, *Spotlight on Safety*, focuses on safety. Everyone is encouraged to submit topic ideas or content for these publications.

The management philosophy in Springdale is to provide everyone the opportunity to be productive and accomplish their goals. In return, the expectation is that everyone works together, does the best job possible, reports to work as scheduled and abides by the ethics and conduct guidelines. We believe this is the best way to effectively carry out the Agency's mission of ensuring food safety while promoting a skilled, productive and engaged workforce.

Alameda, Calif.

In October 2015, Compliance Investigators Suzanne Dent (pictured, left) and Stacy Tyralla (pictured, right) represented FSIS at the Alameda Hospital Community Health Fair. The investigators educated the public on food safety and how FSIS plays an important role in protecting the nation's food supply. In addition, Tyralla and Dent offered various FSIS food safety brochures for children and adults, in both English and Spanish. Photo contributed by Suzanne Dent, OIEA.



Arlington, Neb.

In September 2015, Program Auditor Michael Lathrop (pictured, center) visited a kindergarten class at St. Paul's Lutheran School to teach children about hand washing and other safe food-handling practices. Lathrop helped the children learn proper hand washing through a demonstration with fake "germs" and distributed educational materials, including coloring books. Photo contributed by Ron Eckel, OIEA.



Phoenix, Ariz.

In November 2015, OIEA, OPHS, OFO and OPACE personnel attended the Integrated Foodborne Outbreak Response and Management (InFORM) national conference. The FSIS team participated as moderators, panel experts and presenters. More than 500 public health officials and administrators from across the U.S. attended the conference. Pictured, from left: Latasha Allen, Shaun Smith, William Griffin, Stephanie Defibaugh-Chavez, Bonnie Kissler, Michael Dunn, Kristin Holt, Karen Becker. Not pictured: David Goldman, Neelam Narang, Glenn Tillman, Aaron Lavalley, Gabrielle Johnston. Photo contributed by Shaun Smith, OIEA.



FROM THE **FIELD**

Omaha, Neb.

In November 2015, Dr. Jonathan Coleman (pictured) staffed a FSIS/USDA booth at the 3rd Annual Omaha Teen Summit, which was held at the University of Nebraska–Omaha. Approximately 80 Omaha metro area teens visited the booth, where they learned about USDA internship and career opportunities, as well as safe food handling practices. The Omaha Teen Summit welcomed all metro-area teens free of charge and provided an opportunity for them to interact with one another, network with experts in various fields and be part of a positive change in the local community. Photo contributed by Jonathan Coleman, OIEA.



Asheboro, N.C.

In December 2015, Raleigh District Deputy District Manager Dr. Mahmood Ramzan arranged a “Cattle Slaughter Correlation Session” at Randolph Community College. This correlation meeting, conducted by Dr. Kurt Schulz (pictured, standing), covered information about a wide variety of pathological diseases. Industry representatives and FSIS veterinarians attended. Photo contributed by Mahmood Ramzan, OFO.



Athens, Ga.

On January 18, 2016, the night shift at P855 and P855D celebrated Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Vicki Trammell created a book and poster about Dr. King to share with her colleagues. Photo contributed by Susan Kelley, OFO.



OIEA Compliance and Investigations Division Southeast Region Recognizes Assistant U.S. Attorney and U.S. Marshal Service in Puerto Rico



Photos contributed by Angel Rios, OIEA.

Pictured, from left: William Tirado, Marina Bauza.

*By Angel Rios, OIEA
Phone: (787) 749-4370*

On October 15, 2015, Investigator Cilliam Tirado presented Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA) Mariana E. Bauza-Almonte with an award in recognition of her contributions in connection to the prosecution of a repetitive violator of the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) and Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA).

On May 7, 2015, a federal grand jury returned a three-count indictment charging the president of the firm with distribution and sale of meat and poultry products without inspection and refusing to provide a duly authorized representative of the Secretary of Agriculture access to records. The president of the company plead guilty and was sentenced to 1 year of probation. The successful results of this investigation serve to deter non-compliant firms from violating the FMIA and PPIA. These results also reassure the public trust in FSIS.



Pictured, from left: Antonio Torres (Chief Deputy U.S. Marshal), William Tirado, Felix Carrion (Deputy U.S. Marshal), Ivette Cirino (PRPD Task Force Officer), Jose Mendoza (PRPD Task Force Officer), Orlando Rivera (U.S. Marshal).

FSIS Recognizes Assistant U.S. Attorney

*By Mark W. Crowe, OIEA
Phone: (510) 769-5729*

Recently, FSIS recognized Assistant United States Attorney (AUSA) Merry Jean Chan for her outstanding efforts in a case involving an establishment that had been selling and transporting uninspected meat and falsely representing that the meat products had been inspected and passed. Cooperation in this case between OFO and OIEA demonstrates how both in-plant and in-commerce enforcement can combine to produce significant public health outcomes.



Photo contributed by Mark W. Crowe, OIEA.

Pictured, from left: David Hori, Allison Khroustalev, AUSA Merry Jean Chan, Mark Crowe, Yudhbir Sharma.

March is National Nutrition Month

By Kerrie Tao, OM
Phone: (202) 403-0422

Why is eating healthy so important? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than one-third of U.S. adults (33.8 percent) are obese and approximately 17 percent (or 12.5 million) of children and adolescents aged 2 through 19 are obese. Extra weight can increase health risks.

Making healthier choices can be a challenge. It might be easier to start thinking less about "dieting" and more about diet. Don't associate your diet with

deprivation, miniscule portions or always feeling hungry. Instead, focus on the idea that feeling, looking and functioning your best depends on what you eat and how you eat it.

A good place to start is with the basic nutrients—the essential elements of a healthy diet. Use the USDA's MyPlate guide (www.choosemyplate.gov/) as a visual aid when planning meals and snacks to help ensure you are getting all the nutrients the body needs. The MyPlate guide is shaped like an actual plate with recommended portion sizes for the five food groups: fruits, vegetables, grains, proteins and dairy. Consuming the right amount of nutrients is an essential part to becoming or staying healthy. Most importantly, talk to doctor about the diet and exercise choices that are right for you.

USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

National Nutrition Month - March 2016

The Office of Management's Employee Safety, Health and Wellness Staff is providing three, **FREE** Federal Occupational Health (FOH) webinars about nutrition on Thursday's from 12 – 1 p.m. To participate in the webinars, please go to [eLearn](http://eLearn.usda.gov) and register for the below courses. For information, contact Kerrie Tao at Kerrie.Tao@fsis.usda.gov.

- Title:** Nutrition 101
Link: https://elearn.usda.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=REGISTRATION&scheduleID=46185
Date: March 10, 2016
- Title:** Eating Right on the Run & On a Budget
Link: https://elearn.usda.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=REGISTRATION&scheduleID=46197
Date: March 17, 2016
- Title:** Healthy Meal Planning-Understanding Portion Control and Food Labels
Link: https://elearn.usda.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=REGISTRATION&scheduleID=46198
Date: March 24, 2016

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Andres, Antonio V., Micrbiol	Alameda, Calif.	18	Qureshi, Maqbool, SVMO	Yaphank, N.Y.	35
Arline, Joseph E., FI-S	Buena Vista, Ga.	21	Restrivera, Aurora D., FI-S	Livingston, Calif	25
Bell, Willie, FI-S	Kinston, N.C.	8	Rohde, Ronald F., CSO	Madison, Wis.	16
Bobek, Dennis, FI-S	Omaha, Neb.	7	Santos, Abel, CSI	Lincoln, Neb.	39
Campana, Anthony, SCSi	Lincoln, Neb.	27	Seay, Jo Ann, CSI	Enterprise, Ala.	35
Cook, Michael R., FI-S	Monmouth, Ill.	15	Shamaa, Rawhi O., SVMO	Strykersville, N.Y.	31
Crawford, Vincent L., FI-S	Augusta, Ga.	28	Simpson, Leon, CSI	St. Paul, Neb.	29
Davis, Lorna M., SVMO	South West City, Mo.	20	Stallons, Brian, CSI	Hickory, Kan.	30
Dent, Suzanne R., Complnc Invstgr	Oakland, Calif.	29	Starr, William, CSI	Boise, Idaho	34
Galan, Virginia R., Micrbiol	Alameda, Calif.	29	Syed, Shaukat H., Prog Mgr	Washington, D.C.	42
George, Wilma R., CSI	Moorefield, W.Va.	24	Thomen, Kim, CSI	Burlington, N.C.	18
Griffith, Virgie L., FI-S	Athens, Ga.	16	Tsao, Ying, FI-S	Kelso, Wash.	7
Hopple, Paul L., CSO	Lemoyne, Pa.	37	Vick, Arthur, CSI	Enterprise, Ala.	45
Jenkins, Lyndon, SVMO	Boise, Idaho	25	Villa, Julio C., CSI	Live Oak, Fla.	28
King, Carolyn A., RMA	Des Moines, Iowa	10	Wilcox, Steven J., SVMO	St. Cloud, Minn.	31
Martin, Daniel R., SVMO	St. Joseph, Mo.	15	Wilcutt, Roy M. FI-S	Dexter, Mo.	14
			Winogron, Leopold, CSI	Temperanceville, Va.	11

Annual Safety Requirements

Lockout/Tagout Program

- **Training:** Training must be provided to inspection personnel before they perform pre-operational process verification inspection, verification of pre-operational or operational corrective action (*refer to FSIS Directive 4791.11, Rev. 1 Part IX*).
- **Inspection:** An inspection of the energy control procedures must be conducted annually (*refer to FSIS Directive 4791.11, Rev. 1 Part XII*).
- **Retraining:** Retraining must be provided whenever a change occurs in the employee's assignment, machines, equipment, energy control procedures or processes. Additional training is also required if the annual inspection reveals a deviation or inadequacy in the employee's knowledge or use of the approved procedure (*refer to FSIS Directive 4791.11, Rev. 1 Part XIII*).

Hearing Conservation Program

- **Noise Monitoring:** Monitoring must be repeated if there is a change in production processes, equipment or controls that increase noise exposures (*refer to FSIS Directive 4791.1, Rev. 2 Part Three*).
- **Audiometric Testing:** Annual audiometric testing must be offered to inspection personnel who work in environments that are at or exceed 85 decibels for an 8-hour time-weighted average.
- **Annual Training:** Annual training must be provided to inspection personnel who work in environments that are at or exceed 85 decibels for an 8-hour time-weighted average.

Workplace Safety and Health Inspections

- **Offices:** Conduct annual office safety and health inspection using Form 4791.23, Safety and Health

Inspection Checklist for Office Facilities, and post completed form on bulletin board (*refer to Directive 4791.13, Part One*).

- **Establishment Facilities:** Conduct annual plant facility safety and health inspection using Form 4791.24, Safety and Health Inspection Checklist for Plant Facilities, and post completed form on bulletin board (*refer to Directive 4791.13, Part One*).

The OSHA 300, 300A and 301 Forms:

OSHA Recordkeeping begins January 1st using the OSHA 300 and 301 forms. Post the OSHA 300A summary page February 1st to April 30th from the previous calendar year.

Hazard Communication Program Training:

Training must be provided to employees exposed, or potentially exposed to hazardous chemicals. Additional training must be provided whenever a new hazardous chemical is introduced to the work area (*refer to FSIS Directive 4791.5, Part V*).

Occupant Emergency Plan Training:

Training must be provided when the plan is first developed; when new employees, relief employees and visitors come to the workplace; when new equipment, materials or processes are introduced and when emergency procedures are updated or changed (*refer to FSIS Directive 4791.6, Rev. 2, Part XVI*).

If you have any questions regarding annual safety requirements, please contact the Occupational Safety and Health Specialist assigned to your district.

The Building Bridges to Self-Sufficiency Team Receives Award

By Liz Simmons, OFO
Phone: (479) 751-8412

On November 5, 2015 the 67th Annual Abraham Lincoln Honor Awards ceremony was held in Washington, D.C. The Building Bridges to Self-Sufficiency Team was selected as the recipient of the "Special Distinction for Serving American Agriculture: Freedom and Opportunity." The team was acknowledged for their coalition building success in forging a partnership between Food, Nutrition, and

Consumer Services (FNCS), FSIS and the Kansas Department of Children and Families (DCF) to develop a recruitment and job placement program for individuals in rural Kansas and Missouri. As a result of this partnership, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applicants received hands-on assistance in applying for hard-to-fill food inspector positions in rural locations. Throughout fiscal years 2014 and 2015, this team qualified more than 250 applicants and successfully hired more than 100 full-time food inspectors.



Pictured, from left: Paul Kiecker, Wendy Sonnabend, Kim Green, Cheryl Kennedy (FNCS SNAP Regional Division Director), Suzanne Nelsen, Liz Simmons. Not pictured: Evan Sumner, Philip Fraley (FNCS FSP Section Chief), Maureen Edwards (FNCS Senior Program Specialist), Deborah Madorin (FNCS Operations Team Lead), Ruth Arensdorf (Program Manager, Kansas DCF).



Photos contributed by Liz Simmons, OFO.

Pictured, from left: Thomas Vilsack, Paul Kiecker, Cheryl Kennedy (FNCS SNAP Regional Director), Gregory Parham.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- Directive 5000.3, Identification and Segregation of Products - Revision 1
- Directive 7120.1 Revision 32, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry and Egg Products
- Notice 08-16, Consumer Safety Inspectors Responsibilities at Fish (of the order Siluriformes) Slaughter Establishments During The 18-Month Transitional Period
- Notice 09-16, Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit (OIEA) Responsibilities Related to Siluriformes Fish and Fish Products
- Notice 10-16, Inspection Responsibilities and Authorities for Reducing Evisceration Line Speed

- Notice 11-16, Supplemental Information on Sampling Projects and Supplies
- Notice 12-16, Public Health Regulations and Alerts for Use in Determining IPP Actions and Food Safety Assessment Scheduling in Meat, Poultry Establishments and Egg Product Plants
- Notice 13-16, Public Health Regulations and Alerts for Use in Determining IPP Actions and Food Safety Assessment Scheduling in Meat, Poultry Establishments and Egg Product Plants
- Notice 15-16, Profile Update in Establishments that Produce Not-Ready-To-Eat Stuffed Chicken Products that Appear Ready-To-Eat

Administrative issues were also published.

- Notice 14-16, Modernizing Federal Leave Policies

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

>>> RECALLS

Jan. 20	Tennessee firm recalls beef product due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 contamination.
Jan. 22	Iowa firm recalls chili products due to misbranding.
Jan. 23	California firm recalls beef ravioli products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens and produced without benefit of inspection.
Jan. 25	Massachusetts firm recalls frozen pizza products due to misbranding.
Jan. 25	Pennsylvania firm recalls beef products due to misbranding.
Jan. 27	California firm recalls meat and poultry ravioli and pasta products produced without benefit of inspection and due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Jan. 30	California firm recalls chicken and beef products produced without benefit of inspection.
Feb. 5	California firm recalls pork products produced without benefit of inspection.
Feb. 8	Illinois firm recalls uncured bacon ganache chocolate products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Feb. 9	Georgia firm recalls beef products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
Feb. 12	Illinois firm recalls pork products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
Feb. 13	Canadian firm recalls beef products produced without benefit of import inspection.
Feb. 16	Pennsylvania firm recalls chicken salad products due to possible foreign matter.
Feb. 19	Texas firm recalls ready-to-eat wraps due to adulteration, misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Feb. 23	Oregon firm recalls pork products due to misbranding.
Feb. 25	New York recalls chicken salad products due to possible <i>Listeria</i> contamination.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

April 2016



Photo contributed by Karen Jackson, OFO.

On January 25, 2016, Risk Innovation and Management Staff Deputy Director Evelynne Mbandi and Staff Officer Melanie Abley visited est. P-1480 in Marietta, Ga., with key officials from the Atlanta district office. Pictured, from left: Charles Shean, Rex Holt, Evelynne Mbandi, Debra Halteman, Karen Jackson, Melanie Abley.

Inside This Issue

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

Equivalence

Food Safety is a Global Task

By: Leo O'Drudy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-8693

American consumers buy and eat food produced in the United States and other countries every day. Different countries have different food safety laws and systems, but that does not necessarily mean that their products are any less safe. In fact, for a foreign country to export product regulated by FSIS to the United States, FSIS must first deem a foreign government's food safety system to be equivalent to the United States' system. It is through the equivalence process that FSIS ensures the safety of imported meat and poultry products.

In the food safety context, equivalent does not mean identical. But it does mean that a country can provide an appropriate level of sanitary protection, even though the measures employed may differ from measures applied in the United States.

The Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) process might be helpful in understanding equivalence. Under HACCP, FSIS does not require all domestic establishments to use the exact same methods and take identical steps to address food safety hazards. FSIS does, however, require that establishments meet food safety objectives. Within certain limits, establishments can choose how they meet those objectives and goals by employing a variety of site-specific food safety technologies, techniques, and methods. Similarly, foreign countries may have different laws and regulations, but they must have a HACCP program in place and achieve health protections that are similar or equivalent to those found in the United States, or their products will not enter the United States.

Any country may apply for an equivalence determination by submitting a request to FSIS.

Continued on page 11 ...

The Beacon Mission Statement

The *Beacon* newsletter is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education to provide relevant mission critical information to all FSIS employees. The *Beacon* provides employees information about the Agency's proposed regulations, policies, and programs; training opportunities; and important employee welfare initiatives to connect employees to the mission and build a cohesive community.

The *Beacon* enables employees to stay up to date with the latest events and see the Agency's mission executed in action.

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Deadline for submissions
is the first day of the
previous month.

June issue – due May 1
July issue – due June 1
August issue – due July 1

Submit contributions to
beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 690-8881
Fax: (202) 815-2707

We reserve the right to edit
all submissions for content,
clarity and length.

The FSIS Management Council

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Deputy Under Secretary's Column

I would like to thank all of the employees who participated in the 2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) and encourage each one of you to partake in the upcoming 2016 FEVS survey. As you may know, the FEVS is a government-wide management report distributed by OPM each year. The FEVS has provided us with a more accurate picture of how you feel about working here, providing detailed information about your opinions on your work experience, work unit, leadership, work/life balance, culture, and diversity.



Alfred V. Almanza

In 2015, FSIS had a good participation rate in completing the FEVS. The total web-based survey response rate was 77.3 percent of those who were invited to participate and the paper-based response was 55 percent. The Agency's FY 2015 FEVS data reflected improvements in the workforce's survey responses. In fact, 74 out of 84 FEVS questions showed a positive change as compared to the FY 2014 data.

Our Agency also showed progress in 8 out of 9 of the Secretary's Priorities for the FEVS. These results are encouraging. Moreover, they would not be possible without your participation and contributions to FSIS. It's important to us that employees have ample opportunity to speak up and express their recommendations for improvement. In order to continue improving, we need you to participate in the FEVS and engage in other opportunities for feedback.

Although FSIS made strides in FY 2015, the FEVS results and Agency-level employee engagement activities suggest there is room for improvement, which is why we have developed our FY 2016 Employee Engagement Action Plan. In the year to come, we will focus on incorporating employee engagement by starting a new employee feedback system.

Thanks to your input, we plan to continue to improve the FSIS workplace. This year's plan includes several key areas of focus. In FY 2016, some of our employee engagement activities will include: leadership accountability, employee recognition, onboarding, mission comprehension, and career development for our employees.

We aim to work with management to find ways to more directly receive employee feedback and recognize employees for their hard work. With regard to onboarding and mission comprehension, we're really excited for you to see what we have in store for new employees with our new onboarding program. We will also increase

Continued on page 3 ...

A Legacy of Food Safety: Jeffery Barham

By Richard J. McIntire, OPACE
Phone: (202) 690-0417

Jeffery Barham is a Frontline Supervisor (FLS) based in Topeka, Kan., serving in FSIS' Springdale District, part of the Office of Field Operations (OFO).

OFO manages inspection and enforcement activities nationwide, ensuring that domestically produced meat, poultry, and egg products are safe, wholesome and properly labeled. This FSIS program area also evaluates the same for imported products.

Barham supervises Food Inspectors, Consumer Safety Inspectors, and Veterinary Medical Officers to coordinate and implement public health regulatory activities throughout the Topeka circuit. The activities help identify food safety issues and assist directing employees to conduct inquiries or assessments, document findings, and recommend actions to be taken by the district office and/or headquarters to ensure that public health is being protected. The activities ensure that plants are operating within the regulations and food safety systems are functioning as intended to prevent the shipment of adulterated or misbranded product into commerce.

"I have the opportunity to help and watch many different people grow," Barham said. "I'm lucky because my job is different every single day, and I am always getting to see and learn about new food safety policy, what it means, and how we execute [those policies] to ensure we are protecting public health."

"There are new challenges and issues to resolve every day," Barham said. "As a FLS, I have the opportunity to use regulatory knowledge and science in combination with leadership skills to solve problems. I have a very good team in the Topeka circuit and their dedication and commitment to food safety is what makes me successful."

Barham's work for the agency is part of a continuing legacy. For many years, his father was a processing inspector working at a high speed beef slaughter/processing plant in Liberal, Kan. His father's influence, along with experience in the corporate food processing industry, provided the foundation that started his federal career.

Barham is clear on the Agency's mission and role, which he shares frequently with colleagues.

"Establishments are either compliant or non-compliant and we base our actions on sound regulatory understanding by utilizing supportable thought processes when we verify regulatory requirements," he said. "Our knowledge of regulatory requirements, professional behavior and ability to communicate with industry goes a long way in presenting a positive image of FSIS."

Food safety is a real family affair. Barham's wife, Amber, is a district manager for the Kansas Department of Agriculture overseeing food safety and sanitation requirements at eating establishments.

The couple has two boys ages 22 and 17, and one girl, 11. Outside of work, Barham stays busy acting as a booster for local high school sports. He has coached community baseball and softball teams as well as competitive U.S. Specialty Sports Association baseball teams.



Photo contributed by
Jeffery Barham, OFO.

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY'S COLUMN

... Continued from page 2

the number and frequency of employee engagement methods and opportunities to include shadowing and focus groups. Additionally, we will provide career development opportunities for employees at all levels.

Because of your commitment, we will be able to make FSIS an even better place to work. OPM will begin conducting the 2016 FEVS starting the week of April 26, 2016, to a random

sample of federal employees across the government. If you are selected to participate, I encourage you to do so. This is your window of opportunity to influence change and shape the future of FSIS. The feedback you provide will enable each program area to develop effective strategies and tools for driving continuous improvements. Your feedback will continue to be used to strengthen our Agency and make FSIS an even better place to work.

Take the Healthy Approach to Stress Management

By Jodi Hallstrom, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8597

April is National Stress Awareness Month. That means it's a good time to take a look at your stress and how you manage it. If your coping methods aren't helping you achieve greater emotional and physical wellbeing, it's time to find healthier ones. There are many ways to cope with stress, but they all require some level of change. When deciding which option to choose, it's helpful to think of the four As: Avoid, Alter, Adapt or Accept.

Avoid unnecessary stress:

- Learn how to say "no." Know your limits and stick to them.
- Take control of your environment. If the evening news makes you anxious, pick up a book instead.
- Pare down your to-do list. Drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

Alter the situation:

- Express your feelings, don't bottle them up. If something is bothering you, communicate your concerns.
- Be willing to compromise. When you ask someone to change their behavior, be willing to do the same.
- Be more assertive. Don't take a backseat in your own life. Deal with problems head on, doing your best to anticipate and prevent them.
- Manage your time better. When you're stretched too thin, it's hard to stay calm and focused. If you plan ahead, you can reduce the amount of stress you're under.

Adapt to the stressor:

- Reframe problems. Try to view stressful situations from a positive perspective.
- Look at the big picture. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it worth getting upset over?
- Adjust your standards. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others.
- Focus on the positive. When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life.

Accept the things you can't change:

- Avoid trying to control the uncontrollable. Many things in life are beyond our control. Focus on the things you have personal control over.
- Look for the upside. When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth.
- Share your feelings. Talk to a trusted friend, family member or professional.

If your stress level starts feeling like too much to manage alone, the The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and WorkLife4You can help.

Call the Federal Occupational Health's EAP/Worklife4You at 1-800-222-0364 (TTY 1-888-262-7848) or go online at www.foh4you.com and www.worklife4you.com for free and confidential services, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

For more information, contact Jodi Hallstrom at (612) 659-8597 or via email at jodi.hallstrom@fsis.usda.gov.

2016
FEDERAL
EMPLOYEE
VIEWPOINT
SURVEY

We Want Your Point Of



Vision

Insight

Experience

Wisdom



DUS Almanza shares a memory during Derfler's farewell gathering.

Photo contributed by Katherine Scheidt, OPACE.

To the Employees of the Food Safety and Inspection Service: Thank You

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

I could not leave FSIS without expressing my deep appreciation to each of you for your contribution to making this Agency a great place to work and to making the 18 years that I spent at FSIS some of the best and richest of my life.

FSIS may have a simple mission—to ensure that meat, poultry, and egg products are safe and wholesome—but it is not a mission that is easily accomplished. What is great about FSIS is that each Agency employee is willing to contribute whatever she or he can to the effort to fulfill that mission. It is this commitment to the mission that binds the workforce together. As a result, the people of FSIS work tirelessly to prevent problems with meat, poultry, and egg products, but when there is one, FSIS employees are willing to stand up and give freely of their time to achieve a solution.

One accumulates thousands of memories over 18 years, and I won't bore you with mine. I will say, though, that at FSIS I have met and have had the privilege of working with many wonderful and dedicated people. I hope that each of you has some good memories of the time that we were able to work together. I also hope that you will agree with me that I am leaving at a time when FSIS is as well-positioned as it has ever been, thanks to Al Almanza and the Management Council, to pay large dividends to the American public in the form of fewer illnesses from the products that the Agency regulates.

So, thanks to each and every one of you for 18 wonderful years. Although I am loathe to mention individuals because I am going to leave out so many people who were so nice to me, I do want to say thank you to Mr. Almanza for giving me the chance of a lifetime; to Carmen Rottenberg for putting up with me and guiding me, even though I drove her crazy every day; and to the members of the Management Council for their leadership, day in and day out.



Thank you all and best wishes,

Phil Derfler
philip.derfler@gmail.com

SNAPSHOTS



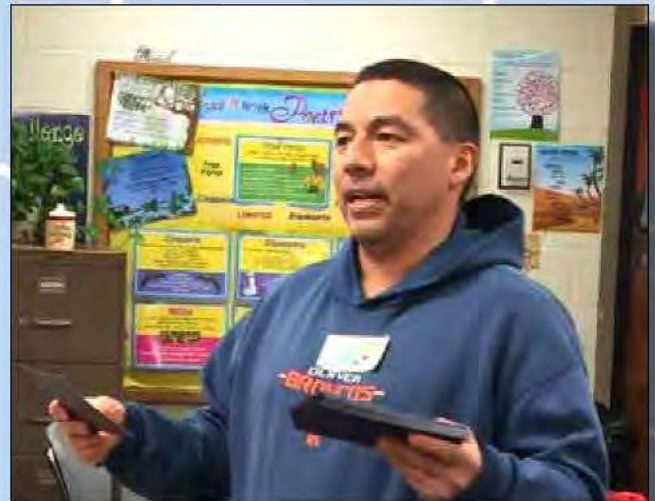
Lake Odessa, Mich.

During a combined work unit meeting in the Chicago district, Consumer Safety Inspector Kathryn Smith was honored for her 40 years of service with FSIS. Kathryn began working for FSIS in December of 1975. Pictured, from left: Raymond Andress, Robert Becker, James Shrieves, Douglas Jackson, Kathryn Smith, Paul Wolseley, Bonnie Straley, Rodney Mueller, David Ellefson. Photo contributed by Raymond Andress, OFO.

Dodge City, Kan.

On January 25, 2016, Inspector Robert Florez spoke to a 7th grade English class at Dodge City Middle School. He provided them with information about proper cooking temperatures for meat and poultry, and explained the importance of separating food appropriately during meal preparation in order to prevent cross-contamination. He also stressed the importance of hand washing to prevent the transfer of bacteria. In addition, Florez discussed the FSIS mission and his duties as a food inspector. He provided the students with magnets, pens and food safety workbooks.

Photo contributed by Rudy Villa, OFO.



Vacaville, Calif.

On February 5, 2016, DDM Abdalla Amin, CSI Genene Fukudome and EIAO Cheryl Henry gave food safety presentations at Vaca Peña Middle School. The presentations included: information on changes in food production and consumption; the causes and signs of foodborne illness; the steps to follow to keep food safe (clean, separate, cook and chill); and proper handling of take-out and delivered foods. The FSIS personnel also distributed pamphlets, stickers

and magnets addressing various food safety topics. Pictured, from left: Genene Fukudome, Abdalla Amin, Marilyn Johnson (Vaca Peña Middle School), Cheryl Henry, Joanne Baker (Vaca Peña Middle School). Photo contributed by Cheryl Henry, OFO.

FROM THE **FIELD**



Webster, N.Y.

On January 12, 2016, Investigator Nicholas Papapietro (pictured, top row, third from the right) participated in Career Day at Willink Middle School. Papapietro gave two presentations to 8th grade students on a day in the life of an FSIS investigator and

food safety. Other presenters (also pictured) included law enforcement officers, teachers, artists, nurses and members of the U.S. Armed Forces. Photo contributed by Mary Kleehamer, Willink Middle School.

Harrisburg, Pa.

In January 2016, FSIS volunteers distributed consumer education material and recruited for various positions within the Agency during the 2016 Pennsylvania Farm Show. Pictured, from left: Amir Ali, Chelsea Buckley, Dean Ebling, Kristen Gentzel. Photo contributed by Chelsea Buckley, OFO.



Forest, Miss.

Recently, CSI Jim Lane Sanders gave a presentation on food safety to a group of high school students at Forest High School. Lane is stationed at est. P-6616 in Sebastopol, Miss. Photo contributed by Dawn Sanders, Forest High School.

What is a CA-16?

By Samilya Zurawski, OM
Phone: 1-800-370-3747

A CA-16 is an authorization for a medical examination or medical treatment. The CA-16 is a form given to the injured employee that acts as a contract between the Department of Labor (DOL) and health care providers. This form may simplify payment of all non-invasive procedures for 60 days after a traumatic work-related injury (cannot be used with occupational injuries). The doctor chosen is referred to as the "attending physician of record." The provider must be registered with DOL.

The CA-16 can apply to more than one doctor. If the employee is referred from one physician to another or to an imaging center or to a physical therapist, the same CA-16 originally issued can be used to authorize these services.

One CA-16 is issued per each traumatic injury and is not issued for occupational injuries. A CA-16 must be issued with all traumatic work-related injury claims.



USDA Collaboration for Education

By Kysha Hendricks, OFO
Phone: (404) 562-5900

During the month of December, Dr. Kysha Hendricks represented FSIS in collaboration with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to facilitate a tour of the red meat slaughter facility in Augusta, Ga. It involved 52 veterinary students, food animal interns and graduate students from the North Carolina State University (NCSSU) College of Veterinary Medicine for the Bovine Educational Symposium (Cowabunga). Hendricks answered questions about how her job as supervisory public health veterinarian (SPHV) in a red meat facility impacts food safety. She also distributed material that outlined the role of the FSIS veterinarian, current vacancy announcements and how to access job applications on USAJOBS.com.



Photos contributed by Kysha Hendricks, OFO.

Pictured, back row, from left: Hannah Sylvester, Leland Garrett, Kelsey Finnie, Courtney Whelan, Ginger Hobgood, Leslie Jarret, Deon Montgomery, Kate Goodwin, Billy H. Caudell. Pictured, middle row, from left: Kylie Glisson, Kathryn McCullough, Jessica Vasquez. Pictured, front row, from left: Kysha Hendricks, Emily Weidrick, Danielle Lindquist.

Welcome to the New Safety Corner!

By Curtis Wallis, OM
Phone: (510) 769-5750

The Environmental, Safety and Health Safety Group (ESHG) has teamed up with the *The Beacon* newsletter to provide this monthly column with occupational health and safety information for all FSIS employees. Each month, we will try to provide information about safety topics that will help you make your location a safer place to work. We will also share updates about our group and the safety program overall. Future columns might even highlight some of the great work from our Circuit Safety Committees!

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Safety Poster

The OSHA safety poster must be posted at every USDA office location. Posters are available on the FSIS intranet

at www.tinyurl.com/FSIS-ESHG. The poster provides the contact information for the Occupational Safety and Health Specialist (Safety Specialist) for your area. Go to the above link and click on "Contact Information" and you will find information for the specialist covering your location. Supervisors, please print out the poster and make sure it is posted for your employees.

ESHG Update

The ESHG is expanding. We are in the final stages of hiring a new Safety Specialist who will work out of the Dallas district office and a new Industrial Hygienist who will work out of the South Building. Keep an eye on this column for more information. They will be joining the team soon!

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Allen, Jr., James D., CSI	Live Oak, Fla.	17	Hohn, Leron, CSI	Sheboygan Falls, Wis.	29
Beard, Bonnie J., CSI	Fredericksburg, Pa.	18	Ihry, Timothy C., VMO	Omaha, Neb.	12
Bengford, Joann J., CSI	Denison, Iowa	13	Keck, Aletha, FI-PP	David City, Neb.	30
Black, Marty, FI-S	Albertville, Ala.	23	Keister, Grace, CSI	Uniontown, N.Y.	41
Brown, Gloria D., FI-S	Athens, Ga.	15	King, Ralph E., CSI	Haubstadt, Ind.	46
Bunch, Linda, FI-S	Pendergrass, Ga.	26	Narang, Neelam, Supvy Micrbiol	Athens, Ga.	20
Butler, Kim C., CSO	Omaha, Neb.	30	Newman, Danny, CSI	Spokane, Wash.	25
Canfield, David J., CSO	Grand Rapids, Mich.	30	Ostheimer, Garold, CSI	Greeley, Colo.	33
Carlton, Opal, FI-S	Blountsville, Ala.	29	Redd, Idella, FI-S	Athens, Ga.	20
Carpenter, Brenda, CSI	Morristown, Tenn.	18	Salter, Murray, FI-S	Enterprise, Ala.	32
Collins, Geraldine, FI-S	Murrayville, Ga.	35	Sawyers, Janet, CSI	Dobson, N.C.	9
Cray, Jr., William C., Lab Dir	Athens, Ga.	23	Schechter, Janice, Secy OA	Washington, D.C.	30
Dowdy, Erma, FI-S	Sanford, N.C.	21	Sharp, Linda, FI-S	Batesville, Ark.	12
Drew, Julie Ann., FI-S	Estherville, Iowa	16	Smiley, Daryl, CSO	Phoenix, Ariz.	8
Elosge, Albert P., CSI	Orlando, Fla.	26	Vela, Arturo, FI-S	Seguin, Texas	29
Frachiseur, Anna J., FI-S	Grannis, Ark.	24	Yoakum, Jan, FI-S	Lexington, Neb.	6
Gardner, Freddie B., FI-S	Dallas, Texas	41			
Gorgi, Mariam, CSI	Fresno, Calif.	12			

Protecting Your Child From Identity Theft

By Jennifer Dallis, OCIO
Phone: (202) 692-4206

In light of the 2015 data breach at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), there is a possibility that the identities of minors could have been compromised if their names and Social Security numbers are found on an application for a security clearance in which family details are required as part of the clearance investigation process. You can read more about the OPM incident and precautionary steps at <https://www.opm.gov/cybersecurity/>.

The OPM data breach is just one of many examples of how the identity of a child could be compromised. With identity theft on the rise, it appears that even those who are too young to have a credit card or apply for a loan are at risk. One reason that hackers seek out opportunities to steal children's Social Security numbers is for their clean credit. In some cases, it can be months or even years before the identity theft is discovered and by then, the damage can be difficult to reverse. A hacker with stolen Social Security numbers can use these numbers to open bank or credit card accounts, apply for loans or rent a place to live. A Social Security number can also help an identity thief secure medical care or government benefits.

It can be difficult to detect and prevent the theft of a child's identity. According to experts, since children typically do not receive credit reports, a cyber-criminal can establish

an entire credit history for a child before parents realize that fraud is taking place. Hackers could spend more than a decade exploiting a child's credit before the fraud is discovered.

What Can Parents Do?

Make sure you know who has access to your child's information and pay attention to any forms that you fill out for your child. Find out how your child's information is collected, used, stored and thrown away. If necessary, you can place a freeze on any existing credit reports. You can do this by contacting any of the credit bureaus such as Equifax, Experian or TransUnion.

In the case that your child's credit may have been compromised, you can request a copy of your child's credit report to see if there has been any unauthorized activity. Typically, this type of inquiry cannot be conducted online. Parents will need to call the credit agency's threat department and explain the reason for the inquiry and request assistance in tracking down fraudulent activity.

If you or one of your children fall victim to identity theft, notify the proper authorities immediately. There are also many companies that specialize in protecting you and your assets if identity theft occurs. You can find further information on steps to mitigate the damage of identity theft at <https://www.identitytheft.gov>.

INSPECTION PROGRAM PERSONNEL (IPP) HELP BUTTON



The IPP Help Button is a single place for tutorials, refreshers, videos, simulations and other how-to materials. The IPP Help Button does not replace classroom training, *AgLearn* courses or FSIS directives. It is intended to supplement the information that you obtain from those sources. You can access the IPP Help Button via the start button and under the FSIS applications folder or access it at <http://fsishelp.fsis.usda.gov/ipphelp/>.

ASK FISH

In my circuit, I visited a voluntary export assignment and discovered that they import catfish (*Siluriformes*). Do they need to apply for import inspection?

If the facility is operating under a Grant of Inspection, it would only need to update its Grant for import inspection activities if it is their intent to host FSIS reinspection of imported catfish (*Siluriformes*) after shipments' release from Customs and Border Protection at the port of entry, and prior to shipments' further movement into U.S. commerce. If the facility is operating under Voluntary Reimbursable Inspection Service and not a Grant of Inspection, the facility must apply for a Grant. If this facility is simply receiving imported catfish (*Siluriformes*) after reinspection has occurred (during the transition period, by either the Food and Drug Administration or FSIS), they would not be required to apply for import inspection.

EQUIVALENCE

... Continued from page 1

The applicant country has the burden of proving that its system is equivalent to health protections in the United States. In response to the request, FSIS asks the petitioning country to complete a self reporting tool questionnaire or SRT. The SRT responses are analyzed by FSIS technical experts to assess the country's regulatory system. This in-depth analysis documents whether the country has laws, regulations, and an infrastructure to support a national food safety inspection system equivalent to that of the U.S. Once the country satisfactorily demonstrates that it has an equivalent food safety system through the documents provided in the SRT, then FSIS will conduct an initial on-site verification audit in the country. During this on-site review, an FSIS audit team travels to the country to evaluate all the aspects of a country's inspection program for both the overall system and individual establishments and laboratories that will be testing product destined for the United States. FSIS prepares and publishes an audit report of its findings and any corrective actions taken by the country as a result in the audit on its website.

If the audit is favorable, then FSIS will publish a proposed rule for comment in the *Federal Register* announcing what we determined, what the reasons were, and seeking public comment. FSIS reviews comments submitted and, if appropriate, publishes a final rule to add the country as eligible to export to the United States.

Once a country receives its initial equivalence determination, their involvement with FSIS continues through verifications and audits. FSIS continually evaluates whether other countries' food safety systems remain equivalent, through import inspections, annual reviews of SRT questionnaire responses, periodic on-site audits of foreign food safety systems and procedures, including certified establishments, laboratories and a review of government controls. Serious issues can cause suspension of eligibility or lead to a rulemaking process that withdraws eligibility permanently.

With regard to import inspection, FSIS verifies the effectiveness of foreign systems through reinspection of product at the border and before it is released into commerce for consumption. Under federal law, shipments of imported meat, poultry, or processed egg products must be presented to an FSIS inspector at one of the approximately 120 official FSIS import establishments located at major ocean ports of entry and land border crossings (in the case of bulk egg products, at designated official establishments). All shipments must be subjected to import reinspection before release into commerce.

Thanks to the hard work of dedicated FSIS employees, American consumers can rightly feel confident about the safety of domestic and imported meat, poultry, and processed egg products.

For more information about equivalence, visit FSIS' website at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/ffsis/topics/international-affairs/importing-products/equivalence.

>>> **RECALLS**

March 3	Arizona firm recalls chicken products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
March 5	Georgia firm recalls chicken nugget products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
March 10	Wisconsin firm recalls chicken pizza and lasagna products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
March 22	California firm recalls chicken salad products due to misbranding and undeclared allergen.
April 6	Virginia firm recalls ready-to-eat turkey, pork and beef products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
April 7	Texas firm recalls poultry products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
April 12	New York firm recalls pork products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **Directive 7120.1, Revision 33, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry and Egg Products**
- **Notice 17-16, Verification of Carcasses that an Establishment Further Processes Without an Official Inspection Legend**

Administrative issues were also published.

- **Notice 16-16, Annual Notice to High-Mileage Drivers**
- **Notice 18-16, Government Purchase Card Mandatory Refresher Training**

- **Notice 19-16, Inspection Program Personnel (IPP) Help Button**
- **Notice 20-16, Agriculture Travel Regulation**
- **Notice 21-16, Annual Reminder for Records Management Responsibilities**
- **Directive 1510.2, Use of Official Time in the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Complaint Process**
- **Directive 1306.2, Revision 1, Information System Security Assessment and Authorization**
- **FSIS Notice 22-16, 2016 OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey**

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

May 2016



Photo contributed by Tasha Thomas and Willis Wright, OFO.

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

INAUGURAL CATFISH INSPECTION CLASS

Pictured, standing, from left: Darain Hazlet, Don Coley, Philip Aman, Dawn Moody, Tammey McVey, Reginald Hulbert, Lorraine Dozier, Aletha Payton, Tracy Bryant, Ronald Key, Al Busch. Pictured, sitting, from left: Winston Felton, Carbet McCoy, Sonya Hoffman, Damon Ranftle, Anita Waldrop, Tasha Thomas, Steven Nathan. For more on this story, see page 4.

Diversity in Agriculture

By Leo O'Drudy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-8693

USDA Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack has made diversity in agriculture a priority of his tenure. This month the entire department is reflecting on and placing special emphasis on this theme. The Secretary's "Business Case for Cultural Transformation," accessible at <http://1.usa.gov/1RP1sTv>, defines the term "diversity" as follows: "Diversity is an inclusive environment wherein differences are valued and integrated into every part of our organization's operation. ..."

Deputy Under Secretary and FSIS Acting Administrator Al Almanza said on February 16 in a Diversity and Inclusion Policy Statement, "Workforce diversity enhances the Agency's ability to successfully develop solutions to today's challenges. ... The ability to deliver high-quality services to customers is undeniably linked to sustaining an organizational culture that protects and empowers the voices of all employees and leverages the diverse talent of all of our human

resources." The full statement, which is available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1Tj7paF>, states that FSIS is committed to the Administration's initiative "to promote diversity and inclusion in the Federal workforce."

FSIS has employed some innovative ways to recruit new employees and broaden the array of backgrounds from which employees come. For example, FSIS has been successful in recruiting and training recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for long-vacant and hard-to-fill food inspector positions in remote areas of the country. For more information on this initiative, see this article from the Kansas Health Institute News Service: <http://www.khi.org/news/article/governor-embraces-jobs-program-for-snap-recipients> or contact the Springdale district office.

Of course, that is only one small example of departmental and Agency-driven efforts on diversity, which—from reasonable

Continued on page 4 ...

The Beacon Mission Statement

The Beacon newsletter is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education to provide relevant mission critical information to all FSIS employees. *The Beacon* provides employees information about the Agency's proposed regulations, policies, and programs; training opportunities; and important employee welfare initiatives to connect employees to the mission and build a cohesive community.

The Beacon enables employees to stay up to date with the latest events and see the Agency's mission executed in action.

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Deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

July issue – due June 1
August issue – due July 1
Sept. issue – due Aug. 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 690-8881
Fax: (202) 815-2707

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

The FSIS Management Council

Alfred V. Almanza	Michael Watts
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	Rachel Edelstein

Deputy Under Secretary's Column

Over the past months, a lot has been happening at FSIS. We are transitioning into regulation of fish of the order Siluriformes, finalizing our new Strategic Plan and examining ways to continue modernizing inspection. You all are the most important part of FSIS and you are the source of this progress.

Additionally, OFO staff will be kicking off an in-person workshop called i-Impact that will continue through the fall for all FSIS employees. In this workshop OFO staff will be talking to all of FSIS about the Agency's public health mission—helping us better understand the vital role we all have in protecting public health, and how we can accomplish our mission of reducing foodborne illnesses and deaths. In June, I will be holding an all-employee town hall meeting to discuss these changes and to answer any questions you might have.

Though I wish I had more chances to talk to you face-to-face, it's important that I'm able to hear your questions and get feedback from you during these town hall meetings. Thankfully I get to see some of you when I travel, but I still don't get to hear from many of you. So I look forward to having an open and informative discussion. With your feedback, I know that we will get closer to meeting our goals.

I hope you will join me for our discussion in June. Until then, keep up the good work. The strides we are making in food safety are a direct result of the dedication you exhibit every single day.



Alfred V. Almanza

i-Impact Food Safety
Protecting Public Health and Preventing Foodborne Illness

NATALIE MARTIN:

Rising Through the Ranks

By Richard J. McIntire, OPACE
Phone: (202) 690-0417

Natalie L. Martin is Deputy Director of the Internal Controls Staff, in the Office of the Administrator, located in Dallas, Texas. As Deputy Director for the Internal Controls Staff, Martin plans, directs and supervises a staff of 12 investigators, who focus on exploring allegations of employee misconduct in order to protect FSIS resources and assets from waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement. Martin came to FSIS 19 years ago, after attending Waldorf College in Forest City, Iowa. She was encouraged by her mother, Ranae Anderson, who was a former FSIS employee in the Des Moines and Dallas district offices before retiring in 2013.

With an educational background in accounting and finance, Martin initially obtained an accounting technician position at the Financial Processing Center (now known as the Financial Services Center) in Urbandale, Iowa. That experience led to opportunities in the Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable branches. Through a promotion she moved over to the Office of Field Operations in Des Moines. It was at the Des Moines district office that she obtained a deeper understanding of what was at the core of the Agency—food safety. She then worked various positions in Resource Management, performing staffing, hiring, personnel, training, budget and supervisory responsibilities.

Using her education and experience as a spring board she was promoted to her current role as Employee Misconduct Investigator on the Internal Control “I think sharing my story of starting as a GS-5 and working my way up through the ranks to a GS-14, gaining knowledge and experience along the way, demonstrates how administrative positions as well as technical, scientific and professional each play a critical part in protecting public health,” It demonstrates how administrative positions as well as technical, scientific and professional each play a critical part in protecting public health,” Martin said. “And that if you put your mind to it,

and learn as much as you can, and apply it to each step along the way, you will continue to become stronger and advance in your career. Also, recognizing FSIS really is a great place to work,” gave her that drive to make a bigger impact on food safety through advancing in her career.

Martin lists the current group of people she works with as another reason why she likes her position so much. “I work with an amazing team of skilled and knowledgeable investigators and analysts that help enhance our program more each day,” she said. “We’re all constantly learning from each other on how to handle new situations and better ourselves along the way. Many of my stories are based around the friendships I’ve created over the years with colleagues, past and present,” Martin said. “They may have started out as co-workers, but many turned into lifelong friends. We’ve learned a lot from each other, and I’m grateful for them and all their support.” On experiencing workplace success, Martin suggests this formula: “If you’re willing to put in the effort, ask questions, get to know people, be positive and challenge yourself, you will find out that no matter what your position is, you are playing a big role in protecting public health, and there’s always room for more leaders.”

In her spare time, the native Iowan is a “baseball mom” to two young boys. Although she is a Dallas Cowboys fan, Martin’s husband, Jeff, constantly tries luring her into becoming a Minnesota Vikings fan. The family counts two miniature schnauzers as a big part of their lives. Natalie also loves traveling anywhere that requires flip flops, throwing summer cookouts with friends and family [and in the process, often explaining why they shouldn’t put cooked meat on a platter previously used for raw meat], and golfing.



Photo contributed by
Natalie L. Martin, OA.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Photo contributed by Tasha Thomas and Willis Wright, OFO.

Pictured, sitting, from left: Ben Sun, Janie Martin, Singh Guraya, Christina Walker, Carla Carson, James Harris, Willis Wright III. Pictured, standing, from left: David Hosmer, Bill Starr, Kyle Brierly, Elwin Weaver, Raul Frontera, Bill Wallace, William Pepper, Shannon Noffsinger, Randall Bailey, Kevin Wager, Jennifer Beasley-McKean, Thomas Ellestad, Deborah Sudduth, Ray Garner. Not Pictured: Lynvel Johnson, Maria Esteras, LaRia Robinson. Fish Group: Michael Baburam, John Black, Lisa Schmittzehe, Jenifer Monteverde, Beatrice Aguado.

Inaugural Catfish Inspection Class

In 2008, Congress passed the 2008 Farm Bill, which amended the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) to make "catfish" an amenable species. However, product covered under "catfish" was not well defined, and on February 7, 2014, the 2014 Farm Bill removed the term "catfish" and replaced it with "all fish of the order Siluriformes." As a result, inspection of this order of fish by FSIS has been mandated by law. The Final Rule putting this into effect was published on December 2, 2015.

To prepare for this mandate, the inaugural fish training for consumer safety inspectors and their supervisors took place from February 16, 2016, to February 19, 2016, in Hernando, Mississippi. Mayor Chip Johnson welcomed the Agency and trainees. The trained inspectors entered catfish establishments on March 1, 2016, and are the first in part of an 18-month transitional period for the establishments (FSIS Notice 08-16). This period, beginning March 1, 2016, and ending September 1, 2017, is focused on helping plants understand what FSIS requires within the FMIA.

DIVERSITY IN AGRICULTURE

... Continued from page 1

accommodations and hiring programs for the disabled to veterans preference—are as pervasive and wide-ranging as the diversity of our workforce, and of the public we serve.

That diversity is celebrated and honored year round. In this month's issue of *The Beacon*, you will see this year's poster for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Heritage Month. FSIS participates in special emphasis month observances, both on an Agency basis and as part of USDA-wide events. And the annual FSIS Diversity Conference currently being planned by the FSIS Civil Rights Staff is scheduled for the week of August 23-25 with travel days on Monday and Friday for out-of-town attendees. The conference will host a diverse group of employees throughout FSIS who will

be able to meet and network with each other and attend numerous career-enhancing workshops. More information on the Diversity Conference will be coming soon.

FSIS employees come from all walks of life and a wide variety of heritages, beliefs and characteristics, and we all bring something unique to contribute to the Agency's mission of protecting public health.

To learn more about civil rights at FSIS, visit: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/informational/aboutfsis/civil-rights>.

To see the USDA non-discrimination statement, visit: http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navtype=FT&navid=NON_DISCRIMINATION.

ASK FISH

With regard to FSIS implementing the inspection of Siluriformes fish and fish products, what activities meet the definition of “processing” that will require FSIS inspection?

9 CFR 531.1 defines “further processed” as smoking, cooking, canning, curing, refining or rendering in an official establishment of product previously prepared in official establishments. These regulations also define “prepared” as slaughtered, canned, salted, rendered, boned, cut up or otherwise manufactured or processed. These regulatory changes can be found in the final rule (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/878aa316-a70a-4297-b352-2d41becc8f73/2008-0031F.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>), beginning on page 75617. All these activities require FSIS mandatory inspection. With that said, during the 18-month transition, FSIS inspection at processing facilities will be done at least once per quarter.

COMING IN JUNE

Town Hall with DUS Almanza

FSIS Employee Connections

FSIS has launched its new quarterly publication, *FSIS Employee Connections*. We hope you like it and look forward to getting your stories and feedback.

If you want to submit articles to FSIS Employee Connections, send them to Quarterlypub@fsis.usda.gov. The deadline for submission to the July issue is June 1; the October issue is September 1; the January issue is December 1; and the April issue is March 1.

Recent FSIS Retirees

*Thank you for your service
and dedication to public health.*

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Blunt, Dennis P., Supvy CSI	Waterloo, Iowa	31
Chambers, Kathy, FI-S	Marietta, Ga.	25
Harville, Ronald, FI-S	Livingston, Calif.	14
Jones, Diane I., Mgmt Suprt Asst	Washington, D.C.	39
Kearney, Gerald K., FI-S	Lewiston, N.C.	31
Miller, Gary, SVM0	Dodge City, Kan.	26
Mills, David L., CSI	Moriches, N.Y.	34
Moss, Guy, CSI	Pleasant View, Utah	25
Patten, John, CSI	Summit, Miss.	23
Snell, Douglas, CSI	Olympia, Wash.	25
Wagner, Randall, CSI	Sioux Falls, S.D.	20
Walker, Vivian, FI-S	Lumber Bridge, N.C.	18
Weibel, Owen J., CSI	Yankton, S.D.	20
Williamson, Christine, FI-S	Broken Bow, Okla.	14

SNAPSHOTS

Kalamazoo, Mich.

On February 12, 2016, FSIS participated in the Government and Nonprofit Career Fair at Western Michigan University. Chicago District CSIs Rey Avendano (pictured, left) and Herbert Smith (pictured, right) spoke with students about careers with FSIS and handed out brochures. Photo contributed by Herb Smith, OFO.



Des Moines, Iowa

The Des Moines District, in conjunction with Iowa State University, held a Food Safety Summit on March 10, 2016, in Ames, Iowa. The goal of the summit was to educate, exchange information and open lines of communication between industry, public health officials and regulatory agencies.

Pictured, front row, from left: Russell Clark, Randall Kumpost, Tanya Phillips, Matthew Wenger (Iowa State University). Pictured, back row, from left: Todd Gerwig,



Brian Hansen, Jordan Bremer (Tiefenthaler Meats), Shelly Tiefenthaler (Tiefenthaler Meats), Steve Calhoun, Catherine Rockwell, William K. Shaw Jr., Joe Cordray (Iowa State University). Photo contributed by Robert Anderson, OFO.

Ft. Benning, Ga.

On February 29, 2016, inspectors visited with the Gulf Coast District Veterinary Command from Fort Benning, Ga. Timini Edwards provided an overview of the USDA standards for operating a USDA inspected large poultry facility. The training is necessary for inspecting facilities during overseas deployment.

Pictured, from left: Horace Jones, Christina

Truesdale, Anna Merrihew, Timini Edwards, Michelle Rivard, Rachel Hatch, Linda Saunders, Kiva Auten.

Photo contributed by Timini Edwards, OFO.



FROM THE **FIELD**

Hyannis, Mass.

On October 21, 2015, John Augustine and Nick Molinski (pictured) were given the opportunity to be presenters at the annual Massachusetts Health Officers Association conference. The conference was comprised of health officials from each town and city in Massachusetts as well as the Massachusetts Department of Health. Photo contributed by John Augustine, OIEA.



Chicago, Ill.

On January 30, 2016, past and present FSIS inspectors from the Dearborn Circuit in the Chicago district donated more than 60 cases of bottled water to the city of Flint, Mich. Pictured, from left: Beverly Primus-Grosman, Don Grosman (retired), Yvonne Maddin (retired). Photo contributed by Dennis Wlasiuk, OFO.



Atlanta, Ga.

From February 28, 2016, through March 10, 2016, OIEA staff held a Surveillance, Investigations, and Enforcement Methods training program in Atlanta, Ga. Staff from OIEA and OOEET assisted in training new federal and state investigators.

Pictured, first row, from left: Amir Ali, Brian Takemoto, Frances Hayes, Cindy Whitley, An Bui, Rosa Recio, Mario Hernandez, Anna Bruno. Pictured, second row, from left: Lisa Borgmann, Matthew Carroll, Elizabeth Starrett, Lew Yoone,

Tom Collaro, Jake Groce, Bob Zon. Pictured, third row, from left: Naimah Green, Lisa Hunter, Tom Urban, Guillermo Orquiz. Pictured, fourth row, from left: Carma Connor, Larry Hortert, Kenneth Cash, Daryl Kirk, Charles Tindall, Manny Goulart, James Chisholm, Michell Williams, Mike Martinez, Keyana Francis, Javier Macias, Becky Dowdey, Joe Ndungu, Matthew Koranek. Photo contributed by Guillermo Orquiz, OIEA.



FSIS Onboarding Manual Available

By Veronika Medina, OPACE
Phone: (202) 202-0196

Do you have a new employee coming on board? As part of FSIS' internal communication plan, offices across the Agency have collaborated to create an FSIS Onboarding Manual for new employees. The manual contains thorough and vital information about USDA, FSIS, employee benefits, pay and leave, forums available to employees, employee development, web-based tools, expected conduct, travel and an onboarding checklist. The goal of this manual is to



be a one-stop resource document for new FSIS employees. It will help each new employee obtain a better understanding of USDA as a department, FSIS as an Agency, and the various benefits of federal employment. The document is available at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/68fb48cc-8a93-4aa0-8db4-f8e85b215c81/FSIS-Onboarding-Manual-Web.pdf?MOD=AJPERES. The document will be revised once a year for timeliness. If you have any questions about this

initiative, please contact Veronika Medina at veronika.medina@fsis.usda.gov.

INSPECTION PROGRAM PERSONNEL (IPP) HELP BUTTON



The IPP Help Button is a single place for tutorials, refreshers, videos, simulations and other how-to materials. The IPP Help Button does not replace classroom training, *AgLearn* courses or FSIS directives. It is intended to supplement the information that you obtain from those sources. You can access the IPP Help button via the start button and under the FSIS applications folder or access it at <http://fsishelp.fsis.usda.govlipphelp/>.

2016 FEDERAL EMPLOYEE VIEWPOINT SURVEY

We Want Your Point Of



Vision Insight Experience Wisdom

DENVER

Proudly Supporting the Agency's Mission

By Peggy Riek, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-7608

The Denver district has the largest geographic jurisdiction of all 10 FSIS districts, covering 10 states—Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming, plus two territories—Northern Mariana Islands (Guam and Saipan) and American Samoa. The Denver district employs 823 individuals who work hard each and every day on the front lines, proudly supporting the Agency's mission to protect public health.

"To get our job done every day, we have the privilege of working with a very culturally diverse group of employees and industry personnel," said Denver District Manager Anna Gallegos.

The Denver district's food safety team is comprised of food inspectors, consumer safety inspectors, public health veterinarians, frontline supervisors, enforcement and investigation analysis officers, resource management specialists and analysts, a district case specialist and three deputy district managers assisting the district manager. These individuals work together daily to provide consumers with safe food—the Agency's number one priority.

The district consists of 671 active federally inspected establishments and 250 custom exempt facilities. There are 552 processing plants and 152 slaughter plants. The Denver district is home to the biggest beef slaughter operations within FSIS. In addition to inspection for poultry, processed egg products, and custom exempt products, the district also provides some voluntary inspection for non-amenable

species such as buffalo and wild game. "The challenges of managing 24 people daily for two shifts and working with industry as a team with one common goal of food safety keeps me energized about my job each day," said Supervisory Consumer Safety Inspector Paula Kellams.

Currently, the Denver staff is heavily involved with i-Impact, an FSIS employee engagement initiative. Additionally, they are focusing their attention on catfish inspection, imports and the New Poultry Inspection System. The district office staff provides valuable customer service, both internally and externally, for the day-to-day operations of the Denver district. Resource Management Analyst Greg Levad said, "Like a domino effect, when I provide exceptional customer service to the district employees each day, they in turn provide the best service they can out in the field."

In the field, inspectors working in the Denver district are needed in many isolated areas, crossing several time zones. To ensure coverage, resource management specialists and analysts are tasked with handling the logistics so that federal establishments are fully staffed every day. Staffing has always been the district's most challenging issue but has improved greatly over the past couple of years. Gallegos hopes to fill all vacancies to better balance the workload. "Doing this will give our employees a better work life balance," said Gallegos. With such a diverse group of employees spread out over a large geographic area, the Denver district has faced many challenges—and turned those challenges into opportunities by working together.



Denver district Resource Management staff members. Pictured, from left: Desiree Guerrero, Anthony Lucas, Dennis Depperschmidt, Greg Levad.

Not pictured: Graydon Lutes, Nanette Wingett.

Photo contributed by Anna Gallegos, OFO.

FSIS Employee Suggestion Program

By Cecilia Matthews, OM
Phone: (202) 708-8160

The FSIS Employee Suggestion Program (ESP) is designed to encourage all employees to improve the efficiency and economy of government operations. The goal of the program is to enhance productivity, reduce cost, promote environmental conservation and sustainability, and simplify processes.

Employee ideas sometimes translate into actual savings, provide a higher-quality product or make it easier to get work done. The bottom line is that good ideas that are implemented and result in process improvements that save the organization time and/or money.

With all that said, the Office of Management would like to share some ESP suggestions that have been successfully adopted. "Congratulations" are in order to the following recipients:

Daniel Renneke - *Eliminating mailing of PY 200 - Egg Product Plant Certificate*

Christine Storey - *Eliminating the timeline on correcting pending PHIS dispositions*

Do you have a great idea to improve operations at FSIS? To submit your suggestion, or for more information, visit the ESP website.

HERITAGE MONTH



CELEBRATION

Environmental Safety and Health Group Welcomes New Specialist

By Curtis Wallis, MPH
Phone: (510) 769-5750

The Environmental Safety and Health Group (ESHG) has two positive developments to announce: the Agency received and resolved a notice from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA); and the ESHG has a new staff member!

OSHA Citation

A California establishment was inspected by OSHA earlier this year and one finding was the lack of a written lockout/tagout program. The OSHA inspector found that the "equipment specific procedures" were not complete and issued a "Notice" to the Agency. Even though we do not own the equipment, we are potentially exposed to hazards from the equipment during pre-operational inspection.

Therefore, OSHA can issue a notice to the Agency. Establishments that lockout equipment for pre-operational inspection must have documented procedures as required by FSIS Directive 4791.11 (page 12). The Agency asked the establishment to write the procedures and then notified OSHA of the change.

Welcome Jacob Moore!

Moore is a new Occupational Safety and Health Specialist in the Dallas District office. He comes to us with experience managing a safety program for a large industrial manufacturing corporation. Prior to working in the private sector, Jacob spent time in the Air Force as a Firefighter. The ESHG is very excited to have Jacob on the team and we look forward to using his resources and knowledge to improve workplace safety. You may contact Jacob at (214) 767-9122 or at jacob.moore@fsis.usda.gov.

OIEA Investigator Receives Honor from District Attorney's Office of the Southern District of N.Y.

By Paul J. Calafiore and Lauren Behar, OIEA
Phone: (718) 244-5034

On February 3, 2016, OIEA-CID Investigator Paul J. Calafiore, in the Jamaica, N.Y. office, received a plaque from the U.S. Attorney's Office at the Southern District of New York for his work in a case involving violations of the Federal Meat Inspection Act and Poultry Products Inspection Act.

Paul Calafiore and Supervisory Investigator Lauren Behar reciprocated their gratitude by presenting a plaque to Assistant United States Attorney (AUSA) Natasha Waglow for her dedicated work and time in entering the violating firm into a permanent Consent Decree. Calafiore and Behar would also like to thank Ryan Cast, Senior Compliance Specialist, OIEA, Enforcement and Litigation Division, as he was instrumental in preparing the proposed consent decree with his expertise and guidance.



Pictured, from left: AUSA Natasha Waglow, U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara, Paul Calafiore, Lauren Behar. Photos contributed by John Turano, U.S. Attorney's Office.

>>> RECALLS

April 14	Texas firm recalls poultry products due to misbranding and undeclared allergen.
April 16	Ohio firm recalls pork products due to misbranding and undeclared allergen.
April 21	New York firm recalls beef product due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 contamination.
April 26	Texas firm recalls poultry products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
April 29	Rhode Island firm recalls meat, poultry products produced without benefit of inspection.
April 29	Louisiana firm recalls poultry products due to possible foreign materials contamination.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **Notice 23-16, Consumer Safety Inspectors Responsibilities at Fish (Of the Order Siluriformes) Establishments during the 18-Month Transitional Period**
- **Notice 24-16, Inspection Program Personnel Responsibilities at Official Import Inspection Establishments (With an Updated Siluriformes Grant of Inspection) During The Transitional Period**
- **Notice 27-16, Enhanced Verification Activities When Egg Products Plants Receive Shell Eggs for Breaking**
- **Directive 7120.1, Revision 34, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products**

- **Notice 28-16, Descriptive Designation for Raw Meat and Poultry Products with Added Solutions, as Required by 9 CFR 317.2(E)(2) and 9 CFR 381.117(H)**

Administrative issues were also published.

- **Directive 1306.9, Revision 2, System and Communication Protection**
- **Directive 1306.4, Revision 1, Information Security Risk Assessment**
- **Notice 25-16, Concur Rebranding**
- **Notice 26-16, Specified Risk Material (SRM) Control Verification Task**
- **Directive 1450.1, Revision 4, Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act**

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

June 2016

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



Photo contributed by Embassy Suites staff

The i-Impact train-the-trainer session was held April 26-27 in Dallas, Texas. See page 12 for the story.

Labeling Rule on Mechanically Tenderized Beef Takes Effect

By Leo O'Drudy, OPAEC
Phone: (202) 720-8693

Most people who eat beef prefer it tender rather than tough, but tender cuts tend to be more expensive. Some years ago, the industry responded to consumer taste by finding a new way to provide tender meat at an affordable price. Industry tenderizes inexpensive tougher cuts by piercing them with blades or needles and sometimes injecting marinade or other fluids in the process.

Unfortunately, there is a serious drawback associated with this innovation: it can threaten food safety and public health unless cooking techniques also change.

Standard cooking techniques assume beef is not pierced. Nontenderized beef tends to confine any potential pathogens to the beef's surface. That's why searing beef while leaving the interior more rare, or less thoroughly cooked, was previously consistent with food safety.

But scientific evidence shows that needles and blades pushing deep into raw beef may push pathogens on the surface inside the cut of beef.

Therefore, the pathogens can remain active and dangerous when the inside of the meat is not thoroughly cooked.

On May 18, 2015, FSIS finalized a rule about mechanically tenderized beef in the *Federal Register* (80 FR 28153), available at <http://1.usa.gov/27QQ0Mj>. Because this rule is so important to food safety, it has taken effect only one year after publication, as of May 17, 2016.

The rule requires that the labels on raw or partially cooked needle- or blade-tenderized beef products destined for household consumers, hotels, restaurants or similar institutions contain validated cooking instructions.

What should these instructions say? FSIS is requiring that the validated cooking instructions include, at a minimum:

1. the cooking method;
2. that these products need to be cooked to a specified minimum internal temperature;
3. whether the product needs to be held for a specified time at that temperature or higher

Continued on page 7 ...

The Beacon Mission Statement

The Beacon newsletter is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education to provide relevant mission critical information to all FSIS employees. *The Beacon* provides employees information about the Agency's proposed regulations, policies, and programs; training opportunities; and important employee welfare initiatives to connect employees to the mission and build a cohesive community.

The Beacon enables employees to stay up to date with the latest events and see the Agency's mission executed in action.

Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education

Carol Blake, Assistant Administrator

Aaron Lavallee, Deputy Assistant Administrator

Eshael M. Johnson, Director

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Leo O'Drudy

Gabrielle Johnston

Peggy Riek

Richard J. McIntire

Brittany Woodland

Deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 690-8881

Fax: (202) 815-2707

Aug. issue – due July 1

Sept. issue – due Aug. 1

Oct. issue – due Sept. 1

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

The FSIS Management Council

Alfred V. Almanza

Michael Watts

Carmen Rottenberg

Stephanie Wilkins

Jane Doherty

Carol Blake

Janet B. Stevens

Aaron Lavallee

Jennifer V. Sisto

Pete Bridgeman

Steve Fisher

Gabrielle Y. James

Terri Nintemann

Carl Mayes

Soumaya Tohamy

David Goldman

William C. "Bill" Smith

Vivian T. Chen

Roberta Wagner

Dan Engeljohn

Rachel Edelstein

Deputy Under Secretary's Column

Over the past few years, a priority of mine has been to reach each employee with a message that YOU impact food safety. "i-Impact" is a great opportunity to learn more about how each employee impacts food safety and the work of FSIS. We have a diverse workforce with many different roles, and it's important to remember that each of us has a unique effect on our mission to protect public health and how this mission is accomplished.



Alfred V. Almanza

I recently had the opportunity to attend the "Train-the-Trainer" event in Dallas, Texas, where 100 employees from the Office of Field Operations (OFO) learned about the "i-Impact" initiative and how they can be involved in delivering the training to all OFO employees. It was a great opportunity to see the enthusiasm for this training effort and to hear from employees during a town hall meeting in the evening.

As we consider the individual role that each of us holds within the Agency, it's also good to think about what those around you are doing to protect public health and how we can better work together as a team. This relates to Secretary Vilsack's Cultural Transformation initiative. Each agency is a place that has equity for all employees and where everyone can reach his or her full potential.

No matter what job you have within FSIS, you have an opportunity to impact food safety and Cultural Transformation within the Agency. In addition to completing your everyday assignments, take a step back and think about how we can improve our greater work environment by engaging with your program area's Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee or leadership. One way you can learn from leaders around you is by becoming a part of the new FSIS mentorship program, which is designed to provide a series of developmental experiences by pairing an experienced employee with a less experienced employee. The program focuses on developing leadership skills and strengthening competencies.

Continued on page 3 ...

Dr. Stephanie Defibaugh-Chavez

Love of Science Leads Microbiologist to FSIS

By Richard J. McIntire, OPACE
Phone: (202) 690-0417

Dr. Stephanie Defibaugh-Chavez is a senior microbiologist in the Office of Public Health Science (OPHS). Defibaugh-Chavez works with many internal and external stakeholders, including other regulatory and public health partners, to assess and make recommendations to FSIS principals—using the best available scientific information for a given topic. Defibaugh-Chavez's day includes determining microbiological method equivalency, review of scientific support for Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points food safety systems in establishments, sampling designs for investigative sampling and review of information on emerging food safety issues.

"In my position, I have opportunities to impact food safety almost every day. Whether it is through activities with other agencies for improving illness surveillance using cutting edge technology or by making a recommendation on the safety of a product in a situation where a recall may be warranted, I help by providing scientific justification and rationales that the Agency can use for decision-making," said Defibaugh-Chavez.

She came to FSIS in November of 2010 following three years of working on method development for characterization of *Salmonella* at the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Food Safety and Applied

Nutrition. She holds a chemistry degree from University of Southwestern Louisiana (now the University of Louisiana at Lafayette); a master's in biochemistry; and a Ph.D. in cell and molecular biology from the University of Arkansas. Her previous work has also led to developing new techniques for detecting *Clostridium botulinum* and the toxins it produces in food products.



Photo contributed by Dr. Stephanie Defibaugh-Chavez

"I think my favorite part about this job is that there is never a dull moment," she said. "In this job, there is always an important request waiting to be answered, and the result often has a direct impact on the safety of our food supply. The work is challenging and more importantly, very rewarding."

Defibaugh-Chavez is dedicated to her work. "Sometimes to a fault," she said, explaining how during her pregnancy she chose to work from a hospital bed because the project she was engaged in was high-profile. "My experiences during that time taught me two things," she said. "One, there are many others at FSIS that won't let the ball drop. And two, it's okay to take time for yourself and your family when you need it. I am proud to work for FSIS," she said. "And as an agency, we should all be proud of the work we do to protect the nation's food supply. All of us impact public

health every day simply by showing up and contributing [our] work."

Off the clock, she dabbles in photography, setting her focus on producing insightful macro images of insects and flowers. In the summer, she gardens with her husband where they cultivate a large variety of peppers. Other than that, 'mom duties' and work take up the rest of her time.

DUS COLUMN

... Continued from page 2

Taking a step back to look at all of the work being done and learning about different ways to become involved really puts our public health mission into perspective.

At FSIS, our most valuable asset is our people. We have a diverse and multi-talented workforce, which will help us achieve our future goals. We want to create an environment that fully utilizes the talents and strengths of all employees, and the best way to do that is through YOUR impact.

The Importance of FOIA at FSIS

By Arianne Perkins, OPACE
Phone: (202) 690-2760

On April 26, 2016, the Agency issued an updated directive on the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The purpose of this directive is to educate FSIS staff on the role each employee plays in ensuring agency compliance with FOIA. Over the last several years, there have been many improvements in the FOIA process. These improvements include new legislation that holds agencies accountable for meeting deadlines when responding to requests for records. Many departments and agencies have also committed to educating employees on the FOIA process and their responsibilities as federal employees. Over the past year, the FSIS FOIA staff has demonstrated this commitment by providing in-person FOIA training to the program area and district office staff.

As federal employees we are all subject to FOIA requirements. This means that any record that we obtain, create and maintain during the course of our official duties (including emails), can be requested by an outside party and released if the information does not fall under a FOIA exemption. The Department of Justice emphasized that "FOIA is everyone's responsibility ... responsibility for effective FOIA administration belongs to all of us—it is not merely a task assigned to an agency's FOIA staff." As the records owners, FSIS program area and district office staff play a vital role in ensuring agency compliance. It is important to respond promptly to the FOIA staff when you receive notification that your records are subject to a FOIA request. Your prompt response ensures that the Agency can provide a timely FOIA response to requestors.

If you have any questions about the FOIA process, please contact the FOIA staff at (202) 720-2109 or via email at foia@usda.gov.



PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Photos contributed by Sarah Lichtman, OPACE

Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza welcomes participants of the i-Impact Train-the-Trainer Workshop in Dallas, Texas.

ASK FISH

I currently work in a fish establishment that produces a raw fish product that is needle injected with a solution of water, sodium tripolyphosphate, salt, and lemon solids. Should the establishment declare a solution added and percent solution statement on their label or just a percent solution?

As of March 1, 2016, catfish products are subject to 9 CFR 317.2(e)(2), otherwise informally known as the “added solutions” rule. However, during the transitional period, FSIS will not take enforcement action on catfish products that contain a solution but do not bear a solution statement. Establishments that produce product bearing a label that is not in compliance with 317.2(e)(2) should be issued an MOI as directed for similar minor labeling noncompliances in FSIS Notice 23-16, Attachment 2.

Note that after September 1, 2017, all catfish labels for product containing a solution must bear a statement in accordance with 9 CFR 317.2(e)(2). FSIS will take enforcement action on all products that do not comply with this regulation after September 1, 2017.

The requirements for Siluriformes fish injected with a solution are outlined in 9 CFR 317.2 (e)(2): www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/textidx?SID=812e10198d7e9653122d0659b90cd1ca&mc=true&node=se9.2.317_12&rqn=div8.

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Alber, Leonard, CSI	Fort Morgan, Colo.	44	Hagen, Hugh E., File Clerk	Urbandale, Iowa	15
Anderson, DeLoris, CSI	Greenville, S.C.	10	Hulsey, Laura E., VMO	Bentonville, Ark.	16
Anderson, Joy, FI-S	Natchitoches, La.	16	Krebs, Thomas, SVMO	Long Prairie, Minn.	30
Austin, Dorothea, CSI	Danville, Ark.	24	Norman, Joyce E., CSI	Dobson, N.C.	25
Barksdale, Linda, CSI	Chicago, Ill.	11	Patel, Mohanbhai F., SVMO	Detroit, Mich.	34
Bishop, William C., CSI	Atlanta, Ala.	40	Pritchard, Homer D., CSI	Montgomery, Ala.	36
Bryan, Harold D., FI-S	Dodge City, Kans.	35	Ramsey, Billy Ray, CSI	Rose Hill, N.C.	38
Clanton, David L., FI-S	Ashland, Ala.	12	Sams, Stephen G., CSI	Sandy, Ore.	33
Craig, Diana, CSI	Dardanelle, Ark.	19	Sifers, Thomas, SVMO	Warsaw, N.C.	12
Davidson, Joni, FI-S	Jack, Ala.	25	Smith, Jr., Willie, CSI	Camilla, Ga.	15
Delapena, Romeo, Food Inspr	Seattle, Wash.	27	Taylor, Brenda L., Budget Analyst	Washington, D.C.	37
Fano, Joseph, CSI	Mundelein, Ill.	45	Wagner, Paulette J., FI-S	Fredericksburg, Pa.	31
Gabriel, Michael, Enfcmnt. Splst.	Washington, D.C.	38	Watford, Sandra, CSI	Hoolehua, Hawaii	14
Goodwin, Jack, CSI	Cullman, Ala.	32	Watson, Doris, Complnc. Investigtr.	Orlando, Fla.	19
Griess, Barbara, CSI	Hastings, Neb.	17			

DES MOINES

Introducing the Des Moines District Office

By Peggy Riek, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-7608

The Des Moines district encompasses the upper Midwest states of Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. Des Moines inspects the largest number of egg products establishments—employing 840 full-time field personnel that oversee the inspection activities of 785 facilities, 537 facilities of which operate actively year-round, with 248 facilities that operate seasonally or intermittently.

“The Des Moines district management philosophy is solely to support its field staff that works both first and second shifts in the establishments. In fact, my deputy district managers and I prefer going out to the establishments to meet with the employees face to face to discuss issues, policies, and regulations. We want to make sure our field employees have the resources they need to do their jobs effectively. Our employees are able to stay focused on their jobs at hand, and they can feel assured that we are approachable and there for them,” said Des Moines District Manager Dawn Sprouls. Staffing in Des Moines ranges from a GS-5 to three deputy district managers—all of whom help to make Sprouls’ job easy.

The Des Moines’ egg products establishments require continuous inspection and staffing—many operating 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, with the other establishments operating for 8-10 hours a day. Additionally, the district has a diverse group of slaughter and processing

plants, including cull cows, market steers, market hogs, fowls, turkeys, and young chickens. Establishments in the district conduct kosher, halal and Confucian ritual slaughter; others process bison and pheasant under voluntary inspection. The Des Moines team also handles a variety of processed products including bratwurst, pizzas, and a variety of canned processed products such as SPAM®. In an effort to support the slaughter and processing operations “Three

management assistants have become more familiar with many duties of the field employees, so that we can support them if they need extra coverage to ensure that slaughter and processing operations are staffed and the mission is maintained,” said Resource Management Assistant Sally Sheres.

Because of the district’s location in the country, with some very remote establishment

locations along the Canadian border in North Dakota as well as facilities in Minnesota and Wisconsin, employees deal with a variety of extreme weather-related issues. “Being spread out like we are, we found that having staffing calls each week with the six circuits is the most efficient way to discuss work issues and to fill positions in order to complete the Agency’s mission,” said Supervisory Consumer Safety Inspector Corey Kastner.

One of the biggest challenges in the Des Moines district involves hiring and recruiting qualified employees. Some



Photo contributed by Dr. Rosemary Turner, OFO

Des Moines District Office staff pictured, front row, from left: Jeani Plautz, Rose Blackford, Ellen Wade, Dr. Khalid Masood, Robin Jacobson. Pictured, back row, from left: Todd Gerwig, Paul Palmer, Dr. Rosemary Turner, Andy Bingham, Jeff Harvey, Dianne Nekola, Steven Day. Not pictured: Dr. Dawn Sprouls, Sally Sheres, Dr. Claire Hotvet, Dr. Renee Larson, Dr. Randy Kumpost, Patrick Stillwell.

Continued on page 10 ...

Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

The Leave Transfer Program (LTP) allows employees to donate annual leave to certain eligible employees. In order to be eligible to receive donated leave under LTP, applicants must: 1) be a current federal employee; 2) obtain approval from their supervisor to be absent from work; 3) be experiencing a personal or family medical emergency that results in hardship for the employee due to insufficient accrued leave; 4) provide

a personal statement and a signed medical document explaining the emergency; and 5) provide Form AD-1046 signed by their supervisor. Information, application forms and the most current list of eligible employees can be found on USDA's SharePoint site at <http://collaboration/sites/InfoExch/Personnel/default.aspx>. For assistance contact Sonja Tomlinson at (202) 708-8179 or sonja.tomlinson@fsis.usda.gov.

LABELING

... Continued from page 1

before consumption to ensure that potential pathogens are destroyed throughout the product; and

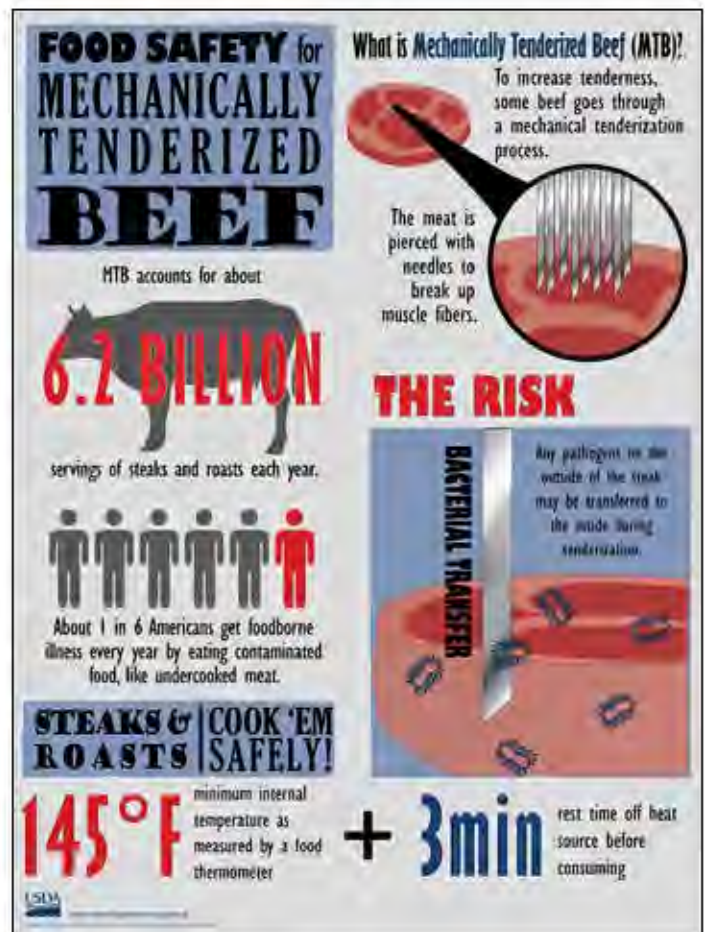
4. a statement that the internal temperature should be measured by a thermometer.

One example of instructions that meet the requirements is: "Grill until product reaches 145 °F, as measured by a food thermometer, and hold the product at or above that temperature for 3 minutes." For more, see the FSIS Questions and Answers document on the rule (available at <http://1.usa.gov/1SNICvY>).

The rule also requires that the labels use the specific phrase "needle tenderized," "blade tenderized" or "mechanically tenderized." This information cannot be hidden away in ultra-fine print or made hard to read by using an odd font or color scheme.

How can inspection program personnel verify that establishments meet the new labeling requirements? Instructions for in-plant personnel can be found in FSIS Notice 29-16, which is available online at <http://1.usa.gov/1YGvMyQ>. It includes the step-by-step procedure for submitting labeling questions via *AskFSIS*.

The world of food safety is constantly changing, and FSIS must change along with it. Sometimes new and updated regulations or other practices come about because of advances in scientific research that suggest more effective approaches. Sometimes change happens because it becomes clear that new threats to public health have emerged. But whatever happens, consumers can be confident about the content and safe handling instructions of their beef, thanks to the hard work of FSIS' scientific, policy-writing and labeling staff, and of the inspection staff that make sure it all happens as it should.



For more about this rule, go to the following URL and scroll down to the section on this topic: www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/regulations/federal-register/interim-and-final-rules/interim-and-final-rules-2015.

To learn more about labeling at FSIS, go here: www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/regulatory-compliance/labeling.

SNAPSHOTS

Urbandale, Iowa

On April 28, 2016, Aubrey Williams (pictured, standing, right), and Roberta Jacobson (pictured, standing, left) presented a hand washing exercise at the Financial Services Center on Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day 2016.

The children learned about the importance of washing hands effectively in preventing foodborne illness. Photo contributed by Karen Sommer, OA.



Los Angeles, Calif.

On March 17, 2016, OIEA and OFO personnel attended the "Mandatory Inspection of Siluriformes Fish and Fish Products" meeting. Attendees included USDA and private industry officials. The meeting, hosted by FSIS, helped industry understand what the Agency requires in order to meet the final rule as well as the 18-month transitional period. Pictured, from left: Nashante Barnes, Robert Leskowsky, Megan Potts, Guadalupe Solis, Abdalla Amin, Rosa Recio, Sue Newman, Frank Gillis, Tracy Hernandez. Photo contributed by Guadalupe Solis, OIEA.



Tecumseh, Neb.

On May 11-12, 2016, inspection program personnel from the Lincoln, Nebraska circuit completed New Poultry Inspection System training at Est. P20251. The training was led by Dr. Nan Armand from the Dallas District.

Pictured, from left: Roger Powell, Jon Dierks, Nan Armand, Chelsea Buckley, Jim Parrish, Juan De Los Santos, Lisa Powell. Photo contributed by Chelsea Buckley, OFO.



FROM THE **FIELD**

Forest Park, Ga.

On May 4, 2016, Carrollton, Georgia processing inspectors took part in a Lock Out/Tag Out refresher training. Pictured, from left: Dinon Phillips, Donna Savage, James Robinson, Donald Roth, Yvette Assem. Photo contributed by Donna Savage, OFO.



Jonesboro, Ga.

On April 29, 2016, Atlanta district EIAOs Georgiana Powers (pictured, right) and Michael Chung (pictured, left) attended the Kilpatrick Elementary School career day. This was the second year that FSIS was asked to attend this career day event. Powers and Chung gave out pamphlets, magnets and booklets about food safety and explained how FSIS works to protect public health. Powers and Chung were just back from i-Impact training, so this was a great way for them to show how they impact food safety. Photo contributed by Debra Halteman, OFO.



Atlanta, Ga.

On April 22, 2016, 35 FSIS employees completed the highly competitive FSIS Escalade Leadership Development Program. The program received 150 applications and this is the largest class to complete the training. Pictured, seated, from left: Clifford Joubert, K. Dawn Larson, Cheryl Henry, Paul Calafiore, Guadalupe Solis, Edgar Jaimez, Marcia Lucas. Pictured, standing, from left: Anthony L. Thompson, Charles Douglas, Joseph Minicozzi, Valerie Gonzales, Melanie



Abley, Sherri Gress, Adrianna Frey, Jaime Woodside, Nicholas Stuhr, Carrie Clark, Michael Partridge, Maria D. Salazar, Victoria Rosas, Kevin Ingram, Marie Phillips, Paul Sherman, Molly Winter, Jani Bennett, Douglas Fulgham, Jr., Anya Cotliarenko, Selena Barbee, Trevell Stanbrough, Anne Luedtke, Brian Hansen, Natoya Cameron, Zachariah Williams, Patricia Jennings, Laura Kranitz, Cade Akers, Michael Watts. Photo contributed by Anthony L. Thompson, OOEET.

OIEA Launches First Surveillance Training Course

By Michael Riccardi Jr., OIEA
Phone: (718) 244-5034

The FSIS Office of Investigation, Enforcement, and Audit, Compliance and Investigation Division (CID), along with the Office of Outreach, Employee Education and Training, held the first Surveillance, Investigations, Enforcement Methods (SIEM) training class, on April 4-7, 2016, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Approximately 35 Investigators from all four CID regions assembled for the training. Several years ago, the senior investigators had a one-week, joint-training session. That session centered on the senior investigators' roles in CID. Senior Investigator Bob Zon thought it necessary to build consistency in CID, to refresh awareness of directives and to enhance the Investigators' knowledge based on our experiences and cases. A workgroup was then formed to create the new one-week training course that consisted of CID staff members Dr. Jerry Elliott, Sara Baucher, Eugene Casole, the four regional directors and the eight senior investigators.



Photo contributed by Michael Riccardi Jr., OIEA

The participants of the Surveillance, Investigations, Enforcement Methods training class, April 4-7, 2016. Pictured, back row, from left: Eric Rhoads, Jim Borda, Mark Pevler, Don Russell, Larry Belk, Adriana Perez, Christopher Irwin, Rafael Pereda, William Marshall, Michael Dunn, Rhonda Woods, Brett Jensen, Paul Flanagan, Tom Griego, Michael Barta, Joseph Cox, Edgar Jaimez, Brent Limoges, April Humbles, Robert Allshouse, Robert Leskowski, Bob Zon; Pictured, front row, from left: Lisa Swallow, Ana Marin, Michael Riccardi, Jannette Pagan, Olaya Valadez, Regina Salter, Linda Ramos, Stacy Tyralla, Dana Maxwell, Jaime Correa, William Tirado, Conny Byler.

The training consisted of modules on: In-Commerce Surveillance, Investigative Methodology, Investigative Surveillance Sampling, Evidence Collection, Report Writing, Notices of Warning, Case Referral and Disposition, Civil Enforcement, Seizure, Mentoring, Investigator Safety, Foodborne Illness Investigations and Imported Products. CID's next Advanced SIEM training course is scheduled for July 11-15, 2016, in Philadelphia, Pa.

DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT

... Continued from page 6

areas are so remote that finding housing can be a problem. "To help alleviate this problem, the district takes an active role at state and local job fairs and partnering with state employment offices to coordinate recruitment activities. Agency personnel help prospective employees about how to use the USAJobs tool when applying for federal jobs," said Sprouls. The district also sends recruiters to the University of Minnesota, Iowa State University and the University of Wisconsin veterinarian schools to make presentations about

FSIS and works with the schools to provide internships and externships for students during the last 2-3 weeks of their senior year.

The Des Moines district, like all the others, faces various personnel issues, geographical challenges and weather-related challenges. With effective systems in place, hiring the right people and communicating regularly with field employees, the Des Moines district is able to prevent food safety issues from occurring. Each employee finds satisfaction from knowing they are contributing to the overall FSIS mission and having a positive impact on food safety.

The Heat is On!

By Curtis Wallis, OM
Phone: (510) 769-5750

It's almost summertime and some establishments are going to get extremely hot this summer. This month's column has some important information about heat stress that should help you stay healthy and safe.

Heat Stress

Do you work in an establishment where heat is an issue during summer months? If so, there are some important things that you need to be aware of while working during the hot summer months. Heat stress can cause serious health problems including heat rash, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and even life threatening heat stroke. Throughout the day, be sure to drink enough water and Sqwinchers, use neck cooling scarves and vented hard hats, and if you feel symptoms, ask to take a break in a cool location. Visit the safety website at www.tinyurl.com/FSIS-ESHG to get more information about heat stress prevention and the heat stress poster.

Welcome Joseph Dobbins!

Dobbins is our newest Industrial Hygienist working out of Washington, D.C. He comes to us from California where he spent time working for the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration. He was previously a Consumer Safety Inspector from 2008-2010. We are very excited to have Dobbins on the team. If you have an air quality or chemical exposure complaint, contact your safety specialist and they will be sure to get Dobbins on the case immediately.

HEAT STRESS

Protect Yourself in the Heat!



Symptoms of Heat Related Illnesses:

- **Heat Rash** – moist skin, itching, tingling, and raised bumps.
- **Heat Cramps** – painful muscle spasms.
- **Heat Exhaustion** – heavy sweating, headaches, dizziness, fainting, and fatigue.



✓ **Keep skin cool and dry**

✓ **Wear loose clothing**

✓ **Stay in good physical condition**

✓ **Eat a balanced diet**

✓ **Use the buddy system and check your partner**

✓ **Know what to do in the event of an emergency**

Symptoms of Heat Stroke:

- Dry, hot skin, with no sweating.
- High body temperature.
- Rapid pulse and breathing.
- Irrational behavior or confusion.
- Convulsions and loss of consciousness.

If you suspect heat stroke, call 911 immediately

How to Prevent Heat Stress:

- Know the signs and symptoms of heat stress and related illnesses.
- Drink water and Sqwinchers throughout the day.
- Use neck cooling scarves, vented hard hats and light clothing.
- Avoid caffeine and sugary drinks.
- Avoid alcohol and illegal drug use.
- Take breaks in a cool location.
- Check with your doctor regarding personal medical conditions.



**Water
Breaks
Keep Cool**

Other Safety Hazards:

- Reduced mental alertness
- Fatigue and loss of strength
- Moist, slippery skin
- Sweat in eyes

OFO Employees Attend i-Impact Train-the-Trainer Workshop

By Jeremy J. Emmert and Kristen Booze, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-3988

Recently, FSIS launched the most extensive employee engagement initiative ever undertaken: i-Impact. One of Deputy Under Secretary Almanza's priorities is the one-hour program, because it will be delivered in person to every FSIS employee, by an FSIS employee. The goal of i-Impact is to help employees better understand the importance of their individual job duties and how those daily job duties support the FSIS public health mission. FSIS employees are an integral part of how the Agency accomplishes its Annual Performance Plan and 5-year Strategic Plan.

On April 26 and 27, 100 participants from the Office of Field Operations attended a workshop to learn how to deliver the i-Impact program to more than 6,500 field personnel. New trainers shared their own stories and perspectives on working for FSIS and finding their line of sight through the Agency planning documents to the overall FSIS mission to protect public health. Deputy Under Secretary Almanza also shared his food safety story and reiterated to participants his desire to ensure that all FSIS personnel grasp how YOU impact food safety. The new trainers are now presenting i-Impact to field employees and will continue to do so for the next several months. i-Impact is an ongoing FSIS initiative and will be incorporated into new employee onboarding. The program will be updated to reflect changes in the 2017 Strategic Plan.

Working together as a team, FSIS employees are demonstrating daily how WE IMPACT food safety, no matter what job function, title, role or position we have. Our individual work duties impact food safety and contribute to the larger effort to impact public health. What we do matters!

**"A
reaffirmation
of the importance
of our job."**

**"It addressed the
importance of our
jobs and reiterated
that it is a team effort."**



Photos contributed by Sarah Lichtman, OPACE

Participants browse the i-Impact workbook. Pictured, from left: Lorne Wood, Jeremy Emmert, Keith Rahn, April Prillaman.



Ryan Bradburn practices using different techniques to engage the audience during the Springdale district breakout session.

"Program was presented very well and it was made very clear that the agency wants to know our opinions."

Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza takes questions from participants during an informal town hall meeting.



Kristen Booze (pictured, left) and Fatima Weaver (pictured, right) prepare to hand out nametags before the train-the-trainer session begins.



OFO Assistant Administrator Bill Smith answers trainers' questions about i-Impact logistics.



Lois Dinges follows along during the initial presentation of i-Impact.



Trainers use the Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plan to understand how their daily tasks help the Agency accomplish long-term goals. Pictured, from left: Karen Hunter, Tanya Phillips, Clarke Jones.

"Very good training. I'm a strong team player and hope FSIS will always work as a team. Very important."

Update: FSIS 360 Leadership Assessments

By Ellyn Blumberg, OOEET
Phone: (202) 690-3158

What are FSIS 360 Leadership Assessments?

The FSIS Emotional Quotient 360 Leadership Assessment is a highly researched assessment that focuses on key skills needed by all leaders, such as assertiveness, optimism and empathy. The assessment provides results on 16 essential supervision skills and will provide suggestions for improving your skills over time.

Why am I taking it?

To support FSIS and the Department's workforce and succession planning efforts. USDA issued Departmental Regulation 4040-412-001 requiring all supervisors, managers and executives who are full-time, career or career-conditional employees to take a 360-degree assessment at least every three years to guide their leadership development.

Who is involved?

As a part of the 360 process, each supervisor will ask others from the list to provide feedback:

- Manager (Mandatory),
- Direct reports (at least four if you have that many),
- Peers (at least four if you have that many), and
- Family/friends and others (Optional: up to four people in each category).



By asking multiple people to provide feedback, each supervisor receives perspectives from different angles. This process increases awareness of work-related behaviors, clarifies differences of opinions and improves communication between self, raters and the organization.

How many supervisors have completed it?

FSIS has achieved our 2016 USDA Goal. More than 30 percent of FSIS' current supervisors have completed a 360 Leadership Assessment. In FY2014, all Senior Executive Service employees completed the assessment. In FY2015, headquarters managers, DM/DDMs, FLS, SEIAOs and RMs completed the assessments. In FY2016, FSIS is engaging SCSIs and SPHVs to continue to achieve department goals. If you have any questions about the 360 Leadership Assessments, please email Lara.D'Amore@fsis.usda.gov.



PHOTO CORRECTION: May 2016 District Spotlight



Photo contributed by Anna Gallegos, OFO

Denver district Resource Management staff members. Pictured, from left: Desiree Guerrero, Anthony Lucas, Dennis Depperschmidt, Greg Levad. Not pictured: Graydon Lutes, Nanette Wingett and Tonia Parks.

Retrospective Analysis of the Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program Presented at the Society for Benefit-Cost Analysis 8th Annual Conference

By Flora Tsui, OPPD
Phone: (301) 504-3670

The Society for Benefit-Cost Analysis (SBCA) is an international and multi-disciplinary association of scholars and practitioners from governments, academia, nonprofits and private industries. It holds meetings annually in Washington, D.C. to share research on benefit-cost analysis (BCA) and to try to improve how BCA supports policy decisions. The 8th annual conference took place March 16-18, 2016, and had more than 300 attendees from 11 countries.

A new focus of SBCA in recent years is the retrospective benefit-cost analysis. It is different from the prospective BCA that government agencies, including FSIS, have been conducting for Federal Register publications, also known as preliminary regulatory impact analyses (PRIA) and final regulatory impact analysis (FRIA). Retrospective BCA has caught much attention upon issuance of Executive Order 13563 (January 18, 2011), Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review. It not only evaluates how policies and

programs are doing, but also sheds light on how accurate the related PRIAs and FRIAs are and how to improve prospective BCAs in the future. In the 2016 annual conference, SBCA had devoted a pre-conference workshop and a session to this subject. In addition, both keynote speakers for the conference, Senator James Lankford (R-OK) and Senator Heidi Heitkamp (D-SD), emphasized that Congress will be pushing this initiative for government agencies.

For the session on retrospective BCA, I presented my work on the Agency's Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program. Contrasting with the FRIA, my work showed that the program has been cost-effective as the benefit has been higher than cost and the cost has been lower than expected. The presentation slides are at <http://bit.ly/1t73a8o>.

I also mentioned that the study relied on data from different offices in FSIS and gave credit to all those who provided data assistance. The presentation was well-received, and we were asked to lead a roundtable discussion on BCAs of food safety regulations at the next SBCA annual conference.



Desalegn Djalleta learns he came in first place in the Count Your Steps health initiative. Photo courtesy of Dr. Linda Lilyestrom, a frontline supervisor, Hatfield Circuit.

Count Your Steps FITNESS CHALLENGE

By Felicia Thompson, OM
Phone: (202) 720-0084

The Office of Management (OM) conducted the "Count Your Steps" fitness challenge in January 2016, and the top two winners are Desalegn Djalleta, a Consumer Safety Inspector in the Philadelphia district, with 674,341 steps, and Tonya McCray, a Food Inspector in the Jackson district, with 538,702 steps. OM conducted this health initiative to encourage FSIS employees to "move" for better health. More than 220 employees—mostly from the Office of Field Operations—registered to participate in the month-long event. Participants received a pedometer courtesy of OM's Employee Safety, Health and Wellness Staff.



Tonya McCray poses for an image in the plant where she works. Photo courtesy of Consumer Safety Inspector Marian Smith-Dixon, Raleigh District.

>>> **RECALLS**

May 4	California firm recalls Trader Joe's broccoli slaw & kale salad with white meat chicken products due to possible <i>Listeria</i> contamination.
May 4	Texas firm recalls vegetable lasagna products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
May 5	Nebraska firm recalls charcuterie meat products produced without benefit of inspection.
May 6	Texas firm recalls poultry products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
May 7	Florida firm recalls meat tamale products due to possible <i>Listeria</i> contamination.
May 7	Washington firm recalls beef jerky products that may be undercooked.
May 10	Texas firm recalls poultry products due to possible <i>Listeria</i> contamination.
May 11	Texas, California, Missouri and Oregon firms recall meat and poultry products due to possible <i>Listeria</i> contamination.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **Notice 28-16, Descriptive Designation for Raw Meat and Poultry Products with Added Solutions, as Required by 9 CFR 317.2(E)(2) and 9 CFR 381.117(H)**
- **FSIS Notice 29-16, Descriptive Designation for Needle- or Blade-Tenderized Raw Beef Products as Required by 9 CFR 317.2(e)(3)**

Administrative issues were also published.

- **FSIS Directive 1306.3, Revision 2, Configuration**

Management of Security Controls for Information Systems

- **Notice 30-16, Mandatory Equal Employment Opportunity and Civil Rights Training for all FSIS Employees**
- **Notice 31-16, Cancellation of FSIS Directives**
- **Notice 32-16, FSIS Adel A. Malak Scholarship (Pilot)**
- **Notice 33-16, Restricted Use of Personal and Government Furnished Electronic Devices**

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

July 2016



Photo contributed by Marilu Simeone, OFO

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

On May 19, 2016, FSIS employees participated in an i-Impact workshop facilitated by Salah Ibrahim in Philadelphia, Pa. Several Consumer Safety Inspectors and Frontline Supervisors from circuit 12, circuit 17 and circuit 27 were in attendance. Pictured, front row, from left: Joseph Piccirilli, Ahsan Mahmood, Victor Alvarez, Yechezkel Fogel, Mario Winter, Kimberly Sivananthan, Onyksa Domenech, Charles Cox, Joseph Stanek. Pictured, back row, from left: James Franzakis, Gabriel Schenk, Peter Miceli, Phillip Yoo, Kely Icart, Jamal Burke, Cekeitha Davis, Nicholas Sgobba, Jennifer Guthrie, Ariel Ortiz. Not pictured: Salah Ibrahim, Marilu Simeone and Muhammad Qureshi. For more stories about i-Impact in action, see page 8.

Food Safety Accomplishments and Results

By Leo O'Drudy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-8693

FSIS is only one of many agencies within USDA, but food safety has always been a top priority for Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack. Under his leadership, and thanks to the hard work of the many thousands of dedicated FSIS employees in offices, labs and establishments around the country, USDA has made significant strides in food safety and public health.

One of the key tools FSIS has implemented is the Public Health Information System (PHIS), a web-based, comprehensive, data-driven system, which replaces many of our separate, older systems (most of which were paper-based) and integrates them into one easy-to-use, automated whole. PHIS makes it much easier for inspection personnel, their managers and headquarters personnel to share information, enabling faster decision making so FSIS can protect public health more efficiently. It also has common-sense features like automatically generated alerts and follow-up procedures, when appropriate.

Another major step forward has been the modernization of poultry inspection. All poultry slaughter establishments must now meet stricter standards with an emphasis on preventing contamination, including microbiological testing to show they are controlling *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*. Establishments that join the voluntary New Poultry Inspection System must do their own quality sorting, allowing FSIS personnel to focus on more food safety-oriented tasks, like making sure plants follow their Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plans.

In fiscal year 2015, FSIS helped make HACCP even more effective and meaningful by requiring establishments to analyze their validation methods to make sure the science behind their plans fits what they are actually doing in-plant, and to provide 90 days worth of data showing that their plans are actually working properly. FSIS is reaching out to make

Continued on Page 3 ...

The Beacon Mission Statement

The *Beacon* newsletter is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education to provide relevant mission critical information to all FSIS employees. The *Beacon* provides employees information about the Agency's proposed regulations, policies, and programs; training opportunities; and important employee welfare initiatives to connect employees to the mission and build a cohesive community.

The *Beacon* enables employees to stay up to date with the latest events and see the Agency's mission executed in action.

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Deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

Aug. issue – due July 1

Sept. issue – due Aug. 1

Oct. issue – due Sept. 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 690-8881

Fax: (202) 815-2707

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

The FSIS Management Council

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Deputy Under Secretary's Column

This July, USDA celebrates food safety as the monthly departmental theme. In the heat of summer and grilling season, July marks a perfect time to emphasize the importance of food safety. During this month, Secretary Tom Vilsack and I are reminding consumers that the safety of the U.S. food supply will always be one of USDA's top priorities and food safety awareness is key to combatting foodborne illness.



Alfred V. Almanza

FSIS has made many positive strides over the past few years.

We have been working around the clock to update our inspection performance standards and to implement new measures to protect the public from foodborne illnesses. Under the New Poultry Inspection System, we began modernizing poultry inspection and implementing tougher standards for *Salmonella* and new standards for *Campylobacter*, which will reduce the occurrence of these pathogens in poultry.

In addition to poultry inspection modernization, USDA recently implemented new measures for beef and beef products such as placing validated cooking instructions on all mechanically tenderized beef products going to supermarkets, hotels, restaurants and similar institutions. We are also requiring all makers of raw ground beef to maintain more complete records of the source material so that the Agency can quickly work with suppliers to recall contaminated product when necessary.

Moreover, we are reaching consumers faster than ever before through social media. Much of our social media success has resulted from seasonal campaigns such as Thanksgiving and events such as the Super Bowl, but we've also begun inserting food safety into trending topics and news worthy events. Did you know that our Twitter account @usdafoodsafety has more than 780,000 followers? We also launched our FoodKeeper smartphone application last year to share valuable storage advice, and it continues to gain in popularity. You can impact public health and food safety by sharing these resources with others.

We are doing so much right now, and you are the root of all of this success. This month is truly a time to celebrate the importance of food safety and the importance of what you do every day. Over the summer and throughout the year, I hope you share the importance of food safety with your friends and families.

Meryl Silverman

Assisting Field Staff Drives Technologist's Role

By Richard J. McIntire, OPACE
Phone: (202) 690-0417

Meryl Silverman, Ph.D., is a food technologist in FSIS' Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD), working out of headquarters in Washington, D.C. In her role Silverman works on the Risk, Innovations, and Management Staff, which ensures that OPPD's policy development initiatives have a strong scientific basis by collaborating with the Office of Public Health Science. Her main areas of expertise are in developing policies related to safe production of ready-to-eat meat and poultry products including compliance guidelines and inspection methods.

"My job impacts public health because I provide guidance that helps industry comply with FSIS' regulatory requirements and production of safe products," Silverman said. She also provides instructions and assistance to field staffers in verifying industry compliance, especially when corrective actions are warranted due to a deviation in product safety.

Her work was most recently showcased in FSIS' newly implemented rule requiring labeling of mechanically tenderized beef products. "I think this rule will have a great impact on public health because it gives consumers the information they need to safely prepare mechanically tenderized beef products," she said.

Silverman was fortunate to be exposed to the field of food science in high school by a family member who worked in the food industry. "I started my career working

for a large food company doing product development," she said. "While I thought that was my dream job, I quickly realized I wanted to do something that had a greater impact on public health. So, I moved back to Washington, D.C., where I decided to work at FSIS after meeting some employees and seeing how passionate they were about their job and FSIS' mission."

She came to FSIS in June 2010 as a Presidential Management Fellow, following a stint as a visiting scientist with the Joint Institute for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition at the Food and Drug Administration. She holds a master's degree in food science from Cornell University, and a doctorate from the University of Maryland.

Silverman's favorite part of the job is assisting field staff through *askFSIS*—the Agency's online repository of answers to frequently asked questions and topics. "I know we have the most dedicated field personnel who are so passionate about FSIS' mission, and I love being able to provide assistance that hopefully helps them do

their job more effectively," she said. Her message to agency colleagues is "Don't ever hesitate to ask a question because OPPD is here to help."

In her off time Silverman loves to cook and tries to do so for her family as much as possible. "I always have food safety on my mind," she said. "Having young children reminds me of how important our job is to ensure everyone has access to a safe and healthy food supply." Away from the office and kitchen she enjoys running, listening to music and exploring Washington, D.C., with her husband and two daughters.



Photo contributed by
Meryl Silverman, OPPD

FOOD SAFETY

... Continued from Page 1

sure small and very small plants are trained and able to meet these new requirements.

Because most consumers buy poultry parts (such as breasts, wings and legs), rather than whole carcasses, FSIS has new pathogen reduction performance standards for these important products. Our science-based estimate is that this step alone will help prevent 50,000 illnesses every year.

The limited space available here isn't nearly enough room to list all of the ways we have made a positive impact on public health. Most importantly, as FSIS employees, we can be proud of our accomplishments in delivering real results for food safety and public health and can look forward to building on that progress in the years to come.

Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

The Leave Transfer Program (LTP) allows employees to donate annual leave to certain eligible employees. In order to be eligible to receive donated leave under LTP, applicants must: 1) be a current federal employee; 2) obtain approval from their supervisor to be absent from work; 3) be experiencing a personal or family medical emergency that results in hardship for the employee due to insufficient accrued leave; 4) provide a personal statement

and a signed medical document explaining the emergency; and 5) provide Form AD-1046 signed by their supervisor. Information, application forms and the most current list of eligible employees can be found on USDA's SharePoint site at <http://collaboration/sites/InfoExch/Personnel/default.aspx>. For assistance contact Sonja Tomlinson at (202) 708-8179 or sonja.tomlinson@fsis.usda.gov.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Photo contributed by Jeannine Krein, OFO

Pictured, from left: Adam Ghering, Luis Delgadillo, Jeannine Krein, Guillermo Orquiz and Shelly Drake.

The Food Safety Discovery Zone (FSDZ) stopped in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on June 4 and 5, 2016, at the Kirtland Air Force Base Air Show. Staff from the Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit and the Office of Field Operations volunteered to assist Luis Delgadillo and Adam Ghering of the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education with the event. During the event, FSIS personnel educated the public about food safety practices to prevent foodborne illness. More than 2,000 individuals visited the FSDZ over the course of the 2-day air show. Visitors were given an interactive multimedia show on food safety practices, focusing on the four steps of food safety—clean, separate, cook and chill.

COMING SOON: FSIS Fiscal Year 2017-2021 Strategic Plan!

The new Strategic Plan is going to be ready for release in the fall. The Plan contains three primary goals focused on protecting public health and preventing foodborne illness, modernizing our food safety approaches and achieving operational excellence. Please keep your eyes open for information regarding its release and launch.

JACKSON

By Peggy Riek, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-7608

The Jackson district covers Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee, including two State Cooperative Inspection programs (Talmadge/Aiken) in Alabama and Mississippi. Jackson is one of the largest districts in terms of employees, with 1,172 individuals who deal with new challenges every day.

"Our employees follow FSIS' Strategic Plan each day steered by the district's management philosophy—we are 'one team' with 'one purpose'—that is, to protect public health and prevent foodborne illness. Together with my deputies, we continually encourage and ensure that the employees are aware of FSIS' mission and convey to them that they are a part of that Agency mission," said Jackson District Manager Perry Davis.

The district's main goal is to keep the 384 federally inspected facilities falling within its jurisdiction staffed year-round.

"The establishments cannot operate if they are not staffed, so I

feel my contribution to the Agency's mission is to ensure that they are staffed which, in turn, provides protection of public health," said Resource Management Specialist Heather Herrington.

The Jackson district is one of the largest poultry districts in the country. In addition, it conducts slaughter and processing of red meat, market hogs, some emu, and halal ritual slaughter and processing. The Jackson district also includes one egg products establishment and six New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS) establishments, with one more NPIS establishment being added by late summer.

When asked what was unique about the Jackson district, Davis said, "We support our employees and strive to build relationships, with one-on-one interactions, always trying to keep our employees focused and motivated so they genuinely feel they are a part of the Agency's mission."

Managers and supervisors consistently coach current employees and new hires about the important role they play in the Agency's mission of food safety, and being the "first line of defense" in protecting public health and preventing foodborne illness. "Knowing I work for

an Agency like FSIS that makes a positive difference in the world and in the lives of those we work with makes me excited about coming to work each day at the Jackson district," said Resource Manager Christina Walker.

Jackson district employees work to acquire prospective employees through outreach and recruiting at high schools, junior colleges, 4-year colleges, universities and career centers throughout their jurisdiction—promoting the value of FSIS as an employer at each event. At these events, Jackson district personnel discuss how they got their jobs

and opportunities for advancement within the Agency. They also provide information on how to apply for the Pathways Program internship positions.

Herrington said, "During orientation with our new hires, we share information about our backgrounds and stress to them that they can accomplish anything in FSIS if they have the desire and fortitude to get to where they deserve to be in their careers. The Jackson district is a place of opportunity!"



Photo by Deborah Rine, OFO

Pictured, front row, from left: Davida Jones, Heather Herrington, Francheska Banks. Pictured, second row, from left: Christina Walker, Sharon Course, Dorothy Stewart, Natoya Cameron and Larry Davis. Pictured, back row, from left: Geneva Dennis, Kermit Harvey, Clairice Buckley, Betty Thomas, Sandra Fore, Deborah Mixon, Don Coley, Perry Davis. Not pictured: David Thompson, Linda Gilmore.

SNAPSHOTS

Corvallis, Ore.

EIAOs Janice Walton (pictured, second from left) and Paul Sherman (pictured, third from left) represented FSIS at the Oregon State University (OSU) career fair at the OSU campus on April 27. Walton and Sherman met many animal science and pre-veterinary students and were able to share the benefits of working for FSIS. Walton and Sherman distributed material to help students create accounts in USAJOBS, information about internships through the Pathways Program, and handouts that explained what FSIS does and what we offer in the way of benefits. Photo contributed by Paul Sherman, OFO.



Dodge City, Kan.

On May 10, personnel from the Springdale district showed a team of budget experts from Washington, D.C., around a large beef slaughter plant. After the tour, the budget team asked and then answered questions. Pictured, front row, from left: Melinda Cep, Julie Wise (OMB), Karen Greenlee, and Terrie Smith. Pictured, back row, from left: Evan Sumner, Paul Kiecker, Chris Fетters, Dan Jones, Mark Zito, Eric Thompson. Photo contributed by Liz Simmons, OFO.



Bryan, Texas

On May 18, FSIS personnel participated in the 2016 Seniors Expo. The approximately 136 booths at the event provided 1,500 area seniors with the opportunity to learn about many services available to them. FSIS handed out food safety materials and answered food safety questions. Pictured, from left: Cade Akers, Kinsey Naylor, Ron Wells, Beth Leopold. Photo contributed by Ron Wells, OIEA.



FROM THE **FIELD**



Rush, N.Y.

OIEA Investigator Nicholas Papapietro uses a hand puppet to explain food safety to a class of kindergarteners at Leary Elementary School. Photo contributed by Debbie Dietz, OIEA.

Fargo, N.D.

On May 19, the Des Moines district held a Food Safety Summit in conjunction with North Dakota State University (NDSU). The goal of the Summit was to educate, exchange information and open lines of communication between industry, public health officials and regulatory agencies. Pictured, front row, from left: Travis Maddock (NDSU), Gary Chihos. Pictured, back row, from left: William K. Shaw Jr., Dawn Sprouls, Sheree Clark, William Langer, Randall Kumpost, Trent Froemming (TFC Poultry). Photo contributed by Patrick Stillwell, OFO.



Washington, D.C.

On June 8, OPACE personnel accepted the National Association of Government Communicators Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards for 2015. The awards are as follows: *The Beacon* newsletter (second place), FoodKeeper Application (Award of Excellence), *Constituent Update* (Award of Excellence), *Salmonella* Public Service Announcement (second place), #grillinglikeapro campaign (Award of Excellence), Thanksgiving Infographic (Award of Excellence). Pictured, from left: Eshael Johnson, Marianne Gravely, Amelia Kermis. Photo contributed by Sarah Lichtman, OPACE.

i-Impact Food Safety *in action*



FSIS inspectors from the Chicago district completed their i-Impact training on Friday, May 13, 2016. Pictured, back row, from left: Kurt E. Guse, Ramon Cana Alvarez (trainer), and Stephen LaFree. Front row, from left: Reginald A. Bigham, Gregory S. Marlett, Annabelle Elrod and Nicholas A. Pack. Photo contributed by Ramon Cana-Alvarez, OFO.

Atlanta district i-Impact trainers pose together during the i-Impact train-the-trainer session in Dallas in April. Pictured, front row, from left: Geraldine Vidal-Covas, Michael Chung, Peggy Tiller, Jan Brown, Edwin Zayas-Cruz. Pictured, back row, from left: Linda Cintron-Nunez, Georgiana Powers, Evette Manrique, Dennis Reisen, Sabrina King. Photo contributed by Sabrina King, OFO.



ASK FISH

Does FSIS Notice 28-16 implemented on June 1, 2016, include catfish producers? I thought the 18-month transition period was the time that industry was given to get the labeling up to USDA requirements.

As of March 1, 2016, raw catfish products are subject to 9 CFR 317.2(e)(2), informally known as the “added solutions” rule. However, during the transitional period, FSIS will not take enforcement action on raw catfish products that contain a solution but do not bear a solution statement. Establishments that produce product bearing a label that is not in compliance with 317.2(e)(2) should be issued a memorandum of interview as directed for similar minor labeling non-compliances in FSIS Notice 23-16, Attachment 2.

Note that after September 1, 2017, all raw catfish labels for product containing a solution must bear a statement in accordance with 9 CFR 317.2(e)(2). FSIS will take enforcement action on all products that do not comply with this regulation after September 1, 2017.

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Anderson, DeLoris, CSI	Greenville, S.C.	19	Hermiston, Stephen J., FI-S	Columbus Jctn., Iowa	8
Bartelt, Kendra S., Consmr Safety Offcr	Austin, Minn.	32	Joyce, John Paul, CSI	Drumore, Pa.	31
Butler, Roberta E., FI-S	Cordova, Md.	26	Martin, Kevin S., FI-Proc Prod	Marshall, Mo.	35
Buice, Sandra P., FI-S	Athens, Ga.	25	McKoy, Arlene, FI-S	Rose Hill, N.C.	30
Colwell Sr., Samuel, FI-S	Pine Mt. Valley, Ga.	18	Myers, Sharon A., Prog Speclst	Athens, Ga.	35
Crosby, Callie M., FI-S	Laurel, Mass.	13	Owens, Lenora, FI-S	Jack, Ala.	15
Dailey, Russell L., FI-S	St. Pauls, N.C.	13	Palo, Douglas, Food Technlgst	Washington, D.C.	36
Draper, Angela F., Complnc Invstgr	Lombard, Ill.	20	Parker, Nellie M., CSI	Temperanceville, Va.	44
Enriquez, David A., FI-S	Seguin, Texas	22	Passmore, Mary L., CSI	Bethlehem, Ga.	39
Fulnechek, Douglas L., SVMO	Springdale, Ark.	28	Smith, Mary C., FI-S	Lumber Bridge, N.C.	15
			Steiner, Daniel A., CSI	Abbotsford, Wis.	29

Reporting Hazards and Preparing for Emergencies

By Curtis Wallis, OM
Phone: (510) 769-5750

It is important that all of us are aware of our surroundings. So if you see something at your workplace that could potentially be a hazard, please report it to your immediate supervisor. Hazards can be reported verbally but they can also be reported using FSIS Form 4791-27, "Report of Alleged Safety or Health Hazard." In fact, even if you tell your supervisor verbally, it's always a good idea to complete the form as well. To make it easier, there is now a place to add the establishment number in the top left corner. With that small addition, the safety group will be able to process the form and review the corrective action(s) much more quickly.

One of the most important documents in any USDA office is the Occupant Emergency Plan (FSIS Form 4791-21). It is important that this information is posted and visible so that employees know what to do in case of an emergency. When completing the form, it's helpful to refer to your establishment's Emergency Action Plan for details about alarms and meeting places. Please check the USDA office at your establishment and make sure this form is complete, accurate and current.

Visit the safety website at www.tinyurl.com/FSIS-ESHG and click on "Forms" to get a copy of forms 4791-27 or 4791-21. You can find more information about the 4791-27 form in Directive 4791-12 and information about the 4791-21 form in Directive 4791-13.

Outbreaks Linked to Ground Beef Highlight the Need for the Recent "Grinding Rule"

By William Lanier, OPHS
Phone: (503) 931-9131

In 2011, 20 people in 7 states became ill with salmonellosis after consuming contaminated ground beef. Officials from FSIS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state agencies investigated this outbreak and traced some of the implicated ground beef to a chain of supermarkets in the Northeast. These supermarkets used beef from several sources to grind on site for retail sale.

Unfortunately, the supermarkets did not keep production records complete enough to identify the specific source of the beef used in the implicated product. A retail-level recall followed. However, inadequate records precluded a supplier-level recall so suspect beef from the supplying establishment may have remained in commerce.

After this outbreak, the supermarket chain implemented recordkeeping practices that allowed identification of individual sources of beef used in retail grinding. In 2012,

following the implementation of these new practices, ground beef from the same supermarket chain was implicated in another salmonellosis outbreak (46 illnesses in 9 states). With the new, detailed production records, the investigation of this second outbreak led to identification of the establishment supplying the contaminated beef. This led to a recall by the supplying establishment, which is a more comprehensive action and is more likely to protect public health than a retail-level recall.

From the investigation of these and other outbreaks, FSIS learned that thorough retail grinding records are critical in identifying the original source of ground beef components. In December 2015, FSIS published a Final Rule (also known as "Grinding Rule") mandating recordkeeping by official establishments and retailers that grind raw beef. The records required by this new rule will help FSIS identify the ultimate source of contaminated beef, which will lead to more complete recalls and may prevent illnesses.

2016 FSIS Customer Service Awards

By Erin Kersse, OOEET
Phone: (301) 344-4758

This is the first year for this award, which recognizes administrative professionals who produce a positive impact on the FSIS mission through excellent customer service. In total, 34 FSIS employees were nominated by their colleagues, and the three award recipients received the highest number of nominations. The excellent customer service and dedication to the FSIS mission demonstrated by these members of the FSIS team make them highly valued assets to the Agency. Congratulations to the 2016 FSIS Customer Service Award recipients and nominees!

2016 FSIS Customer Service Award Recipients:

Deborah Arthur (OIEA): *Nominated for improved service delivery, professionalism and dedication.*

"Ms. Arthur consistently provides our staff with support for the daily operations of our staff. Auditors receive prompt accurate guidance and assistance. She takes time away from her other responsibilities to assist each of us when we request her help."

Dennis Depperschmidt (OFO): *Nominated for professionalism and dedication.*

"Dennis is always quick to respond to emails to help resolve the problem. He is always pleasant, professional and understanding. He is very knowledgeable."

Nominees:

Candi McChesney	Juliet Persaud
Carolyn Pearson	Kenneth Koch
Catherine Moffitt	Michael McCann
Celestyna Ochylski	Mila Cook
Christina Walker-Travis	Paula Kellams
Claudia Edwards	Peter Duryea
Deborah Arthur	Sharon Course
Dennis Depperschmidt	Sharon Thomas
Doretta Dunn	Howard Smith
Winston Felton	Susan Brantley
Ellen Wade	Suzette Rhodes
Gabriel Negron	Suzette Woerner
Greg Gillum	Tamika Christine De Jesus
Heather Herrington	Tammy Klein
Jeffrey Schmidt	Thomas Vermeersch
Jennifer Conrad	Tracey Hardy
Juanita Harris	Willis Wright

Catherine Moffitt (OPPD): *Nominated for improved service delivery, teamwork and exemplary performance.*

"Her dedication and positive attitude help everyone on the staff do their work better. Cathy is a real asset to our department."

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- Directive 1306.1, Information System Incident Response - Revision 2
- Directive 5710.1, Rev. 1, Designation of a State or Individual State-Inspected Establishment for FSIS Inspection
- Directive 7120.1, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry and Egg Products - Revision 35
- Notice 34-16, Prescribed Treatment to Destroy Trichinae

in Pork and Products Containing Pork, as Required by 9 CFR 318.10

- Notice 35-16, Raw Chicken Parts Sampling Program
- Notice 36-16, Not Ready-to-Eat Comminuted Poultry Sampling Program
- Notice 37-16, Descriptive Designation for Needle- or Blade-tenderized Raw Beef Products as Required by 9 CFR 317.2(e)(3)
- Notice 40-16, Questionnaire on Consumer Complaints Regarding Foreign Material
- Notice 41-16, New Neutralizing Buffered Peptone Water to Replace Current Buffered Peptone

Water for Poultry Verification Sampling

Administrative issues were also published.

- Directive 1306.5, Identification and Authentication – Revision 2
- Directive 2300.1, FSIS LincPass Light Activation Station Procedures
- Notice 38-16, Medical Evacuation Insurance for International Travel
- Notice 39-16, Corrected Attachment for FSIS LincPass Light Activation Station Procedures

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

>>> **RECALLS**

May 13	Texas firm expands recall of poultry products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
May 18	New York firm recalls pork dumpling products due to misbranding.
May 19	Iowa firm recalls two beef products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
May 20	Arizona firm recalls ready-to-eat salad with chicken products due to possible <i>Listeria</i> contamination.
May 26	Florida firm recalls salads containing chicken due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
June 3	Indiana firm recalls broccoli salad kit products due to possible <i>Listeria</i> contamination.
June 4	Minnesota firm recalls meat pie products produced without benefit of inspection and due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
June 13	New York firm recalls sausage products distributed without benefit of import inspection.
June 14	New Jersey firm recalls beef products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 contamination.
June 17	New York firm recalls wonton and dumpling products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
June 18	Minnesota firm recalls chicken products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
June 20	California firm recalls imported Siluriformes fish products distributed without meeting FSIS requirements.
June 25	California firm recalls imported Siluriformes fish products distributed without meeting FSIS requirements.
June 26	California firm recalls poultry products due to mislabeling and undeclared allergens.
July 1	Florida firm recalls chicken products due to misbranding and undeclared allergen.
July 1	Pennsylvania firm recalls lemongrass basil chicken products due to possible <i>Listeria</i> contamination.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

August 2016

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



Photo contributed by Evelyn Gomez, OOEET

Pictured, from left: Small Plant Help Desk staffers Darlene Lee, Elaine Hite and Robert Boyle.

Small Plant Help Desk Expands

By Leo O'Drudy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-8693

Small and very small meat and poultry processors (defined by the Small Business Administration as having 11 to 500 employees, and 1 to 10 employees respectively) make up about 90 percent of all the establishments in the country and are a crucial part of our food system. That's why Congress, starting with the 2008 Farm Bill, directed USDA to provide targeted technical assistance to ensure that even establishments with limited budgets, personnel, and expertise can do everything necessary to protect public health by fully complying with food safety laws and regulations. FSIS has eagerly taken on that responsibility, and taken it seriously.

One of the ways we are meeting this challenge is through the FSIS Small Plant Help Desk, which was launched in 2009 to assist

plant owners and operators with questions. "We like to think of ourselves as a 'real person' they can develop a relationship with and help them deal with whatever issue they're trying to get their hands around," said Dr. Robert Boyle, a Supervisory Veterinary Medical Officer. "It's heartening to get feedback from a stakeholder that they appreciate the help in navigating a complicated regulatory environment."

Unlike other sources of information such as AskFSIS, the Help Desk does not do any policy interpretation. Instead, it is a knowledgeable resource for explanations and general information about FSIS and our inspection activities. When callers have questions that require policy interpretation, the Help Desk staff guides information-seekers to the right source of information in the Agency.

Continued on Page 4 ...

The Beacon Mission Statement

The Beacon newsletter is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education to provide relevant mission critical information to all FSIS employees. The Beacon provides employees information about the Agency's proposed regulations, policies, and programs; training opportunities; and important employee welfare initiatives to connect employees to the mission and build a cohesive community.

The Beacon enables employees to stay up to date with the latest events and see the Agency's mission executed in action.

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Deadline for submissions
is the first day of the
previous month.

Sept. issue – due Aug 1
Oct. issue – due Sept. 1
Nov. issue – due Oct. 1

Submit contributions to
beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 690-3881
Fax: (202) 815-2707

We reserve the right to edit
all submissions for content,
clarity and length.

The FSIS Management Council

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Deputy Under Secretary's Column



Alfred V. Almanza

This month, I want to take some time to recognize the FSIS employees who are behind the important work of FSIS' outreach to small plants. Did you know that more than 90 percent of the approximately 6,000 plants under FSIS inspection are considered small or very small businesses? That is certainly no small percentage. With the help of FSIS employees, these establishments are able produce safe products. As part of the FSIS mission, it's our job to help plants we regulate to understand how to ensure that meat, poultry and processed egg products are safe, wholesome and correctly labeled and packaged.

Fortunately, there are many FSIS employees with the experience and skills necessary to serve our customers. FSIS employees work hard every day to assist small plants through printed publications, newsletters, websites, outreach, webinars, and the Small Plant Help Desk. Our Small Plant Help Desk consists of staff officers who are subject matter experts with recent in-plant experience. They assess callers' requests and then provide information to meet the needs of small plants. The Help Desk also works with FSIS field staff to provide relevant, timely and knowledgeable support in their day-to-day inspection activities. The Small Plant Help Desk serves as a "one-stop-shop" for small plant owners and operators with valuable assistance and it's truly an example of how each of our individual Agency experiences work together to better serve the public and promote public health. This month, you can read more about the work of The Help Desk in our feature article on the previous page.

As we modernize, we aim to provide information to more and more plants in the most efficient manner. In June, we launched a Virtual representative for small plants so that customers may receive information and answers at all hours, any day of the week. None of this would be possible without all of your knowledge and experience with food safety. I'm so proud of all that we are doing to make food safety accessible to all audiences, including the small plants that produce the majority of our nation's meat and poultry products.

Louis Bluhm

Administrative Position Offers Options Beyond the Lab

By Richard J. McIntire, OPACE
Phone: (202) 690-0417

Louis Bluhm, Ph.D., is the lead chemist on the Laboratory Quality Assurance Staff (LQAS), part of the Office of Public Health Science (OPHS), and administrator of the FSIS Accredited Laboratory Program located in Athens, Ga., OPHS provides FSIS leadership with the necessary scientific analysis, advice, data and recommendations regarding matters of concern to FSIS. The three FSIS laboratories complete thousands of meat and poultry analyses annually for veterinary drugs, heavy metals, and pesticides. As a lead chemist for LQAS, Bluhm works with a team of chemistry staff officers who are responsible for quality assurance of chemistry-related activities in all three FSIS laboratories. "There is no reason to run a test if the method used to produce the result doesn't function correctly," Bluhm said. "So, I strive to make sure that the chemistry methods that the labs use are fit for the intended purpose."

As administrator of the FSIS Accredited Laboratory Program, which certifies private chemistry testing laboratories, Bluhm works with staff who ensure that private labs can perform the analysis for which they are accredited, provide proficiency testing samples and analyze results. Presently, about 50 private laboratories participate in the program. His work also helps the Agency's lab system maintain its International Organization for Standardization accreditation, adding trust and recognition to the results the labs produce. "All food safety laboratory testing, whether done by FSIS or by private labs, impacts public health," Bluhm said. "My job provides assurance that this testing is done properly."

While pursuing his undergraduate degree at Mississippi State University, Bluhm toured a USDA Animal and Plant

Health Inspection Service laboratory in Gulfport, Mississippi, where his father-in-law was employed. That visit had a profound impact on him. He saw analysts checking fruits and vegetables for pesticides and quickly took a liking to the federal laboratory environment. After earning his doctorate in analytical chemistry at Vanderbilt University, he accepted a lab job with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, analyzing foods for dioxins at the agency's Arkansas Regional Laboratory just outside of Little Rock, Arkansas.

Bluhm came to FSIS in the summer of 2005, as a chemistry staff officer. "I came to FSIS for a new challenge," he said. "I may no longer be in the lab running samples, but I still have a strong connection with the lab environment. For me, meaningful work helps the common good. So to work in a place where science combines with protecting the public is very special." Bluhm enjoys the variety of activities involved in his job. "Sometimes I conduct an onsite audit of a lab, other times I review a method or article for publication. Still other times I may travel to a conference to share information about the labs. I also like that the work requires problem-solving, providing guidance and a lot of thinking," he said.

Bluhm's off-work hours tend to revolve around his kids' activities. His children train and compete in swim meets throughout the year. Recently, they competed in a local piano festival and earned superior marks. Bluhm also likes to 'tinker' in his workshop. He considers himself an amateur electrician. His biggest success involved wiring his entire workshop. When time allows, Bluhm grows vegetables in his garden. This summer its tomatoes, planted in fertilized hay bales instead of the ground, are doing much better than expected.



Photo contributed
by Louis Bluhm, OPHS

Learning with LERD: Effective Communication

By MaryKay McLennan, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8570

Communication with coworkers is vital to your everyday working relationships.

Effective communication starts with active listening. Active listening can be accomplished by simply reacting to what another person says with a nod, asking questions or paraphrasing. By doing this, you will make a better impression on your coworkers.

Working with your coworkers on a daily basis and interacting with them on a personal level can build trust. However, be careful that you do not get too casual. Being too casual with your coworkers may make them feel uncomfortable and this could hinder your future professional communications with them. Remember to keep your emails, meetings and phone calls professional at all times, regardless of how well you know your coworkers.

Setting the tone of not just your voice, but of your written communications is important. Never write angry. Never type

in all capital letters, which may be interpreted as hostile or rude and never use disrespectful or unprofessional language. Writing an email while your emotions are high is usually not a good choice. Instead, step away from what you are writing, cool off and come back to it later.

When meeting with coworkers, keep in mind that body language plays a key role in effective communications. You may feel you are saying all the right things and you are clear on what you are saying; however, your body language could be telling a different story. Pay attention to your body language. Avoid sighing, averting your eyes, crossing your arms or using other negative body language. Use active listening techniques to show that you're engaged in the conversation.

Effective communication is communication that is clearly and successfully delivered, received and understood. Effectively communicating with your coworkers (and your leadership) is something that you should not overlook. Learning to communicate effectively can help resolve differences while building trust and respect.

SMALL PLANTS

...Continued from page 1

Small plant owners and operators have made good use of this resource. During the 2015 fiscal year, the Help Desk received and responded to 2,031 inquiries over the phone and via email. An article in the online industry publication Meatingplace.com (www.meatingplace.com/Industry/Blogs/Details/56265) recently praised the Help Desk, saying "It offers many excellent resources. When you call, you'll refreshingly find a real, live person on the other end of the line that is very willing to assist you. [...] The materials they send out are quite excellent. Be sure to subscribe to their informative newsletter as well."

The Help Desk also provides information to any size plant, or to academia, government agencies and other parties who may have questions. Its staff travels to small industry conferences and events to set up information booths. If there are a lot of questions on a particular topic, which often occurs when there's a new regulation, those questions are quickly addressed, enabling the Agency to respond

quickly with targeted outreach and educational materials. Due to this responsiveness, the Help Desk received the 2016 Administrator's Award for Customer Service.

Recently the Help Desk launched a Virtual Representative, a new tool that will allow users to receive up-to-date information on frequently asked questions and communicate directly with the Help Desk's technical experts. Even though the phone lines are still available, this new online system allows customers to access responses to previously asked questions anytime—including weekends and in the evening.

Subject matter experts from FSIS' Outreach and Partnership Division are available weekdays 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time to provide personal assistance and guidance on the Agency's regulation of meat, poultry and processed egg products. The Small Plant Help Desk's toll-free number is 1-877-FSIS-HELP or 1-877-374-7435. They can also be reached by email at InfoSource@fsis.usda.gov. The new Small Plant Virtual Representative is available at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/regulatory-compliance/svsp/sphelpdesk.

DALLAS

Introducing the Dallas District Office

By Jaclynn Marie Scrivner, OFO
Phone: (214) 767-9116

FSIS' Dallas district employs more than 800 people located in 500 establishments spread across Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas, including the Talmadge/Aiken program (approximately 250 meat and poultry plants in 10 states).

The diverse skills that Dallas district employees bring to the Agency are needed in the many identification warehouses, university meat labs and 11 import houses. There are 48 meat slaughter establishments, 21 poultry slaughter establishments, over 400 meat and/or poultry processing establishments, two catfish slaughter establishments, and one egg products establishment. Dallas district personnel oversee inspection of nearly every type of amenable species including feral hogs, bison and ostriches. Also under their inspection purview is almost every kind of processing, including canning, and a wide range of ethnic specialty products like Nam sticks, fried pig ears, beef feet, market heads, machados, Vietnamese BBQ, barbacoa, tasso, boudin balls and catfish gumbo.

The district now has several catfish processing and slaughter establishments within its boundaries. The Dallas district has led OFO in catfish inspection implementation.

It developed its own outreach team to gather information from a variety of sources including the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, the Louisiana State University Extension Service and the Food and Drug Administration.

"I feel strongly about constituent interaction," said Dallas District Manager Jennifer Beasley-McKean, describing the district's management philosophy. "Everyone who contacts the Dallas district is of utmost importance—whether they are an FSIS employee, a regulated establishment or a member of the general public."

In the last 2 years, recruiting and hiring have been the district's biggest challenges. However, volunteer recruiters worked with FSIS' Human Resources Office in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to increase the Dallas district's presence at recruiting events, especially Hiring Our Heroes, which helps veterans find employment. It is through this cooperative effort that the district has been able to reduce its present vacancy rate in establishments to 5.76 percent.

Dallas district staffers say their district is a great place to work and feel fortunate for the camaraderie and teamwork they have with one another as they provide safe food each day to the American public. They share a wide variety of experience, education and expertise, and rely on each

other. "The district managers' open door policy, along with the deputy district managers', makes those working in the field know that we always have someone to turn to when there is a question that needs an answer. Their disposition and attitude is comforting to many on staff and it takes anxiety out of the equation," said Resource Management Specialist Suzette Woerner. In the Dallas district, everyone impacts public health.



Photo contributed by Ronald Nida, OFO

Dallas district staff members attend the Work Unit Meeting in February 2016.

Pictured, front row, from left: Dave DeRenzo, Aisha Woodberry, Kinsey Naylor, Jennifer Truxall, Frederick Johnson, Shelley Myers, Robert Flores, Ijaz Qazi, Dan Willis and Ron Nida.

Pictured, back row, from left: Cade Akers, Landon Rung, Lorie Sinnot, Maria Alba, Kenneth Murphy, Velva Cole, Frankie Walzier, Jerald Richardson.

i-Impact Food Safety *in action*



Photo contributed by Donna Savage, OFO

On May 17, EIAO Michael Chung facilitated an i-Impact workshop at est. 19871P in Forest Park, Ga.

The training presented opportunities for shared input from the inspectors related to how their work impacts FSIS' mission. Several of the CSIs present at the meeting have more than 30 years of experience with the Agency, so they were grateful for the opportunity presented by the training to share their experiences with their colleagues.

Pictured, standing, from left: Billy Peru, Dinon Phillips, Yvette Assem, Harold Davis, Donna Savage, Donald Roth, Salita Stevens, James Robinson. Pictured, seated, from left: Michael Chung, Robert Daniel.

On May 27, SCSi Kurtis Beall facilitated an i-Impact workshop to inspection program personnel in the Denver district.

Photos contributed by Chelsea Buckley, OFO



Pictured: Kurtis Beall



Pictured, from left: James Aschoff, Curtis Helgenberger, Chelsea Buckley, Juan De Los Santos, James Parrish, Kurtis Beall, Jon Dierks, Mark Fogel.



I have been an employee of USDA FSIS for 27 years, and have held positions as a CSI, Food Technologist, Supervisory Food Technologist, Consumer Safety Officer, EIAO, Compliance Officer and Front Line Supervisor. Through that time span I have seen the Agency evolve from one that strived to maintain the status quo to one that is pushing for constant improvement. Giving the i-Impact presentation has provided me the opportunity to share experiences where actions that I have taken or those under my supervision have taken, have had an immediate, visible, tangible impact on food safety. During the presentation I share these situations and events in order to remind the audience that each simple action that they take each day can affect the lives and health of millions of people. I have always held a belief that you certainly don't do this job for the money, since there are better paying jobs available in the industry. However, if you believe that what you go to work every day for is important and if you understand your individual impact, then it is a noble profession, and one that everybody can be proud of."

—Lorne Wood, OFO

ASKFISH

Many of your AskFish questions discuss “packaging and labeling” of fish. Would you please define packaging and labeling? Many of our local fish houses will use cardboard boxes packed with fish and ice to transport fish to processors or store. Those boxes will have the species name written on the cardboard box. Is this considered packaging? Will this require an approved FSIS label?

A package means any container in which a fish product is enclosed or partially-enclosed for the purpose of display, sale or shipping. So, yes, FSIS would consider the cardboard boxes as described packaging. This packaging would need to bear all required labeling features applicable under 9 CFR Part 541. There are up to eight required labeling features. Sketch approval by FSIS would only be required if one (or more) of the conditions outlined in 9 CFR 412.1(c) exists, e.g., if the label bears a special statement or claim.

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Besich, Paula M., FI-S	Lufkin, Texas	24
Cole, Robert N., SVMO	Shelbyville, Tenn.	11
Cooper, Charlene, FI-S	Carthage, Texas	17
Determan, Michael R., FI-S	Butterfield, Minn.	11
Epps, Patty D., FI-S	Gaffney, S.C.	5
Helton, Carol M., CSI	Carrollton, Ga.	28
Hill, Eugene, CSI	Decatur, Ala.	21
Holcomb, Michael B., CSI	Hatfield, Pa.	33
Holiat, Stephan M., SVMO	Birdsboro, Pa.	7
Holterman, James L., Lead VMO	Omaha, Neb.	30
Johnson, Lou W., FI-S	Lufkin, Texas	18
McNamara, Joseph P., Compr. Asst.	St. Louis, Mo.	18
Saggus, Brenda A., FI-S	Bethlehem, Ga.	34
Sanders, William J., Mgmt. Analyst	Raleigh, N.C.	31
Taylor, Mary A., CSI	Mira Loma, Calif.	31

COMING SOON: FSIS Fiscal Year 2017-2021 Strategic Plan!

The new Strategic Plan is going to be ready for release in the fall. The Plan contains three primary goals focused on protecting public health and preventing foodborne illness, modernizing our food safety approaches and achieving operational excellence. Please keep your eyes open for information regarding its release and launch.

Austin, Minn.

The inspection team at est. 1620 shows commitment to the Feds Feed Families initiative. Pictured, from left: Kelsey Ness, Nanci Robertson, Bob Subra, Mike Farr, Matt Freechack, Bill McNett. Photo contributed by John Stretch, OFO.



Atlanta, Ga.

On June 10, 28 FSIS supervisors completed the Experienced Supervisor Training Program. Pictured, seated, from left: Michelle Espeut, Megan Bennett, Sara Giffler, Constance Williams, Lauren Behar. Pictured, standing, from left: Michael Watts, Charmaine Carr, Karen Gilstrap, W. "Oliver" Williams, John Linville, Christie Royal, Anthony Andreassi, Lauren Unkauf, Adam Smith, Teresa Carpenter, Keith Payne, Carolyn Cosgrove, Jana Howe, Cade Akers, Tracey Siegle, Rosemary Turner,



Susan Bowen, William McManess, Brian Fong, Chris Calloway, Christina Mercer, Salina Najera, Deena Ismail, Christina Walker, Anthony L. Thompson. Photo contributed by Carle Churgin, Chain Reaction Partners, LLC.

Houston, Texas

On June 7, OIEA investigators participated in the 2016 Harris County Food Safety Summit. Approximately 300 retail food establishment owners and managers attend the event. The investigators handed out food safety outreach materials.

Investigator Ron Wells gave a presentation detailing FSIS' "Guidance for Controlling *Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm) in Retail Delicatessens" and gave an overview of the requirements of the Federal Meat Inspection Act and Poultry Products Inspection Act. Pictured, from left: Connie Gibson, Kurt Wolter. Photo contributed by Ron Wells, OIEA.



FROM THE **FIELD**

Alexandria, Va.

On May 27, 31 supervisors from field and headquarters locations completed the New Supervisor Training Program. Pictured, front row, from left: Kaylyn Dillard-Infante, Kevin Hatten, Jenny Hoven, William Gillingwater, Wanda Fuentes. Pictured, second row, from left: Kimberly Mouncé, Jennifer Baquerizo, Darby Murphy, Jessica Daul, Janet McGinn, Laura Waterbury-Mangus, Claude Hebron. Pictured, third row, from left: Alethea Evans, Kara Butterfield, Stephenie Bradley, Julie Smith, Michael King. Pictured, fourth row, from left: Hashim Osman, Jamshed Khan, Karren Little, Tony Stultz, Anna Smith. Pictured, back row, from left: Richard Kappen, Mark Reeves, Brandy Stone, Christopher Irwin, Anne Risa, LaVetta Henry, Todd Banaszynski, James Lee, Nathaniel Shrieves, Tracy Hernandez. Photo contributed by Duane Robinson, OOEET.



Omaha, Neb.

In June, Deb Arthur (pictured) learned about the importance of personal protective equipment that can be used in the event of a public health emergency at the Preparedness Symposium organized by the Center for Preparedness Education, University of Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha. Arthur and Donna Potts-Gill attended the symposium, which is sponsored annually to clarify local agency roles in a public health emergency. Photo contributed by Ron Eckel, OIEA.

Forest Park, Ga.

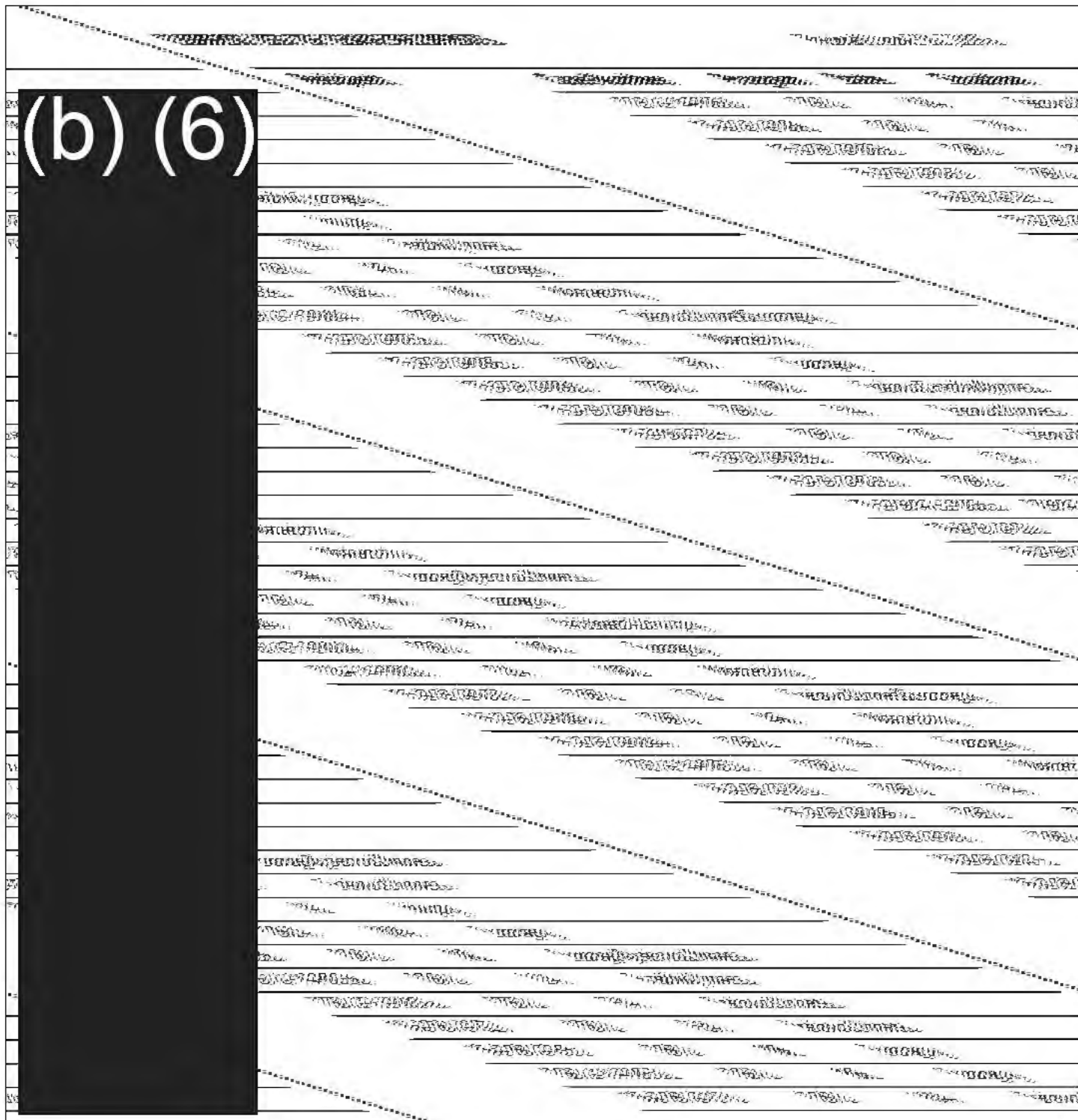
On June 8, Inspectors at est. 19871 took part in an active shooter safety awareness session titled, "How to Be Safe in a Dangerous Situation," presented by Clayton County Police Sergeant T.J. Griffin. Griffin presented the group with case studies of actual scenarios, answered questions and provided video simulations along with guidance for participants to follow in the event of a similar situation. Pictured, front row, from left: Billy Peru, Donald Roth, T.J. Griffin (Clayton County Police), Donna Savage, Salita Stevens, Yvette Assem, Dinon Phillips. Pictured, back row, from left: Harold Davis, Trevell Stanbrough, Andre Orr (est. 19871). Not pictured: Rickey Sewell (est. 19871), Sully Charles (est. 19871), Lisa Cook (est. 19871). Photo contributed by Lisa Cook.



Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

The Leave Transfer Program (LTP) allows employees to donate annual leave to certain eligible employees. In order to be eligible to receive donated leave under LTP, applicants must: 1) be a current federal employee; 2) obtain approval from their supervisor to be absent from work; 3) be experiencing a personal or family medical emergency that results in hardship for the employee due to insufficient

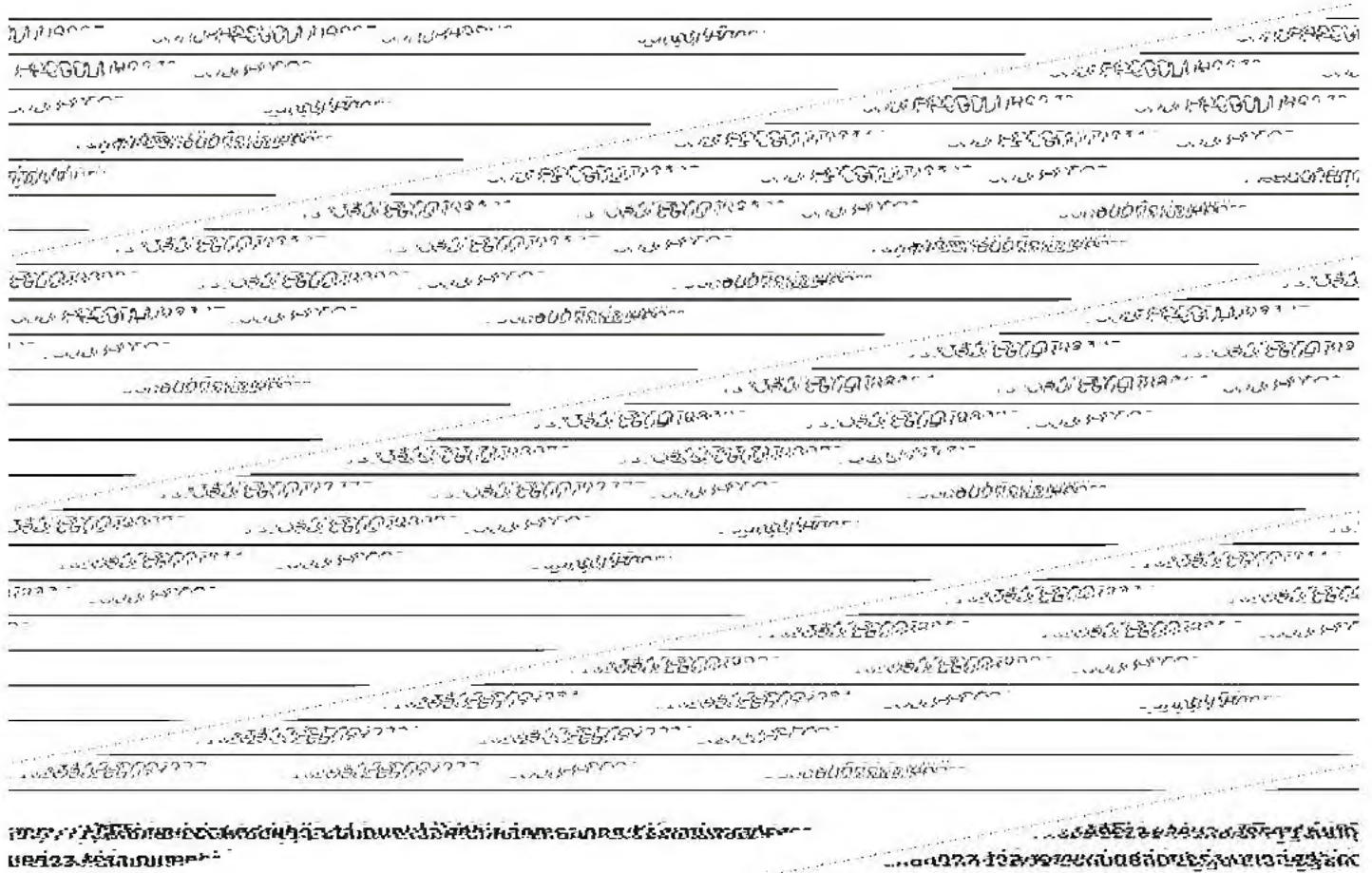
accrued leave; 4) provide a personal statement and a signed medical document explaining the emergency; and 5) provide Form AD-1046 signed by their supervisor. Contact Sonja Tomlinson at 202-708-8179 or by email at sonja.tomlinson@fsis.usda.gov for information, application forms and the most current list of eligible employees.



(b) (6)

(b) (4)

15-OFO-0057	OFO	CA	Maternity
15-OFO-0047	OFO	OK	Surgery
16-OFO-017	OFO	CA	Surgery
OFO-14-0065	OFO	NC	Surgery/Serious Illness
15-OFO-0066	OFO	CT	Injury
15-OM-0073	OM	MN	Serious Illness
OFO-15-0005	OFO	SC	Surgery
15-OFO-0038	OFO	AL	Maternity
15-OPPD-0075	OPPD	DC	Maternity
16-OFO-025	OFO	IN	Surgery
OFO-14-0026	OFO	DE	Surgery
OPPD-14-0001	OPPD	DC	Surgery
16-OFO-005	OFO	GA	Serious Illness
15-OFO-0032	OFO	ID	Surgery
16-OFO-034	OFO	AL	Surgery
15-OFO-0018	OFO	IN	Surgery
OFO-14-0022	OFO	IN	Surgery
OPPD-13-0002	OPPD	DC	Family Illness
OFO-14-0045	OFO	MN	Maternity
OFO-14-0027	OFO	WA	Surgery
15-OFO-0014	OFO	VA	Surgery
15-OFO-0028	OFO	GA	Maternity
OFO-14-0032	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
OFO-15-0010	OFO	NY	Surgery/Serious Illness
15-OFO-0055	OFO	MO	Serious Injury
16-OFO-012	OFO	AR	Serious Family Illness
15-OFO-0053	OFO	TX	Surgery
16-OFO-007	OFO	CA	Serious Illness
16-OFO-003	OFO	SD	Serious Illness
OFO-13-0024	OFO	IL	Serious Illness
16-OFO-0016	OFO	AR	Serious Family Illness
16-OFO-002	OFO	AR	Surgery/Serious Illness
OFO-14-0056	OFO	TX	Serious Illness
OPHS-14-0003	OPHS	GA	Serious Illness
15-OPHS-0069	OPHS	CA	Serious Family Illness
15-OFO-0068	OFO	VA	Surgery
15-OFO-0078	OFO	IA	Serious Family Illness
15-ODIFF-0036	ODIFF	DC	Maternity
15-OFO-0061	OFO	CA	Serious Illness
*OFO-12-0055	OFO		
*OM-14-0003	OM		
*OFO-14-0024	OFO		
*OFO-14-0034	OFO		
*OFO-14-0035	OFO		
*OFO-14-0044	OFO		Serious Illness



2016 Feds Feed Families Food Drive Campaign

As a world-wide leader on issues of food and hunger, USDA has been one of the leading departments in total contributions over the past several years. In 2015, USDA employees alone donated more than 7.4 million pounds of food! USDA's goal in 2016 is to "Beat our Best." Employees are encouraged to beat their best through donations and gleaning.

We encourage you to get as many employees in your office involved as possible! This is a voluntary effort by employees to collect and donate food for those in need. For more information, contact Sabrina Ferguson-Ward, Sabrina.m.ferguson-ward@dm.usda.gov.



Drop off
boxes
will be located
throughout
the building.



Reopening a "Short Form Closure"

By Pat Turner, OM
Phone: (202) 720-4162

Question: My workers' compensation claim was recently labeled "short form closure."

What exactly does that mean?

The term "Short Form Closure" refers to a case that was closed by the Department of Labor's automated system for the following reasons:

- Your traumatic injury claim for continuation of pay was not disputed by FSIS.
- Your medical bills did not exceed \$1,500 or no loss of wages claim was filed.

It does not mean that your case is permanently closed. In order for your "short form closure" claim to be reopened

and assigned to a claims examiner for review one of the following events must occur:

Automatic Reopening:

- Your medical bills exceed \$1,500.
- A wage loss claim is received.

FSIS submits a late controversion (your continuation of pay was disputed by FSIS) or challenges your claim.

Manual Reopening:

- Your request for surgery is received.
- A recurrence of your claim is submitted.

If you have any questions about your worker's compensation claims, please contact the Workers' Compensation Branch at 1-800-370-3747.

Is Your Child College Bound?

By Jodi Hallstrom, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8597

Whether you and your family are in the beginning stages of choosing a college or preparing to move your son or daughter to college for the first time, the transition from home to college life can be an exciting, but stressful and emotional time for everyone.

Federal Occupational Health's (FOH) WorkLife4You is here to help! Just go to www.worklife4you.com (new user registration code is **FSIS**) or call **1-800-222-0364** for all the support you need to get started. WorkLife4You is an Agency-paid benefit for all employees and their household members, and is free and 100-percent confidential.

Free On-Demand Webinars

Access recorded webinars about all things college-related, such as:

- **College Financial Planning:** Savings and investment strategies, college financial planning tips and options for financial aid.
- **How to Choose the Right College or University:** Help your child find, evaluate and choose the college that best fits his or her needs.
- **Preparing for and Applying to College:** Tips on balancing independence and guidance, health and wellness practices, preparing for emotions, managing communication and honoring new relationships.

- **Preparing Your Child and Family for College:** Tips on preparing to make the transition to college a productive experience for the entire family.

College-Related Articles

Go to www.worklife4you.com for college related articles, including The College Application Process, College Financing, A College Packing Checklist and Adjusting to College Life.

Test Prep, College Search, Scholarships and Financial Aid

You can also go to www.worklife4you.com for educational tools and resources, all at a discounted price. Search for colleges and graduate schools, learn about admissions and find scholarships. You can also access the online test preparation, including a diagnostic test, lessons and full-length practice tests with detailed answers and explanations. You can also get a 20-percent discount on your students' books at the online bookstore!

Free College Kits!

This care package is designed to equip college-bound students with products and tools that can help with their health, safety and academic success. The kit includes items such as: Students' Self-Care Guide, "Thinking Putty," screwdriver set, sewing/manicure kit, emergency whistle/lighted key chain, three-color ballpoint pen with six interchangeable highlighters and Living the College Life book. To get your free kit, email us at worklifeandwellness@fsis.usda.gov.

FSIS Hazard Communication Program

By Curtis Wallis, OM
Phone: (510) 769-5750

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) at the Department of Labor has the authority to issue FSIS a "Notice of Unsafe or Unhealthful Working Condition," when OSHA investigates whether or not FSIS employees are adequately trained in the hazards of chemicals on site. They serve as a reminder to all FSIS employees that we must follow the policy found in Directive 4791.5 "Hazard Communication Program." Some of the key components of The Hazard Communication Program described in Directive 4791.5 are:

- The establishment manager must maintain a list of hazardous chemicals and provide that list to the Inspector-in-Charge (IIC). The chemical list must be updated and accurate at all times.
 - The establishment manager must maintain an accurate library of Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for all hazardous chemicals. The IIC must ensure that all FSIS employees know the location of, and have access to, the SDS library.
 - All employees who could potentially be exposed to a hazardous chemical must receive training about the hazards associated with those chemicals. A review of the SDS is generally recognized as appropriate training.
 - Training must be recorded and available during a safety inspection.
 - Attachment 1 of Directive 4791.5 must be signed by the IIC and establishment management.
- If you have any questions about Hazard Communication, please contact the Occupational Safety and Health Specialist for your district.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **Directive 7120.1 Rev. 36, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products**

Administrative issues were also published.

- **Notice 42-16, Cancellation of FSIS Directive 2630.1 Correspondence Management Program**
- **Notice 43-16 2016, Yearend Closing Instructions**
- **Notice 44-16, Instructions for Writing Poultry Good Commercial Practices Noncompliance Records and Memorandum of Interview Letters for Poultry Mistreatment**
- **Notice 45-16, Sharing Information with State or Local Agencies, Foreign Government Officials, and International Organizations**

- **Directive 2450.2, Government Paid Parking For Non-Bargaining Unit Employees**
- **Directive 2450.2 Rev. 2, Government Paid Parking for Non Bargaining Unit Employees**
- **Directive 1306.6 Rev. 2, Information Systems Physical and Environmental Protection**
- **Directive 1306.7 Rev. 2, System and Information Integrity**
- **Notice 46-16, The Electronic Official Personnel Folder**
- **Notice 47-16, Special Provisions for FSIS Sample Scheduling During Western Laboratory Relocation**

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

>>> **RECALLS**

July 6	Arkansas firm recalls frozen chicken and beef products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
July 8	Georgia recalls not ready-to-eat meat and poultry products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O121 contamination.
July 13	Texas firm recalls shrimp scampi products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
July 14	California firm recalls imported Siluriformes fish products distributed without meeting fsis requirements.
July 14	Louisiana firm recalls Siluriformes fish products due to possible adulteration.
July 15	Arkansas firm recalls frozen chicken and beef products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
July 19	Oklahoma firm recalls chicken and pork hot dog and corn dog products due to possible <i>Listeria</i> contamination.
July 21	Washington firm recalls pork products due to possible <i>Salmonella</i> contamination.
July 22	Colorado firm recalls products due to nitrite levels in excess of regulatory limit.
July 26	Colorado firm recalls non-intact beef products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 contamination.
July 26	New Hampshire firm recalls beef products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 contamination.
July 27	Canada firm recalls dried chicken soup mix products distributed without benefit of import inspection.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

Inside This Issue

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- 6 Policy Updates
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- 14 Food Defense
- 16 Recalls

Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



Photo contributed by Carolyn Rogers, OFO.

Members of the Raleigh district office took part in a Feds Feed Families gleaning activity in Louisburg, N.C., on July 16. The FSIS personnel harvested fresh cucumbers, which were donated to the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle (a member of America's Second Harvest Food Bank). For more photos of FSIS' Feds Feed Families efforts, see page 12. Pictured, from left: Lorraine Jones, Carol Ford, Laura Hutchinson, David Lilly, Marilyn Bell and Jason Brown (First Fruits Farm).

Food Safety Education Month

*By Leo O'Drudy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-8693*

If it's September, it's National Food Safety Education Month (NFSEM), a time when our year-round effort to educate the public we serve about how to better protect itself from foodborne illness gets a boost from partners such as schools, consumer groups and the restaurant industry.

In fact, this annual event was created by the restaurant industry—specifically the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation's (NRAEF) International Food Safety Council—to educate not only the public but also restaurant and food service workers. This year, the NRAEF is putting the spotlight on viruses, especially norovirus and Hepatitis A. While both can be present in FSIS-regulated products, they can also be found in salads. Norovirus, in particular, is better known for being found in shellfish such as lobsters and oysters. For more information

about the NRAEF's efforts, please visit the National Food Safety Month website at www.foodsafetymonth.com.

Working in parallel with this effort are many dedicated FSIS employees, including the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education's Food Safety Education Staff (FSES) who focus on FSIS-regulated products. One of FSES' tasks is to coordinate seasonal campaigns tying food safety messages to holidays or specific times of the year when consumers are most likely to be making critical food safety decisions. For example, this summer's Fourth of July media tour, which centered on issues like grilling safety, reached an estimated audience of 18 million via blog posts, social media, and TV and radio interviews.

September is traditionally the time for children to go back to school, and children are among those most at risk from foodborne illness.

Continued on Page 4 ...

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

The Beacon Mission Statement

The Beacon newsletter is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education to provide relevant mission critical information to all FSIS employees. The Beacon provides employees information about the Agency's proposed regulations, policies, and programs; training opportunities; and important employee welfare initiatives to connect employees to the mission and build a cohesive community.

The Beacon enables employees to stay up to date with the latest events and see the Agency's mission executed in action.

Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education

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Aaron Lavalley, Deputy Assistant Administrator
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Richard J. McIntire	Brittany Woodland

Deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

Oct. issue – due Sept. 1
Nov. issue – due Oct. 1
Dec. issue – due Nov. 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 690-3881
Fax: (202) 815-2707

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

The FSIS Management Council

Alfred V. Almanza	Stephanie Wilkins
Carmen Rottenberg	Carol Blake
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Deputy Under Secretary's Column

Next month, we will be releasing the FSIS Strategic Plan for 2017-2021. The plan allows the Agency to anticipate future needs and challenges and serves as a foundation for our long-range and day-to-day operations. All of you play a huge role in those day-to-day operations, and by now, most of you have learned about the impact you have on food safety through our i-Impact program. i-Impact is an opportunity to learn how every FSIS employee plays a role in food safety, regardless of grade, title or program area.



Alfred V. Almanza

Every FSIS employee should be able to talk about the unique ways in which they impact food safety. Moreover, i-Impact relates directly to each employee's performance standards and the daily tasks that they must carry out for their job. Your individual performance standards keep your daily activities aligned with FSIS priorities. This is outlined in the i-Impact program by demonstrating linkage to the mission, Strategic Plan and Annual Plan. This clear line of sight relates your everyday work to the overall direction that FSIS wants to go in.

I'm proud of the work that has gone into the 2017-2021 FSIS Strategic Plan from employees throughout the Agency. The new plan contains three primary goals focused on protecting public health and preventing foodborne illness; modernizing our food safety approaches; and achieving operational excellence. In addition to establishing clear outcomes and objectives, the plan positions the Agency to anticipate future needs and challenges. As we continue to work toward our shared mission of protecting public health and preventing foodborne illness, it is important to understand the many ways that all of our employees impact the FSIS mission. I encourage everyone to read the new Strategic Plan when it becomes available.

KELLI WILLIS

Protecting our Food from Intentional Contamination

By Greg DiNapoli, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-9945

Kelli Willis is a Food Defense Analyst in the Food Defense Assessment Staff (FDAS), which is part of the Office of Data Integration and Food Protection (ODIFP). Willis joined ODIFP in January 2014 through the Pathways Program. Prior to joining FSIS, Willis worked as a consultant for an environmental firm and was a volunteer for the American Red Cross. "I enjoy helping people whether it is through volunteering or my service in the federal government helping to protect consumers from emergencies," Willis said. The office that Willis works in provides the scientific and technical basis to support preparedness, response, and recovery initiatives. It also provides advice to other government agencies and the industry on all types of threats to the food supply.

Willis works in Washington, D.C. with FSIS personnel, industry and other stakeholders to push for the adoption of food defense practices that will prevent intentional contamination of the food supply. She coordinates across the Agency on the annual food defense plan survey; the development of a food defense multi-year training and exercise plan; and development of an integration and analysis strategy to improve integration of food defense into the Agency's day-to-day mission (please see page 14 for Jessica Pulz's article on food defense).

Willis is very passionate about her work. This passion comes from knowing that she impacts food safety and public health, since an intentional adulteration incident could potentially have a devastating impact on public health. Intentional attacks on the food supply could have adverse psychological and economic impacts, cause a loss



Photo contributed by Kelli Willis, ODIFP

"It truly takes a whole community to prepare for, protect against, mitigate, respond to and recover from threats and hazards. And so I always tell people don't be afraid to say something if you see something suspicious."

of confidence in the safety of food or cause widespread public fear.

Willis has been involved in the agricultural field for many years. She started her career as a soil scientist and then slowly became involved in the field of emergency management. "When I became a food defense analyst with FSIS it was a great opportunity to combine my training, skills and experience from the agriculture and emergency management fields," she said.

While Willis does enjoy the actual work, she is quick to admit that the best part of her job is the people she works with. "Even though our staff is small, we work hard to successfully promote food defense, to essentially provide a great and necessary service to American consumers through protection," she said. What makes it all so rewarding to her is that FDAS has to "get it right" every time, while those who want to do harm to the food supply only have to "get it right once." This does provide quite the challenge for FDAS, but Willis and her colleagues are up to the task. And as the threat landscape within the U.S. and around the world is constantly changing, Willis reminds people to always be alert and prepared—whether we're talking about the food we eat or some other aspect of our life. "It truly takes a whole community

to prepare for, protect against, mitigate, respond to and recover from threats and hazards. And so I always tell people don't be afraid to say something if you see something suspicious," she said.

In her free time Willis enjoys spending time with her family (husband and two daughters), in addition to watching and playing sports, participating in outdoor activities and travelling.

In preparation, FSES created a surge of targeted information throughout August, authoring blog posts such as "Back to School Supply Checklist" and "My Favorite Class is Lunch," and issuing a press release: "Back-To-School Food Safety Tips for Parents and Caregivers." On August 6, an FSES representative gave a presentation on "Back-to-School Food Safety" at the Greater Washington Urban League's 4th Annual Community Health and Wellness Back to School Festival. The presentation focused on the four steps – clean, separate, cook and chill – and the steps to pack a food-safe lunch. For information about keeping bag lunches safe, visit www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/549475aa-c187-4151-b3d5-ac3bb5e819ac/Keeping_Bag_Lunches_Safe.pdf?MOD=AJPERES.

These outreach efforts are not confined to one season or team. Throughout the course of the year, FSIS Food Safety Ambassadors from around the nation and across the Agency have been making presentations at senior centers around the country, with a program called "Food Safety 101." The seniors and food service workers learn food safety tips and receive educational materials and food thermometers.

You can join in the food safety education campaign yourself and reach out to your family, friends and local community to help consumers keep themselves safe, without having to be part of a formal campaign or scheduled event. A wealth of educational materials you can learn from, distribute and teach with can be found here: www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/ffsis/topics/food-safety-education/teach-others/download-materials.



PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Photo contributed by Alexandra Tarrant, OPAE

Dr. John Huie posed for a picture with Al Almanza upon receiving a certificate at the National Supervisors Meeting in Dallas, Texas.

Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

The Leave Transfer Program (LTP) allows employees to donate annual leave to certain eligible employees. In order to be eligible to receive donated leave under LTP, applicants must: 1) be a current federal employee; 2) obtain approval from their supervisor to be absent from work; 3) be experiencing a personal or family medical emergency that results in hardship for the employee due to insufficient accrued leave; 4) provide a personal statement and a signed medical document explaining the emergency; and 5) provide Form AD-1046 signed by their supervisor. Information, application forms and the most current list of eligible employees can be found on USDA's SharePoint site at <http://collaboration/sites/InfoExch/Personnel/default.aspx>. For assistance contact Sonja Tomlinson at (202) 708-8179 or sonja.tomlinson@fsis.usda.gov.

Introducing the Chicago District Office

By Peggy Riek, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-7608

In 1906, author Upton Sinclair published the novel "The Jungle," which exposed the conditions of meatpacking houses in the Chicago Union Stock Yards. This exposure led to legislation for domestic meat inspection. Consequently, the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act became law on the same day that same year.

Today, the Chicago district consists of the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio, and is home to 650 FSIS employees who work hard each day to accomplish the FSIS mission of protecting public health and preventing foodborne illness. Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officer (EIAO) Wenbing Zhang said, "Our Chicago District Manager Paul Wolseley continually expresses to everyone on our inspection team that it is essential that our products are wholesome, produced in sanitary conditions and properly labeled and packaged. Everything we do involving the Agency's mission is critical."

There are 786 federally inspected establishments operating within the Chicago district. The district also partners with the states of Illinois, Ohio and Indiana with establishments operating under the Talmadge-Aiken (T/A) Program and the Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) Program. There are 62 establishments operating under the Illinois T/A Program, 11 establishments in the Ohio CIS Program and three establishments in the Indiana CIS Program. Additionally, there are approximately 200 custom-exempt operators in the state of Michigan in which the Chicago district provides regulatory oversight through annual reviews. Within the past couple of years, seven poultry slaughter establishments have come under the New Poultry Inspection System in Ohio, Michigan and Indiana.

When asked about his management style, Chicago District Manager Paul Wolseley says that he and his management team approach the employees with a smile, and together they try to keep a positive attitude amongst the employees within the district. We want to treat our employees right by



Photo contributed by Tamara Davis, OFO.

In May 2016, FSIS employees from circuit 4, in Elk Grove Village, Ill., and circuit 6, in Bolingbrook, Ill., participated at FSIS' i-Impact training at the Chicago district office in Chicago, Ill.

supporting, empowering and caring for them. It is our job as managers to focus on the people, resolve issues and provide a good working environment," he said. Resource Management Assistant Candi McChesney said, "I enjoy everything about my job in the Chicago district, especially helping folks out in the field with General Services Administration vehicles, travel arrange-

ments and auditing travel vouchers. I have worked in three districts now and have always felt thankful to be able to work for an Agency like FSIS."

The Chicago district provides slaughter and processing for red meat, poultry and Siluriformes fish (catfish). The district also inspects processed egg products. Through the years, the Chicago Stock Yards became a central location for a variety of processing operations. There are a large number of establishments that operate within the Chicago metropolitan area that produce the widest variety of ethnic cooked sausage products anywhere in the country.

The district takes sampling for pathogens very seriously. "We are required to send out *Listeria monocytogenes* samples to the lab the same day they are taken," Zhang said. "To make this task easier, I suggested preparing the sampling forms from the Public Health Information System in advance, so that when the samples were ready to ship, only last-minute notes would need to be included. For our district, this process seems to be working well."

Like many other districts, one of the biggest challenges for the Chicago district is staffing. To handle this challenge, the district participates in outreach efforts at job fairs and colleges throughout its jurisdiction. "In Chicago, the diversity of the employees contributes to the diversity of the outreach that is performed," said EIAO Trinisa Williams-Ruiz.

Wolseley explained they are planning to partner with FSIS' headquarters and Office of Human Resources by doing some hands-on recruiting at various locations, walking prospective FSIS employees through the hiring process and ultimately producing a list of eligible applicants.

Consultation and Coaching Through Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

By Jodi M. Hallstrom, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8597

Supervisors and managers can face many professional challenges. The Employee Assistance Program's Supervisory Consultation and Management Coaching programs are specifically designed to assist with supervisory issues such as motivating your workforce and meeting team goals, dealing with ongoing organizational change and developing leadership skills to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing workforce.

What is a Supervisory Consultation?

A consultation is usually associated with a specific problem or concern regarding a particular employee. It generally involves a one-time meeting or discussion with an EAP professional regarding issues such as referring an employee to the EAP, addressing work performance (formally and informally) or addressing behavioral issues. A senior level EAP consultant works with the supervisor to identify potential solutions and explore ways to most appropriately address them. Supervisors and managers at all levels are eligible to receive confidential consultations from the EAP.

What is Management Coaching?

The EAP's Management Coaching program helps supervisors and managers develop skills to be an effective leader in today's workforce. The program focuses on maximizing strengths and skills to improve as a supervisor and enhance overall quality of life. Coaching services can be utilized to:

- Navigate change and manage stress
- Handle difficult conversations and conflict
- Defuse and manage anger
- Develop better communication skills
- Balance the demands of work and home

Meetings with a professional coach can help managers develop solutions that lead to positive change. Coaching usually involves several appointments and all coaching appointments are voluntary and confidential.

The Supervisor Consultation and Management Coaching programs provide the opportunity to enhance your strengths and maximize your potential. Call the EAP today and be the most effective leader you can be. The EAP is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-800-222-0364 /1-800-262-7848 (TTY), or on the web at www.FOH4You.com.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- Notice 49-16 Use of WebTA Version 4.2
- Notice 50-16, Updates to the Inspection Program Personnel Help Button
- Notice 51-16, Submitting Form 5110-1 Services Rendered
- Notice 52-16, Training Requirement for International Travel
- FSIS Notice 55-16, Public Health Information System Dashboard Alerts Widget
- FSIS Notice 56-17, Political Activity Guidance Reminder
- Directive 1306.8 Rev. 2, Security Awareness and Training

Administrative issues were also published.

- Notice 48-16, Actions to Facilitate Industry Access to the Public Health Information System Notice 53-16, Protecting FSIS Inspection Program Personnel from Mosquito Bites
- Notice 54-16, Voluntary Labeling Statements That Bioengineered or Genetically Modified Ingredients or Animal Feed Were Not Used In Meat, Poultry, or Egg Products
- Directive 7120.1 Rev. 37, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used In the Production of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products
- Notice 57-16, Elimination of the EGGDOM Sampling Program

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

ASKFISH

During the catfish transitional period do we document the non-compliance of the following findings on a Noncompliance record (NR) or MOI? During pre-operational sanitation inspection the product-contact surfaces are found to be contaminated with product residue from the previous day's production (no product affected at this point). During operational production, product-contact surfaces are observed contaminated but NO product is observed contaminated at that time.

During the 18-month transitional period (March 1, 2016, through September 1, 2017) establishments are expected to maintain sanitary conditions and prevent direct product contamination and/or adulteration. If non-compliance is observed on a product contact surface during pre-operational sanitation inspection, a Regulatory Control Action (RCA) would be applied to the piece of equipment and the finding should be documented on an NR.

If during an operational inspection non-compliance is observed on a product contact surface and direct product adulteration is imminent, then a RCA would be applied to the piece of equipment and a NR would be issued for the non-compliance. If a determination is made that direct product adulteration is not imminent then a Memorandum of Interview (MOI) should be written.

Personnel should refer to Notice 23-2016, Consumer Safety Inspectors Responsibilities at Fish Establishments During The 18-Month Transitional Period, Attachment 2, for actions to take if a noncompliant result is observed. If you are uncertain whether conditions support a particular determination (NR or MOI), please discuss the issue with your immediate supervisor.

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Arellano, Abelardo C., CSI	Corpus Christi, Texas	35	Knight, Pat, SVMO	Clarksville, Ark.	28
Brundage, Ronald H., FI-S	Salisbury, Md.	40	Jones, Wilma, CSI	Stratford, Texas	29
Collins, Gary M., CSI	Canton, Ga.	33	Ladely, Scott R., Micr Biol	Athens, Ga.	24
Drake, Carol A., SupvyFnanci Sys Analyst	Urbandale, Iowa	22	Leopold, Beth, Complnc Speclst	College Station, Texas	30
Everage, Burl W., CSI	Pine Mtn. Valley, Ga.	25	Maldonado, Louis, CSI	City of Industry, Calif.	31
Foster, Brenda R., Lead HR Spec. (Benefits)	Minneapolis, Minn.	34	Miller, Dale E., FI-S	Greeley, Colo.	15
Gowen, Bruce L., Fnanci Technn	Urbandale, Iowa	19	Owens, Patricia A., CSI	Enterprise, Ala.	17
Hairgrove, Rebecca G., SVMO	Nacogdoches, Texas	41	Rhoads, Walter M., CSI	Liberal, Kan.	19
Hernandez, Dora, FI-S	Grand Island, Nebr.	16	Simpson, Martha D., FI-S	Grand Island, Neb.	20
Henry, Charlotte A., CSI	Milford, Texas	35	Jones, Jr., Ulysses, CSI	Bolingbrook, Ill.	33
Hoge, John L., SVMO	Dudley, N.C.	28	Newburn, Robert E., FI-S	Dakota City, Neb.	7
Holmes, Lester J., CSI	Livingston, Calif.	29	Roye, Larry W., FI-S	Fort Morgan, Colo.	32
Hopperstad, John, CSI	Sioux Falls, S.D.	30	Samuels, Lois E., CSI	Decatur, Ark.	28
Huntley, Catherine J., Supvy CSI	Tolleson, Ariz.	23	Short, William, CSI	Lakewood, Colo.	25
			Smith, Ronald R., CSI	Columbus, Ohio	42
			Teal, Carmen, FI-S	Vienna, Ga.	42

Huntington, Pa.

Recently, OIEA Investigator David Duvall (pictured) attended a career day at Juniata College. The career fair is held each year and features more than 120 employers. Duvall met with students to discuss employment opportunities and the benefits of working for FSIS. Interested students were provided with information on how to set up an account on USAJOBS and apply for FSIS positions.

Photo contributed by David Duvall, OIEA.



Mt. Laurel, N.J.

On July 11-15, OIEA Investigators attended an advanced Surveillance, Investigations and Enforcement Methods (SIEM) class. Pictured, from left: Louis Tate, Bertram Leach, Pedro Rodriguez, Guadalupe Solis, Katherine McFadden, Victoria Sulenes, James Borda, Sanitric Brown, Mark Heim, Krishna Cabine, Joseph Woltz, III, Scott Warren, Eric Rhoads, Michael Kain, Clark McKimmy, James Lappin, David Duvall, Phillip Overschmidt, Ronald

Wells, Dan Skotnicki, Joseph Wolfgram, Robert Petrie, Dennis Thomas, Charles Goin, Jonathon Hamric, Anthony Rossano, Damian Cazac, Jennifer Leak, Nick Papapietro, Mayo Prudhomme, Jason Story, Michael Ronczka, William Threlkeld. Photo contributed by Michael Kain, OIEA.

Demorest, Ga.

On May 13, Wesley Caudell (pictured) provided information about food safety and FSIS careers at the Hilliard Wilbanks Middle School career day. A few years ago, Caudell had given a food safety presentation at a local elementary school. This elementary school is a feeder school for Hilliard Wilbanks Middle School. Some of the students recognized Caudell from the earlier food safety presentation and remembered important points such as proper hand washing techniques and cooking temperatures for meat and poultry products. Photo contributed by Wesley Caudell, OFO.



FROM THE *FIELD*

Alexandria, Va.

On July 29, 30 FSIS personnel completed the FSIS Leadership Exploration and Development Program. Pictured, front row, from left: Sherri Leath, Luis Trujillo, James Shrieves, Sharon Peredis, Robert Daniel. Pictured, second row, from left: Adrian Vaughan, Michael Watts, Kimberly Mouncé, Charles Rickards IV, Stephanie Titus, Janice Watkins, Lisa Marko, Mable Oghagbon. Pictured, third row, from left: Teresa Becker, Katherine Paz, Barbara Myers, Lori Sanders, Towanda Zachery, Rachel Woodruff.

Pictured, forth row, from left: Kimberly Francisco, Angelina Schile, Seamus Curtis, Shannon Noffsinger, Adrienne Nelson-Reynolds. Pictured, fifth row, from left: Thomas Gordon, Charles Douglas Jr., Shauna Armstrong, Nicia White, Marta Velasquez, Corey Van Winkle, Michael Dittmer, Michael Piotrowski, Timothy Drake.

Photo contributed by Micheall Myrie, OOEET.



Nathan Greenwell, Molly Winter, Dan Liebsch, Diana Care. Photo contributed by Jeff White, OOEET.

Alexandria, Va.

On July 15, 22 supervisors and team leads from field and headquarters locations completed the 2016 FSIS Catalyst Leadership Development Program. Pictured, front row, from left: Paul Kiecker, Michael Watts, Al Almanza. Pictured, second row, from left: Brian Gates, Rose-Marie Palmer, Cynthia Brown, Carrie Teetz, Damali Carr, Matthew Sanderson. Pictured, third row, from left: Molette Bradley, Danisha Montague, Anna Smith. Pictured, fourth row, from left: Heather Swan, Carla Miller, Ricky Couch, Travis Nienhueser, Megan Bennett. Pictured, fifth row, from left: Donald Fickey, Samuel Peabody, John Krieger, Chris Yol, Willy Lanier,

Suffolk, Va.

On July 15, Dr. Safwat Ahmad, FLS (pictured, fourth from left) and Dr. Deborah Edwards, SPHV (pictured, fifth from left) participated in a training session for a group of 25 Virginia state health inspectors. The inspectors are responsible for the inspection of restaurants, food trucks and bed and breakfast establishments. The topics discussed were Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points, Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures, prerequisite programs and slaughter. The training included a film and a question and answer session. Photo contributed by Deborah Edwards, OFO.



i-Impact Food Safety *in action*

On July 14, personnel from the Ft. Lauderdale circuit participated in an i-Impact workshop. Pictured, from left: Vincent Urban, Amy Barker, Robert Miranda, Steven Kirkendall, Dennis Poplin, Mark Wengerd, Peggy Tiller, Rose Coley, Melissa Oquendo, Tom Ortolivo, Elizabeth Tomlinson, Bogdan Toma, Robin Burns, Mariana Kama Mitrache, Corinthia Simmons Burney. Photo contributed by John Derringer, OFO.



On June 8, FSIS personnel at est. P-9197 in Lewiston, N.C., participated in an i-Impact workshop. Photo contributed by Raul Frontera, OFO.



On July 7, in celebration of a successful initial rollout of i-Impact, trainers Jeremy Emmert (pictured, left) and Kristen Booze (pictured, right) cut an i-Impact cake in Washington, D.C.

On July 15, personnel at est. P-1019 in Mentone, Ind., participated in an i-Impact workshop. Pictured, from left: Selina Maish, Richard Smits, Andrea Rodriguez, Maria Jurado, David Spencer. Not pictured: Steve Sexton, Autumn Vail, Joyce Castro, Ramon Cana Alvarez. Photo contributed by Ramon Cana Alvarez, OFO.



Safety Corner: FSIS Hazard Communication Program

By Curtis Wallis, OM
Phone: (510) 769-5750

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) performs various investigations for the safety of workers. In the past, FSIS has received requests for copies of all completed OSHA logs for the last 5 years. When this occurs, the safety group, along with the necessary district office(s), work with OSHA to provide these documents for review. This process is set up for worker safety. This process also ensures that injuries are adequately recorded on specific OSHA logs. OSHA forms are available on the record keeping website for OSHA at www.osha.gov/recordkeeping.

According to the OSHA website, OSHA forms 300 and 301 must be completed when there is:

- Any work-related fatality;
- Any work-related injury or illness that results in loss of consciousness, days away from work, restricted work, or transfer to another job;

- Any work-related injury or illness requiring medical treatment beyond first aid; and
- Any work-related diagnosed case of cancer, chronic irreversible diseases, fractured or cracked bones or teeth, or punctured eardrums.

OSHA also has special record keeping instructions for work-related cases involving: needle sticks and sharp injuries; medical removal; hearing loss; and tuberculosis.

OSHA defines first aid as treatment that includes non-prescription medication such as Ibuprofen, application of wound bandages such as Band-Aids, hot or cold therapy, removing splinters, applying temporary splints or slings, using massage or drinking fluids for relief. More information about OSHA's definition of First Aid is available on the recordkeeping website.

OSHA forms must be maintained for 5 years and be readily available during an OSHA inspection.

For more information about OSHA recordkeeping, please contact the Occupational Safety and Health specialist for your district.



National Hispanic Heritage Month

Hispanic Americans: Embracing, Enriching and Enabling America
September 15 - October 15

STRATEGIC PLAN

The drafting of the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan has been a collaborative effort across the Agency, including input from the field. The Plan contains three primary goals focused on protecting public health and preventing foodborne illness, modernizing our food safety approaches and achieving operational excellence. Stay tuned for the new Strategic Plan, which will be coming at the beginning of Fiscal Year 2017!

2016 Feds Feed Families Food Drive Campaign



Personnel from est. P-17340 in Hickory, Ky., pose with food items they collected for the Feds Feed Families campaign. Pictured, from left: Gina McCord, Nick Vilardo, Joe Kelley, Lesli Tull, Delfina Weatherspoon, Wayne Weatherspoon, Tina Carmon (front), John Bradbury. Photo contributed by Carolyn Rogers, OFO.

Giovanna Wigginton entered a chili called "The New Hotness" in the Feds Feed Families USDA Chili Cookoff at headquarters in Washington, D.C., on July 28. Photo contributed by Sarah Lynch, OA.



The day shift inspection team at est. P-17340 in Hickory, Ky., pose with some of the food items they collected for the Feds Feed Families campaign. FSIS personnel at this establishment have collected more than 432 pounds of food for the campaign so far. Pictured, back row, from left: Chris Channell, Jerry Camper, Charles Carter, Scott Haley, Barry Scoggins, Mark Harpole. Pictured, middle row, from left: Joseph Kelley, John Bradbury, Rusty Parham, Wayne Weatherspoon, Joe Smithson. Pictured, front row, from left: Yubia Diaz-Colley, Wilma Smith, Delfina Weatherspoon, Angela Abney, Donna Harper. Not pictured: Curtis Horsley, Sheryl William, Jody Brock, Tina Carmon. Photo contributed by Carolyn Rogers, OFO.



Paulo Almeida participates as a judge at the Feds Feed Families USDA Chili Cookoff at headquarters in Washington, D.C., on July 28. Participants donated nonperishable food items and tasted bowls of chili prepared by personnel from across the department. Photo contributed by Sarah Lynch, OA.



Chris Alvares entered a chili called "Ring of Fire" in the Feds Feed Families USDA Chili Cookoff at headquarters in Washington, D.C., on July 28. Photo contributed by Sarah Lynch, OA.



On July 13, the OIEA Federal State Audit Branch and OPPD Policy Development Staff in the Zorinsky Federal Building in Omaha, Neb., participated in a breakfast buffet food drive event for the Feds Feed Families campaign. There was a great turnout for the food drive event, which brought in more than 450 pounds of food for the campaign. The picture includes a small portion of the donations and the event organizers. Pictured, from left: Ellie Livingston, Deb Arthur, Robert Witte. Photo contributed by Ilene Arnold, OPPD.

Night shift personnel at est. P-17340 in Hickory, Ky., have contributed to the more than 432 pounds of food that FSIS personnel at this establishment have collected for the Feds Feed Families campaign so far. Pictured, back row, from left: Nick Vilardo, Scott Lamb, Craig Mosier, Aleta Greayer, Timothy Stephens, Cortney Burgess, Doug Pickett, Phillip Hooper. Pictured, middle row, from left: Jodie Hooper, Joanne Carter, Peggy Mays, Kathy Stephens, Tommy Allen. Pictured, front row, from left: Missy Moore, Wendie Farr, Danny Cook, Rose Ann Cook. Not pictured: Sam Auxier and Greg Wilson. Photo contributed by Carolyn Rogers, OFO.



FSIS Food Defense Provides Protection Against Intentional Adulteration Incidents

By Jessica Pulz, OFO
Phone: (202) 720-4614

Every year communities across our country face emergencies—from natural disasters to deliberate acts—that test our resilience. September is National Preparedness Month, a time to bolster readiness in the event of a crisis. This year's theme is "Don't Wait. Communicate. Make Your Emergency Plan Today." To learn more about how to prepare, visit www.ready.gov or www.listo.gov. America's PrepareAthon is on September 30.

FSIS takes preparedness very seriously—whether preparing for foodborne illness outbreaks, natural disasters, cyber security incidents or intentional adulteration of the food supply. FSIS is working with employees and partners across federal, state, local, tribal and territorial governments; academia and the private sector to develop and implement plans to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to and recover from a variety of threats and hazards.

Food Defense at FSIS

One aspect of FSIS' preparedness activities is food defense – the protection of food products from intentional contamination or adulteration in which there is intent to cause public health harm or economic disruption. Even the threat of intentional contamination can have significant economic impacts and challenge public confidence in our food supply and food safety systems, so food defense is a fundamental component of the FSIS mission.

FSIS' collaboration with industry has resulted in voluntary adoption of food defense plans by 85 percent of regulated establishments, an increase of 51 percent since the start of the program in 2006. This represents more than 95 percent of FSIS regulated products produced in the U.S. and includes 98 percent of large establishments, 92 percent of small establishments and 78 percent of very small establishments. We continue outreach to small and very small establishments and have developed a number of tools and resources to encourage voluntary adoption of functional food defense plans.



Benefits of a Functional Food Defense Plan

The threat of intentional contamination requires collaboration with traditional (e.g., public health) and non-traditional (e.g., law enforcement, homeland security) partners and stakeholders across government, industry and academia. Protection of the U.S. food supply from dynamic and evolving threats involves understanding vulnerabilities, conducting monitoring and surveillance, and building capability for mitigation, response and recovery.

As directed by Homeland Security Presidential Directive 9 (HSPD-9): Defense of U.S. Agriculture and Food, USDA is one of several federal agencies responsible for conducting vulnerability assessments on the food supply. From 2003 to 2015, FSIS conducted or participated in a total of 46 vulnerability assessments or updates. These assessments helped inform research and development priorities, identify mitigation strategies that formed the basis of our guidance and tools for industry, and prioritize monitoring and surveillance strategies.

An important aspect of our food defense program is monitoring and surveillance conducted by inspection program personnel and investigators in the field. Inspection program personnel at both domestic and import establishments and plants conduct routine food defense verification tasks to identify potential vulnerabilities at the establishment that could allow deliberate adulteration of a food product.

FSIS investigators conduct surveillance activities at warehouses, distributors and other facilities to verify that businesses are in compliance with FSIS statutory and regulatory requirements. In addition to these activities, FSIS ensures that there is sufficient laboratory capability and capacity in place to support detection and response of intentional contamination of the food supply. HSPD-9 required development of "nationwide laboratory networks for food ... that integrate existing Federal and State laboratory resources, are interconnected, and utilize standardized diagnostic protocols and procedures." In

response to this requirement, FSIS and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) collaborated to establish the Food Emergency Response Network (FERN). FERN integrates the nation's food-testing laboratories at the local, state and federal levels into a network that is able to respond to emergencies involving biological, chemical or radiological contamination of food. FSIS' support of FERN includes management of a cooperative agreement grant program that includes method development, training and proficiency testing, and data management.

The Future of Food Defense

Although there is no specific or credible intelligence about pending attacks against the U.S. food supply at this time, the evolving threat landscape—including manmade and natural hazards—requires that we continue to modernize our program to protect public health and increase resilience of the food supply. Recent attacks overseas and here in the U.S. remind us that increased vigilance is needed. With the focus on small scale attacks and soft targets, critical infrastructure, including the food supply, remains an attractive target for our adversaries.

FSIS' current approach to food defense is to ensure that the progress made to date can be sustained and that we remain sufficiently flexible and adaptable to address these evolving threats. FSIS will continue to promote food defense practices, monitor establishments implementing food defense practices and ensure the Agency increasingly

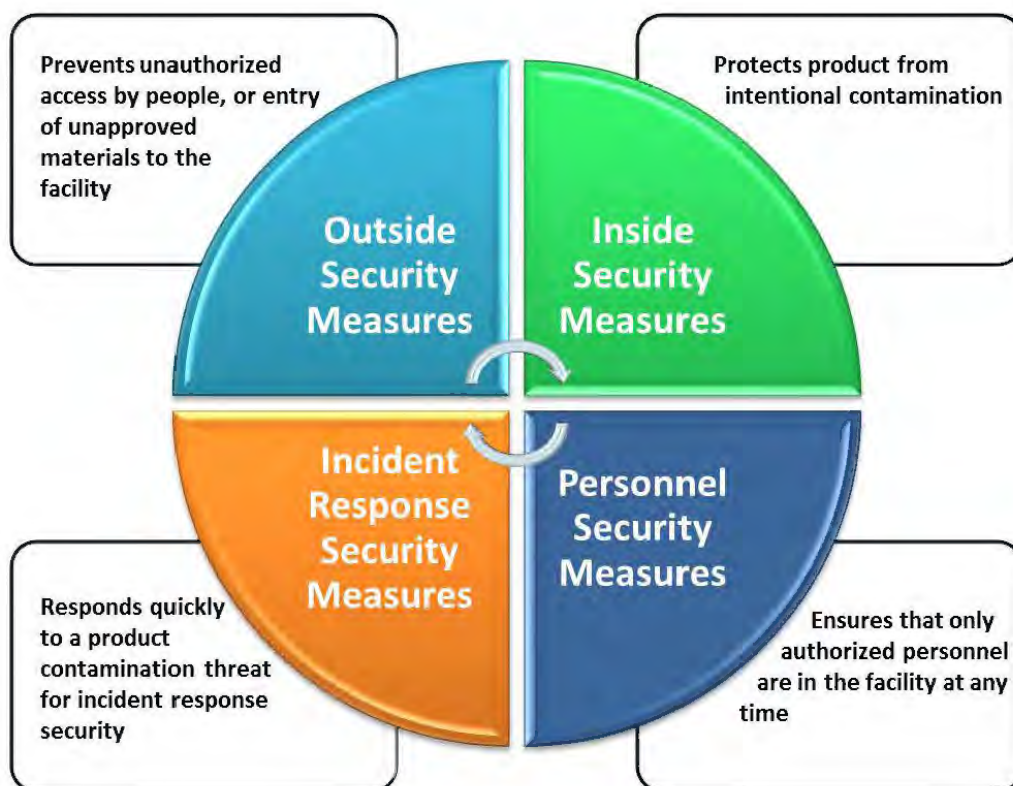
integrates food defense principles, concepts and practices into day-to-day activities.

FSIS will use data collected through monitoring and surveillance, significant incident reporting and strategic partnerships to prioritize collaboration with industry. For example, FSIS will use routine analysis of significant incident data to identify emerging trends and prioritize preparedness efforts. The Agency is also working to integrate and align its food defense directives with those for inspection of slaughter and processing; compliance evaluation and enforcement; exports and imports; laboratory services; and facilities, equipment and sanitation. The goal is to increase both utilization of resources and comprehensiveness of protective measures. FSIS will also continue to use the Public Health Information System and other tools to assess the percentage of FSIS regulated establishments that maintain food defense practices.

FSIS will also work with FDA to identify ways to align our food defense practices with those established in the final rule on Mitigation Strategies to Protect Food Against Intentional Adulteration issued in accordance with the Food Safety Modernization Act, where appropriate.

Additional Information

Additional information on food defense is available at www.fsis.usda.gov/fooddefense. If you have any questions about food defense, contact the FSIS Food Defense Assessment Staff at FoodDefense@fsis.usda.gov.



>>> **RECALLS**

Aug. 3	New York firm recalls pork products due to misbranding.
Aug. 6	New Jersey firm recalls meat and poultry products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Aug. 10	New Jersey firm recalls meat and poultry products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Aug. 10	Texas firm recalls ground beef products due to possible foreign material contamination.
Aug. 21	Florida firm recalls various meat and poultry produced without benefit of inspection.
Aug. 24	Wisconsin firm recalls beef products due to possible specific risk materials contamination.
Aug. 25	Georgia firm recalls frozen chicken entrées due to possible foreign matter contamination.
Aug. 26	Alabama firm recalls pork and chicken sausage products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Sept. 1	California firm recalls poultry products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

Looking for Feedback on the Employee Connections Quarterly Publication

In the February 2016 Beacon we announced the launch of the new FSIS employee quarterly publication, "Connections." It focuses on employee activities and events and personal accomplishments of FSIS personnel across the country highlighting your many community service projects and interests. We now hope to get your feedback on the publication.

Please send us your comments to *FSISconnections* @fsis.usda.gov so that we may improve our product. We look forward to hearing from you!

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

October 2016



Photo contributed by Autumn Canada, OPACE.

Inside This Issue

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

2016 DIVERSITY CONFERENCE

FSIS District Managers pose with Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza and USDA Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack at the Diversity Conference on August 24 in Washington, D.C. Pictured, from left: Keith Gilmore (Executive Associate for Regulatory Operations, OFO); Perry Davis (Jackson); Dawn Sprouls (Des Moines); Jennifer McKean (Dallas); Yudhbir Sharma (Alameda); Al Almanza; Susan Scarcia (Philadelphia); Phyllis Adams (Atlanta); Secretary Vilsack; Robert Bane (Springdale); Steven Lalicker (Raleigh); Paul Wolseley (Chicago); Anna Gallegos (Denver). See page 7 for the story.

The New Strategic Plan

By Leo O'Drudy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-8693

As Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza mentions in his column, and as we have all learned from the i-Impact training, each of us has a "line of sight" to the new FSIS 2017-2021 Strategic Plan. We are all measured on key activities and tasks in our performance plans, and these "roll up" into Actions and Results in the 2017 Annual Plan that represent our work. While the FSIS Strategic Plan is a broad summary of what we want to achieve, the Annual Plan Actions and Results are reflected in the Strategic Plan Objectives, Outcomes and Goals to clearly align and reflect what we do every day.

Beacon readers may recall from prior issues that this Strategic Plan has been in the works for a long time. It is now complete! The new Strategic Plan builds on the successes of and lessons learned from the previous Strategic Plan

in setting a path forward for the next 5 years. It has three clear and memorable goals:

- Reduce Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health
- Modernize Systems, Policies and the Use of Scientific Approaches
- Achieve Operational Excellence

Every thing you are asked to do at work directly supports one or more of those Goals. Each of these broad Goals is made up of two clearly defined Outcomes, each of which has specific and measurable Objectives. The Plan also explains why each Objective is necessary, what we will be doing to achieve it, and how we can know whether we are in fact achieving that Objective.

No matter your position or location in FSIS, you are an important part of a Strategic Plan that reflects the Agency's overall vision to keep

Continued on Page 4 ...

The Beacon Mission Statement

The Beacon newsletter is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education to provide relevant mission critical information to all FSIS employees. The Beacon provides employees information about the Agency's proposed regulations, policies, and programs; training opportunities; and important employee welfare initiatives to connect employees to the mission and build a cohesive community.

The Beacon enables employees to stay up to date with the latest events and see the Agency's mission executed in action.

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Deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

November issue – due Oct. 1

December issue – due Nov. 1

January issue – due Dec. 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 690-3881

Fax: (202) 815-2707

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

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Deputy Under Secretary's Column

This month, we begin the start of a new fiscal year (FY). Along with the start of this new year, we also will launch our new FY 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, as well as our new FY 2017 Annual Plan. At the beginning of each fiscal year, your supervisor should provide you with an updated performance plan. The standards that your individual plan contains keep your work aligned with FSIS priorities that are linked to the FSIS mission, our Strategic Plan and our Annual Plan.



Alfred V. Almanza

When your activities are directly linked to these plans, a clear line of sight is established between each person's work and the direction that our Agency aims to go in. This connection enables all employees to be engaged in day-to-day activities with a clear sense of direction, purpose and knowledge of how what you want to accomplish at work fits in to the larger picture.

The Agency goals and the results that we can focus on are outlined in the upcoming Strategic Plan and Annual Plan. i-Impact, the FSIS Strategic Plan, the FSIS Annual Plan and your performance plans tie into your duties as an FSIS employee and what you do every day. Every task that is a part of your work, no matter how small, is important to our Agency and what we aim to accomplish. Thank you again for the work you do to keep our food safe every day.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Drafting 2017-2021 Strategic Plan has been a collaborative effort across the Agency. The Plan contains three primary goals focused on protecting public health and preventing foodborne illness, modernizing our food safety approaches and achieving operational excellence. Stay tuned for the new Strategic Plan.

Thomas Collaro

Passion for Consumer Safety

By Emeka Ndolo, OPACE
Phone: (202) 260-9491

Thomas Collaro is a Senior Compliance Investigator based in Philadelphia, Pa., serving the Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit's (OIEA) Northeast region.

OIEA contributes to the FSIS public health mission through the surveillance and investigation of meat, poultry and processed egg product facilities; investigation of foodborne illness outbreaks; response to natural disaster and intentional contamination events; execution and application of enforcement of FSIS criminal, civil and administrative sanctions and authorities; and equivalency verification. "Simply put, once meat, poultry or processed egg products leave the control of the federal establishment, our job is to ensure it reaches the ultimate consumer wholesome, unadulterated, properly packaged and labeled," Collaro said. "Any program is only as good as its enforcement."

As a Senior Investigator, Collaro is involved in the more sensitive reviews and investigations, and serves as a team leader, coordinating the collection of evidence and data by other Investigators. "I detect, plan and develop criminal, bio-security and illness outbreak investigations," Collaro said. "In addition, I coordinate other enforcement activities conducted by Investigators involving surveillance activities, collection and analysis of complex records, and control of adulterated or misbranded product."

Collaro comes from a long line of butchers and has an uncle who was a Consumer Safety Inspector. His uncle's influence along with his family's background in the meat industry provided the foundation that started his federal career. When Collaro initially applied for a job at FSIS, however, he didn't fully understand the Agency's role. "I



Photo contributed by Thomas Collaro, OIEA.

just assumed that if meat or poultry made its way to the retail sector, it was safe to eat; I was in for a big surprise!" Collaro said. Initially hired as an Inspector working on a chicken slaughter line, Collaro was driven to explore other opportunities within the Agency. "I applied for promotions and took on any available training as my career progressed," he said. "I believe I have worked at every conceivable establishment there is." Collaro eventually applied for a position as a Compliance Investigator and was selected. Having been a mentee himself, Collaro says that he likes the mentoring and training aspect of his job. "I've never forgotten what it's like to be the 'newbie,' going from a job you know, to a job where everything is alien," Collaro

said. "I have been fortunate enough to have had mentors throughout my career, and I like being in a position that I can share some of the knowledge obtained from almost two decades of working in FSIS."

Collaro's passion is investigating illness outbreaks. "Nothing else gets me going more than knowing that someone became ill simply from eating a meal either at home or at a restaurant, and knowing that if I do my job I can prevent additional people from getting sick," Collaro said. Collaro believes that it requires a dedicated team of people to produce the results that FSIS has achieved. "Over the years, we have been very successful in quickly identifying the source of various outbreaks, and I am incredibly proud of our work and the FSIS team," he said.

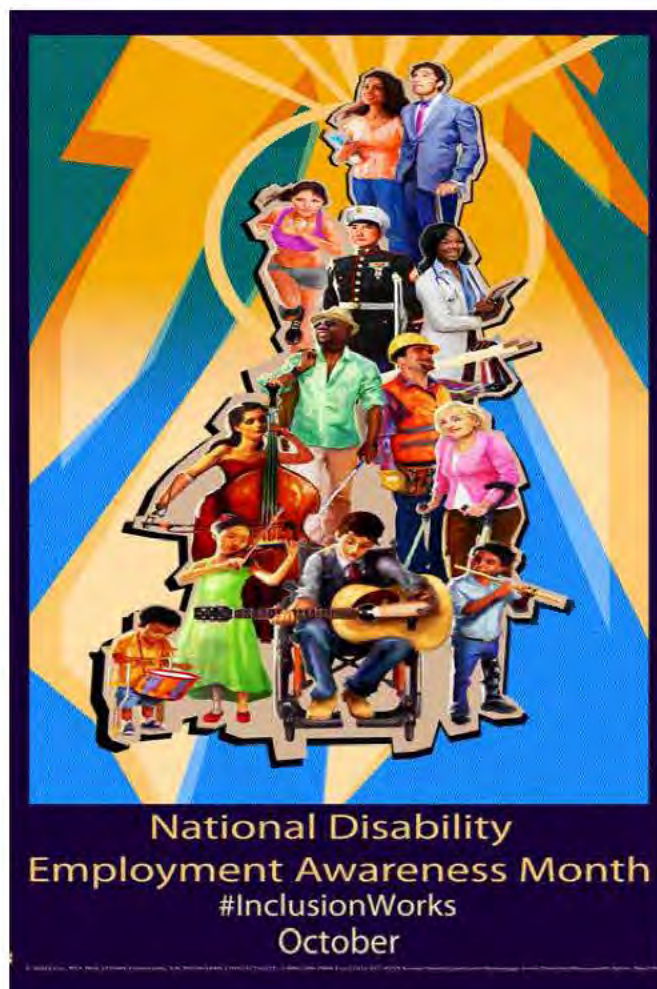
Collaro is an avid sports fan and since football season is back, he will be rooting for his favorite hometown team, the New York Jets. Collaro enjoys traveling and being outside. He likes to hike in the warmer months and snowshoe in the winter months. "I am proud to say that I hiked up Mt. Teide last year, which is the highest peak in Spain," he said.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Photo contributed by Pamela Alexander, OFO.

On Wednesday, September 7, the inspection team at DeQueen, Ark., met with Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza. Pictured, from left: Melinda Rainey, Al Almanza, Willie Finley and Gerald Nehka.



STRATEGIC PLAN

... Continued from page 1

food safe and protect public health by preventing foodborne illness.

The FSIS 2017-2021 Strategic Plan will be available in paper form, and released online this month at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/informational/aboutfsis/strategic-planning.

FSIS 2017-2021 Strategic Plan		
Vision: Everyone's food is safe Mission: Protecting the public's health by ensuring the safety of meat, poultry, and processed egg products		
Goals	Outcomes	Objectives
Goal 1: Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health	1.1 – Prevent Contamination 1.2 – Limit Illness from Regulated Products	1.1.1 – Drive Compliance with Food Safety Statutes and Regulations 1.1.2 – Strengthen Sampling Programs 1.1.3 – Ensure Establishments Are Meeting Pathogen Reduction Performance Standards 1.1.4 – Promote Food Defense Practices 1.2.1 – Improve Food Safety at In-Commerce Facilities 1.2.2 – Enhance Response to Foodborne Illness Outbreaks and Adulteration Events 1.2.3 – Increase Public Awareness of Recalls, Foodborne Illness, and Safe Food Handling Practices
Goal 2: Modernize Inspection Systems, Policies, and the Use of Scientific Approaches	2.1 – Improve Food Safety and Humane Handling Practices through Adoption of Innovative Approaches 2.2 – Enhance Access to Complete and Accurate Information to Inform Decisions	2.1.1 – Modernize Scientific Techniques and Inspection Procedures 2.1.2 – Increase Adoption of Humane Handling Best Practices 2.2.1 – Improve Reliability, Access, and Timely Collection and Distribution of Information
Goal 3: Achieve Operational Excellence	3.1 – Maintain a Well-Trained and Engaged Workforce 3.2 – Improve Processes and Services	3.1.1 – Improve Recruitment and Retention for Mission Critical Positions 3.1.2 – Enhance Training and Development Opportunities across Competency Areas 3.1.3 – Ensure Equal Opportunity and a Diverse and Inclusive Environment 3.2.1 – Enhance Efficiency and Effectiveness of Key Business Processes and Systems 3.2.2 – Improve Service Delivery
Accountable Collaborative Empowered Solutions-Oriented		

Introducing the Philadelphia District Office

By Peggy Riek, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-7608

The Philadelphia district, located in the northeastern United States, covers 21 circuits throughout eight states: Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont. The state of Vermont also participates in the State Cooperative Inspection program (Talmadge/Aiken).

The district staff comes from many different ethnic and religious backgrounds. "Our diversity makes our 600-strong workforce unique. Without our employees' dedication, diversity and unique expertise, we would not be able to accomplish our FSIS mission—protecting public health and preventing foodborne illnesses," said Philadelphia District Manager Susan Scarcia.

Fast-paced and challenging, the Philadelphia district manages 1,000 federally inspected establishments, the largest number of establishments within FSIS, of which 97 percent are small- or very small-sized plants. There are 60 poultry slaughter establishments, including one New Poultry Inspection System establishment, 145 red meat slaughter and four egg processing establishments within the district. Additionally, there are two catfish import houses in Londonderry, New Hampshire and Boston, Massachusetts, 9 import houses located in Maine, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and New York, and a combination of processing facilities.

"As a district, we are proud to contribute toward FSIS's mission and have an important part in helping with the rest of the Agency in having the safest food supply in the world. As a food safety team, we strive to work together collaboratively, face to face, and continually look for ways to weave the Agency's Strategic Plan into our work every day," said Scarcia.

The Philadelphia district handles a wide variety of species, both small and large, including goats, lamb, sheep,

cattle, hogs, bison, ducks, geese, squab (pigeon), turkeys, chickens, New York dressed chickens and blackbirds. Establishments in the district conduct kosher, Confucian, halal and ritual slaughter.

"The people are what make me excited about coming to work each day," said Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officer (EIAO) George Slobodjian. "They provide support in helping to achieve the Agency's mission and are never too busy to answer questions. Management stresses good communication. It is vital when evaluating food safety systems and protecting the public from new and emerging threats."

Deputy District Manager Joseph Schein said, "The Philadelphia district provides new and current employees

with many opportunities to expand their knowledge base and abilities. I try to engage employees and encourage them to come up with innovative ideas about how to better do their jobs," he added.

Being so close to headquarters in Washington, D.C., the district finds itself at the forefront of a lot of new Agency initiatives such as involvement with the Nationwide Beef and Veal Carcass Microbiological Baseline Data Collection Program and conducting Food Safety Assessment learning sessions for

headquarters employees. Additionally, the district provides beef slaughter and hog Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points-Based Inspection Models Project (HIMP) establishment tours for congressional members and stakeholders.

Scarcia said, "Our inspection personnel in the Philadelphia district are doing an excellent job in prioritizing inspection tasks and taking actions. They have also been very successful in verifying compliance with labeling and ensuring products with ingredients of public health concern, such as allergens, have been identified in numerous recalls."

In past years, the district realized that its recruitment strategy was not working when trying to fill positions in remote locations in New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont. As a result, it is now utilizing more innovative strategies with



Photo contributed by Susan Scarcia, OFO.

Sal Ibrahim delivered i-Impact training to the administrative staff for the Philadelphia district office. Pictured, front row, from left: Luz Cantres, Robin Way, Christine DeJesus, Gina LaSpata. Pictured, middle row, from left: Juliet Persaud, Gladys Danridge, Yvonne Maldonado, Susan Scarcia, Lynda Lilyestrom, Sheila Miller, Sal Ibrahim. Pictured, back row, from left: Scott Benek, Charles Reeves, George Slobodjian, Paul Zinskie.

Continued on Page 11 ...



Columbus, Ohio

On August 13, FSIS personnel from est. P15724 performed food safety outreach activities with the Food Safety Discovery Zone at the Festival Latino. FSIS personnel answered food safety questions and provided information to consumers at the event. Pictured, from left: Mary Ann Sutton, Jennifer Alcalde, Martin Overholt, Debra Swinehart. Photo contributed by Jennifer Alcalde, OFO.

Brookings, S.D.

On September 8, the Des Moines district held a Food Safety Summit in conjunction with South Dakota State University (SDSU). The goal of the Summit was to provide information relevant to small and very small establishments. The summit also provided an opportunity to educate, exchange information and open lines of communication between industry, public health officials and FSIS.

Pictured, from left: Keith Underwood (SDSU), Brian Hansen, Bill Langer, Mike Sheldon, Randy Kumpost, Dawn Sprouls, Arcenia Oliver. Photo contributed by Patrick Stillwell, OFO.



Dallas, Texas

On August 1-12, OIEA held a basic Surveillance, Investigations and Enforcement Methods (SIEM) training class. Pictured, from left: Mentus Ugwu, Manny Goulart, Francisco Flores, Shaun Smith, Richard Fife, Vicky Case, Michelle Cox, Eric Rhodes, Jeff Wieners, Susan Isberg, Sandra Fabregas-Ruiz, Mickey Mancini, Chad Harkness, Lolita Brumfield, Jose Pereira. Photo contributed by Paulette Platko, OOEET.



FROM THE *FIELD*

Yale, Mich.

In July, Jenifer Tolan (pictured) and Myra Kramp (dressed as Thermy) assisted OPACE staff with food safety education and outreach at the Yale Bologna Festival. FSIS' Food Safety Discovery Zone made several stops in the Chicago district this summer and more than 20 people from the Chicago district volunteered to help distribute food safety information and educate consumers. Photo contributed by Myra Kramp, OFO.



Detroit, Mich.

On August 13, Sheila McMillan and Claudia Edwards (pictured) staffed an FSIS outreach table at a local church community day. The theme of the event was "back to school." McMillan and Edwards handed out food safety materials and answered food safety questions. FSIS personnel from the Dearborn circuit also donated school supplies for the event. Photo contributed by Sheila McMillan, OFO.

Forest, Miss.

In August, Jim Sanders (pictured) gave a presentation about food safety at Forest High School. Photo contributed by Dawn Sanders (Forest High School).



i-Impact Food Safety *in action*



On August 23, 18 i-Impact trainers came to FSIS headquarters for two days to provide their input for i-Impact in fiscal year 2017. i-Impact "2.0" is currently being developed with the help of feedback and input from employees throughout the Agency.

Pictured, front row, from left: Sofiane Ghris, Georgiana Powers, Sabrina King, Gerry Tidwell, Trinis D. Williams-Ruiz, Sue Newman, Robert Baeza and Kristen Booze.

Pictured, back row, from left: Rodney Prince, Ryan Bradburn, Susan Johnson, David Custozzo, Keith Rahn, Cheryl Henry, Bill Langer, Salah Ibrahim, Carla Miller, Tiffany Pierce, Michael Cano and Jeremy Emmert.

Photo contributed by Kristen Booze, OPACE.

Recently, Consumer Safety Inspectors attended an i-Impact workshop in the Jackson district.

Pictured, from left: Thomas Benson, Tamika McKinnes, John Poore, Angelia Moore, David Mosley. Photo contributed by Gerry Tidwell, OFO.



ASKFISH

I am requesting all information on Siluriformes fish inspection. I have just been assigned a new plant.

Information regarding the Rules and Regulations can be found in the Siluriformes Final Rule at: www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/878aa316-a70a-4297-b352-2d41becc8f73/2008-0031F.pdf?MOD=AJPERES. Additional clarification on how FSIS is enforcing the requirements at official establishments throughout the transitional period may be found in FSIS Notice 23-16, "Consumer Safety Inspectors Responsibilities at Fish (of the order Siluriformes) Establishments During the 18-month Transitional Period" at: www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/9dc3dddb-d0d7-42af-bd48-dc9af16e003f/23-16.pdf?MOD=AJPERES.

The Final Rule, FSIS Notice 23-16, and other information can also be found at www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/inspection/siluriformes.

FSIS Releases New Video Showcasing How Employees Impact Food Safety

On September 28, FSIS released a new video to the i-Impact Food Safety web page at www.fsis.usda.gov/iimpact or at <https://youtu.be/v5CRdZjkhVg>. The video begins with an animation of a hypothetical family in the United States. This family represents the millions of consumers that the employees of FSIS impact every day. The video then highlights various FSIS career fields and how the work performed by those employees impacts the safety of the food every family eats. This video is one piece of a greater commitment that FSIS is making to ensure that every FSIS employee fully understands how the work that he or she does impacts food safety. In addition, the video can be used for recruiting or other informational events. Enjoy this video and be proud of how we all impact food safety!



2016 Diversity Training Conference

By Damali Carr, OA
Phone: (301) 504-7753

This year, the Diversity Training Conference (DTC) was held at the Washington Court Hotel in Washington, D.C., on August 23-25 and was attended by more than 225 FSIS employees. The theme for the DTC was "Diversity, Inclusion, and Engagement: The Key to Our Success," which was highlighted throughout the conference during its general sessions and workshops. The workshops also delivered training on other topics such as Equal Employment Opportunity, conflict management, Agency policies, and career and personal development.



In addition to receiving formal training, participants had the opportunity to network and interact with their colleagues and FSIS and USDA leadership. Feedback received during the conference and through evaluations showed many employees felt inspired by the conference and that it sparked new motivation to accomplish the FSIS mission. Employees reported that they were eager to share their experiences and the information gained once they returned to their worksites. Based on the positive feedback from participants, FSIS recognizes the conference as a definite success for the Agency in furthering its Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement efforts!

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Adeyemo, OyewolE, Microbiol	Athens, Ga.	13	Larson, Clara C., FI-S	Norwalk, Wis.	15
Bonham, John, CSI	Springdale, Ark.	39	Long, Howard B., CSI	Hinton, Va.	38
Buus, Henry J., CSI	La Crosse, Wis.	32	Mayer, Gabriele E., Chemst	Athens, Ga.	10
Day, Steven W., Consmr Safety Offcr	Des Moines, Iowa	30	McClelland, Pearlina, FI-S	Douglas, Ga.	10
Dubon, Jaime E., CSI	Center, Texas	18	McDowell, Norma J., FI-S	Albertville, Ala.	17
Holley, Michael, CSI	New York, N.Y.	25	Olson, Terry F., CSI	Boscobel, Wis.	36
Johnson, Clementine, CSI	Arcadia, La.	28	Sanchez, Catherine M., CSI	Dinuba, Calif.	26
Key, Ronald C., CSI	Decatur, Ala.	40	Shockey, Harry T., CSI	Moorefield, W. Va.	36
Kleve, William R., FI-S	Butterfield, Minn.	26	Short, Dr. William, VMO	Lakewood, Colo.	25
Krusekopt, Dr. Kurt, VMO	College Station, Texas	30	Wilson, Donald J., FI-S	Postville, Iowa	14
			Wippler, John F., Chemst	St. Louis, Mo.	14
			Woods, Ricky, FI-S	Fresno, Calif.	18

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **Notice 61-16, Poultry Disposition Reporting**
- **Notice 66-17, Requirements for the Disposition of Non-Ambulatory Disabled Veal Calves**
- **Directive 5030.5, Review of Egg Products Plants Drawings and Specifications**
- **Notice 75-16, Verifying That Records Are Kept By Official Establishments and Retail Stores That Grind Raw Beef**
- **Directive 60201. Rev. 1, Enhanced Inspection of Poultry in Response to a Notification of a Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Outbreak**
- **Directive 9500.8 Rev. 1, Importation of Products for Other Than Commercial Purposes**
- **Notice 72-16 - Other Raw Chicken Parts Sampling Project**
- **Directive 5060.1, Hygiene and Biosecurity Practices**

Administrative issues were also published.

- **Notice 58-16, WebTA 4.2 Delayed Implementation**
- **Notice 59-16, Performance Award Distribution for Non-Bargaining Unit Employees**
- **Notice 60-16, End of The Year Performance Management Instructions**
- **Notice 62-16, 2016 Open Season for Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program**
- **Notice 63-16, Submission of Fiscal Year 2017 Renewal Orders**
- **Directive 1306.12 Rev. 2, Information System Security Maintenance**
- **Notice 64-16, Partner Government Agency Message Set**
- **Directive 1306.11 Rev. 2, Information Systems Audit**

and Accountability

- **Directive 1306.13 Rev. 1, Information Systems Planning**
- **Directive 1306.19 Rev. 1, Personnel Security for Information Systems**
- **Directive 1306.20 Rev. 1, Information System and Services Acquisition**
- **Directive 2410.3 Rev. 2, Personal Property**
- **Directive 4735.9 Rev. 2, Office of Field Operations Assignment Restrictions and Rules on Gifts from Regulated Industry**
- **Directive 1306.10 Rev. 2, Information System Access Control**
- **Notice 65-16, Considering Interim Ratings And Advisory Assessments In Final Ratings Of Record**
- **Notice 67-16, Fiscal Year 2017 Pay Periods and Official Payday Dates**
- **Notice 68-16, Further Delay of WEBTA 4.2 Implementation**
- **Notice 69-16, Time and Attendance (T&A) Reporting Procedures for Pay Period 19**
- **Notice 70-16, Restoration of Forfeited Annual Leave**
- **Notice 71-16, Prior Notification and Failure to Present**
- **Directive 1306.14 Rev. 2, Media Protection**
- **Directive 1306.18, Safeguarding Mobile or Portable Electronic Equipment and Data**
- **Notice 73-16, USDA Ethics Office Inquiries**
- **Notice 76-16, Fiscal Year 2017 Accounting Codes in WebTA 3.8**
- **Notice 74-16, WebTA 4.2 New Implementation Date**
- **Directive 1306.16 Rev. 1, Security Assurance**
- **Directive 1306.15 Rev. 1, Information Systems Contingency Planning**

Note: Field employees will receive paper copies.

PHILADELPHIA

... Continued from page 5

more outreach and a focus on recruiting events to address the staffing issues. "Additionally, district management continues to work with the Agency's Human Resource Office and headquarters to find ways to improve its performance by utilizing a variety of hiring authorities such as direct hires through the Veterans' Preference Program, Consumer Safety Inspector Delegated Exam Recruits at the GS-5 and GS-7 level and the Pathways Recent Graduate Program," said Resource Manager Robin Way.

"In addition to making sure the establishments have appropriate daily staffing, I also ensure that field personnel are following humane handling practices. I am right there to provide guidance to the in-plant field team, including district veterinary medical specialists, frontline supervisors, consumer safety inspectors and Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officers on all matters," said Deputy District Manager Lynda Lilyestrom.

Moving into the new fiscal year, with the arrival of the new Strategic Plan for 2017-2021, Scarcia and her deputy district managers will continue to look for ways to help employees in the district better understand how they do, indeed, impact food safety.

>>> **RECALLS**

Sept. 1	California firm recalls poultry products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Sept. 8	California firm recalls ground beef products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 adulteration.
Sept. 9	New Hampshire firm recalls lamb products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> contamination.
Sept. 10	Arkansas firm recalls meat and poultry products due to insanitary conditions.
Sept. 10	Ohio firm recalls pork rinds due to misbranding and undeclared allergen.
Sept. 16	Arizona firm recalls beef tamale products containing meat produced without benefit of federal inspection.
Sept. 16	Pennsylvania firm recalls pork products formulated with water that did not meet EPA drinking water standards.
Sept. 17	Washington firm recalls sausage, beef and lamb products produced without benefit of inspection.
Sept. 20	Colorado firm recalls chicken spring rolls due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Sept. 21	Washington firm recalls black forest ham products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
Sept. 22	Canada firm recalls meat and poultry pizza products distributed without benefit of import inspection.
Sept. 24	Massachusetts firm recalls beef, veal and bison products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 adulteration.
Sept. 24	California firm recalls wattie's canned spaghetti with sausage products distributed without benefit of import inspection.
Sept. 27	Missouri firm recalls chicken nugget products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
Sept. 27	Texas firm recalls beef products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O103 contamination.
For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls .	

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.

Food Safety and
Inspection ServiceVolume
20Number
11

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY



2016 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)

The 2016 Combined Federal Campaign is well underway. This year's theme is "SHOW SOME LOVE" which aligns perfectly with our cultural transformation efforts to work together, build relationships and help others. The CFC is special. It's the largest workplace giving campaign in the world and its successful history proves the generosity of Federal employees and our ability to make an impact on the rest of the world. There are more than 20,000 approved charities that participate in the CFC. You can support organizations across the nation or around the world. You can make your CFC pledge online or contribute using a paper pledge form from your Keyworker. If you have any questions, contact your program area Keyworker.

Inside This Issue

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

A Commitment to Our Nation's Veterans

By Leo O'Drudy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-8693

With Veterans Day this month, we take a look at opportunities for veterans at USDA as a whole and specifically here at FSIS. When those who have served our country in uniform come home, or transition to the civilian world, our government shows gratitude in part by making a special effort to ensure the transition is a smooth one.

Part of this "thank you" to veterans is protection against discrimination in federal employment; and another part comes as special consideration for federal employment in the form of veterans' preference. If you have a service-connected disability or received a Purple Heart, you are eligible for 10-point veterans' preference. Veterans can apply for 10-point veterans' preference using Standard Form (SF)-15, which can be found online at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OM/HRD/pubform/SFForms/sf0015.pdf>. There is also a 5-point veterans' preference available for individuals who served for 6 months during wars our nation fought after World War II. If you are not sure of your preference

eligibility, visit the Department of Labor's Veterans' Preference Advisor website at <http://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/vetspref.htm>.

A good resource for veterans seeking federal employment is the FedshireVets Frequently Asked Questions page at <https://www.fedshirevets.gov/faqs/index.aspx>. Additionally, the FedshireVets Facebook page provides information about some federal vacancies and the most recent news and events to assist veterans and transitioning service members, and their families, seeking employment with the Federal Government.

USDA has a Veterans Employment Program Officer who provides leadership and guidance on the employment of veterans within USDA. The USDA Veterans Employment Program Manager is Mr. Monshi Ramdass, who can be reached at VeteransEmploymentProgram@dm.usda.gov or (202) 280-9673. While the USDA Veterans Employment Program Office is not a hiring office, it can answer questions, help with resumes and direct interested veterans to useful resources. For more information about services provided, visit <http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/vepo/index.htm>.

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The Beacon Mission Statement

The *Beacon* newsletter is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education to provide relevant mission critical information to all FSIS employees. The *Beacon* provides employees information about the Agency's proposed regulations, policies, and programs; training opportunities; and important employee welfare initiatives to connect employees to the mission and build a cohesive community.

The *Beacon* enables employees to stay up to date with the latest events and see the Agency's mission executed in action.

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Emeka Ndolo

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Brittany Woodland

Deadline for submissions is the first day of the previous month.

December issue – due Nov. 1

January issue – due Dec. 1

February issue – due Jan. 1

Submit contributions to beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 690-3881

Fax: (202) 815-2707

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content, clarity and length.

The FSIS Management Council

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Deputy Under Secretary's Column

Thank you for your contributions to making our work environment a better place. I appreciate the time many of you took to respond to the 2016 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). The input you provided on the survey is invaluable because it enables us to take a close look at our current work environment, compare this year's results with those from previous surveys, and make adjustments and improvements where necessary.

The FEVS has allowed us to have a more accurate picture of how you feel about working at FSIS.

The survey results have provided us with information regarding your opinions about our performance culture, leadership, job satisfaction, recruitment, and where we are headed. Your feedback presents concrete views from you about how we can work together to realize our vision of FSIS's mission for the future.

FSIS leadership and the Cultural Transformation Workgroup have taken time to reflect on your feedback. One way to impact your satisfaction and commitment to the Agency is to improve the clarity with which we communicate future goals and strategies of FSIS and the consistency in which we execute our messages. We are committed to improving the performance of our Agency and increasing your level of job satisfaction. Your opinions are valuable and will be used as the basis for ongoing discussions between managers and staff over the coming year. The FEVS preliminary summary and trend analysis will be posted on InsideFSIS later this month. Thank you again for your participation and feedback, and the time you spent completing the survey. It really makes a difference.

Just as I am thankful for your contributions to making our Agency a better place to work, I am thankful for your incredible work every day. This month, when I celebrate Thanksgiving, I will be thinking of you. While most American families are sitting down to the dinner table on Thanksgiving, I know many of you will be working hard to ensure that they can enjoy these meals and avoid foodborne illness. America's abundance of safe food would be impossible without our Agency and the work that you do. Thank you for your selfless service to our country and for making FSIS a great place to work.



Alfred V. Almanza

DR. GREGORY SHAW

A LINE OF DEFENSE FOR FOOD SAFETY

By Emeka Ndolo, OPACE
Phone: (202) 260-9491

Dr. Gregory Shaw is a Public Health Veterinarian based in Memphis, Tenn., serving the Office of Field Operations (OFO) in the Jackson District. As a Public Health Veterinarian, Shaw ensures that the nation's food supply is safe from seen and unseen dangers. "My role consists of ensuring that all animals are treated humanely, completing of daily food safety tasks, staying up to date on export requirements and working with inspection personnel within the establishments to maintain the wholesomeness of the farm to table continuum," Shaw said.

Shaw recently served as the waste reductions team lead on FSIS' Green Initiative Committee. This committee assists the Agency in maintaining a beautiful planet for future generations. Shaw is also an i-Impact trainer.

"I ensure that each person I train understands how important their work is to food safety and our great nation," said Shaw.



Photo contributed by Gregory Shaw, OFO.

Shaw performs the Kidney Inhibition Swab (KIS) test that is used to detect antimicrobial drugs within the kidney.

While earning his bachelor's degree in Animal and Poultry Science at Tuskegee University, Shaw interned with the Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service. "This early agricultural experience piqued my interest in USDA and more specifically, FSIS. My desire to be part of the food safety mission grew when I graduated from Veterinary School," Shaw said.

Shaw believes that all food that goes on the tables of Americans should be unadulterated and that all animals should be treated humanely. "It is an honor to serve my country in such an important capacity," he said. "I enjoy the everyday impact that I have on protecting the food supply of the country I love. With an ever-changing microbial climate, I like knowing that I serve as a line of food defense for food safety."

When Shaw is not protecting consumers by making sure the nation's food supply is safe, he is a professional jazz musician.

Raised in a house of musically gifted people, music has always been his greatest love, along with animals.

ASKFISH

I am planning on completing my quarterly inspection of a processing facility and have been informed that during my visit, the facility will be producing a ready-to-eat *Siluriformes* fish product. Should I perform inspection tasks for that during my quarterly inspection?

Yes, in accordance with FSIS Notice 23-16, meet with plant management and document in a Memorandum of Interview.

Eight Common Email Security Mistakes

By Jennifer Dallis, OA
Phone: (202) 692-4206

With such widespread use, both professionally and personally, email is one area where someone may be vulnerable and not know it. Here are some common mistakes many people make when it comes to email security:

1. Not closing the browser after logging out.

When you are checking your email at a library or cybercafé you not only need to log out of your email when you are finished, but you also need to make sure to close the browser window completely.

2. Forgetting to delete browser cache, history and passwords.

After using a public terminal, it is important that you remember to delete the browser cache, history, and passwords. Most browsers automatically keep track of all the webpages that you have visited, and some keep track of any passwords and personal information that you enter.

3. Believing you won the lottery...and other scam titles.

Spammers use a wide variety of clever titles to get you to open emails which they fill with all sorts of bad things.

4. Sending personal and financial information via email.

Banks and online stores provide, almost without exception, a secured section on their website where you can input your personal and financial information. They do this precisely because email, no matter how well protected, is more easily hacked than well secured sites.

5. Failing to scan all email attachments.

Nine out of every ten viruses that infect a computer reach it through an email attachment. Yet despite this ratio, many people still do not scan all incoming email attachments.



6. Sharing your account information with others.

Sometimes, we may need an urgent message checked, and we call up our significant other, family member or friend and request them to check our email on our behalf. Of course, we trust these people, but once the password is known to anybody other than you, your account is no longer as secure as it was.

Continued on page 12...

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Photo contributed by Cara LeConte, OA.

Deputy Under Secretary Almanza (center), Jane Doherty (fourth from left), Olya Lutchyn (second from left) and Natasha Williams (second from the right), stand with representatives from 13 different countries from around the world at the 2016 Food Safety Equivalence and Inspection Seminar, which was held from September 12-23, in Washington, D.C.

The 2-week seminar provided visiting countries a better understanding of the U.S. food safety inspection system. More than 30 foreign food safety officials attended, representing Armenia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Mongolia, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom, Korea and Switzerland. The seminar featured presentations covering the full range of the food safety inspection program, from FSIS employees, representatives from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection

Service and representatives from the the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, in order to strengthen the interagency relationships and the concerted effort required to prevent foodborne illnesses and protect public health.

INTRODUCING THE RALEIGH DISTRICT OFFICE

By Peggy Riek, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-7608

The Raleigh district spans from rural areas to densely populated cities in Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, New Jersey, Virginia and West Virginia. The district also includes our nation's capital, Washington, D.C., and two state cooperative inspection programs (Talmadge/Aiken) in North Carolina and Virginia.

Raleigh employs 1,200 individuals, working in 690 federally inspected establishments, who take great pride in doing their jobs in support of the Agency's mission to protect public health. "My deputy district managers (DDMs) and I empower and support the Raleigh employees so they are able to conduct important food safety work each day. We strive to provide appropriate inspection coverage as we continue to improve our work and excel in public health," said District Manager Steve Lalicker.

The district is comprised of 141 slaughter/processing establishments, 523 processing establishments, four egg processing establishments and 23 import inspection locations. We have 157 custom-exempt operators in the Raleigh district, which includes 31 in Maryland, 51 in New Jersey, 44 in North Carolina, seven in Virginia and 24 in West Virginia. Additionally, the district has eight New Poultry Inspection System establishments.

The Raleigh district's primary production is poultry. "During fiscal year 2016, establishments within the district conducted inspection oversight for over 16 billion pounds of inspected meat and

poultry products, and [provided inspection for] 1.785 billion poultry animals and 14.2 million livestock animals. Raleigh's efforts, alone, had a worldwide impact of 48 billion safe meals served (average 1/3 lb. serving)," Lalicker said. Within the district, several establishments operate 7 days a week.

Establishments in the district slaughter red meat, poultry, duck, goat, sheep, lamb, swine and catfish. Raleigh has one establishment that conducts catfish slaughter and 11 import inspection establishments inspecting imported catfish. Within the district, establishments conduct kosher, halal, Buddhist and Confucian ritual slaughter. Other establishments process eggs, dried and semi-dried meats, fully cooked products, canned products, and basic products such as steaks, roasts, chops and ground meats. "North Carolina is big on country ham, and New Jersey processes a wide variety of ethnic sausages," Lalicker said.

Continued on page 11...



Photo contributed by Lorraine Jones, OFO.

Raleigh district office leadership and staff pose for a photo together.

Pictured, front row, from left: Tracy Bryant, Laura Hutchison, Bridget Wimberley, Marilyn Bell, Carol Ford, Steve Lalicker, Tim Carter. Pictured, back row, from left: Mark Roling, Lorraine Jones, Beth Cunningham, Matt Nowicki. Not pictured: Travis Auxier, Ariel Thompson, Reggie Tillman, Derek Johnson.

SNAPSHOTS



Brookings, S.D.

On September 28, Katherine Dantzler-Olson (pictured, right) and Brian Hansen attended the South Dakota State University Ag-Bio Career Fair on behalf of FSIS. More than 50 students seeking internships or full-time employment connected with Dantzler-Olson and Hansen. The students were able to use FSIS' virtual reality goggles to see different phases of beef and poultry slaughter operations. Photo contributed by Brian Hansen, OFO.

Naperville, Ill.

On September 16, EIAOs Ramon Cana Alvarez and Josue Castillo performed outreach activities at a Jewel-Osco grocery store. Ken Rosenwinkel, Food Safety and Sustainability Manager for Jewel-Osco, joined in the outreach effort. Pictured, from left: Ken Rosenwinkel, Ramon Cana Alvarez, Josue Castillo. Photo contributed by Ramon Cana Alvarez, OFO.



Fremont, Neb.

On August 16-17, FSIS personnel from the Office of Policy and Program Development, and Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education visited Smithfield Farmland and Hormel Foods. The purpose of the visit was to compare and contrast traditional hog slaughter with Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points-Based Inspection Models Project (HIMP) hog slaughter and correlate with in-plant personnel on these systems. Pictured, from left: Rachel Edelstein, Scott Frickenstein, Jeremy Emmert, Chuck Westerman, Carol Blake, Kevin Gillespie, John Linville. Photo Contributed by Chelsea Buckley, OFO.

FROM THE **FIELD**



Columbus, Ohio

On August 13-14, FSIS personnel brought the Food Safety Discovery Zone mobile exhibit to the Festival Latino, which celebrated its 20th anniversary this year. FSIS personnel educated consumers about food safety and distributed food safety education materials, along with food thermometers and kitchen utensils. Adults and children attending the event played a spin the wheel game to answer food safety questions for a prize. Pictured, from left: Veronika Medina, Letricia Calhoun, Adam Ghering, Regina Salter. Photo contributed by Maria Machuca, OPAEC.

Washington, D.C.

On September 27, Kerrie Tao (pictured), FSIS' Employee Safety, Health and Wellness Staff Wellness Manager, joined USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service for their annual health fair in the USDA headquarters South Building. FSIS provided a variety of food safety education materials, as well as health and wellness materials from the American Cancer Society and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The health fair offered 30 exhibits and provided free health screenings. Approximately 300 employees attended the health fair from various agencies throughout USDA. For more information about conducting a health fair in your location, contact Kerrie Tao at

Kerrie.Tao@fsis.usda.gov.

Photo contributed by Kerrie Tao, OM.



Alexandria, Va.

From August 22 to September 2, FSIS held New Supervisor Training. Pictured, front row, from left: William Smith, Ashley Alleyne, Dannette DeWeese, Adanetch Gebreselassie, Adrian Vaughn, Michael Watts, Caylee Ng. Pictured, second row, from left: Brittany Branick, Michael Knight, Bob Koshy, Marilyn Brownlow, Justine O'Malley, Tanesha Wilkins, Karen Whala. Pictured, third row, from left: Frankie J. Beacorn, Jennifer Johnson, Carrie E. Schmidt, Charles Dorshorst, Robinson Rogers, Courtney Harral Jernigan. Pictured, back row, from left: Shannon Smith, Louis A.

Tate III, Andrew Gordon, Penni Cole, Katie Rosenbalm,

Patty Lengermann, Laura Willenbring, Daniel J. Hanowski, Noel Berger, Glenn Tillman, Antonio Quinones, Christopher Mattingly, Jeremy Hessman. Photo contributed by Thomas Walsh, OOEET.

i-Impact Food Safety *in action*

Arcenia Oliver and Sabrina King: Our i-Impact Journey

*By Arcenia Oliver and Sabrina King, OFO
Phone: (612) 270-4978, (404) 562-5900*



In March 2016, FSIS began soliciting volunteers to present a new employee engagement initiative known as i-Impact. At first we had no clue as to what we would be doing, but the title "i-Impact" caught our attention. So, when asked if we would like to participate in the train-the-trainer session, we were on board without hesitation. Approximately 100 employees attended the train-the-trainer session held in Dallas, Texas, in April. During the training session, we were briefed on the concept of i-Impact and the information to be carried forth and presented to all Agency employees. With i-Impact, we would discuss with each employee how their individual work activities supported the goals of FSIS' 2011-2016 Strategic Plan, also known as an employee's "line of sight." There were breakout sessions where we were able to share different ideas and methods for presenting the i-Impact material to colleagues. We emerged from those breakout sessions excited, motivated, energized and on a mission to help make a difference in how employees felt about the work they perform; and in doing so, hoping to promote a positive and productive work environment.

As trainers taking on this additional duty, we were also tasked with coordinating with Frontline Supervisors to schedule training sessions, being flexible in our schedules, ordering i-Impact materials, and ensuring that evaluations, feedback forms and sign-in sheets were submitted in a timely manner. Our objective was to help every employee understand how their individual work activities are connected to the mission

of this Agency and more important, how their work impacts the world around them. As we began helping employees understand how their work and the work of their colleagues supports the vision and mission of the Agency, minds were opened and interests were piqued. We began to see a change in the attitudes and mindsets of individuals from one session to the next as they began taking it all in. Employees seemed to have a "craving" for the face time and the opportunity to be heard. This was the first attempt, in the history of FSIS, for an initiative like this, and it was well received.

We were ecstatic to be a part of this historical moment in FSIS. i-Impact training sessions provided us the opportunity to meet and talk with colleagues who we might not have been able to encounter during our normal duties. It was uplifting to hear how they felt that their work makes a difference in the world and how they planned to "take it to the next level." Even after training sessions, employees kept the fire burning by submitting videos of who they were and how they impact food safety. To our colleagues, no matter where you are within the Agency; thank you for impacting the safety of the world's food supply.

We are Sabrina King and Arcenia Oliver—we impact food safety!

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Ates, Delia M., FI-S	Decatur, Ark.	19	Ogasawara, Pamela, CSO	Washington, D.C.	30
Brooke, Dr. Gregory P., SVMO	Stanwood, Wash.	12	Olson, Linda S., CSI	Renton, Wash.	31
Carpenter, Paul A., CSI	Sioux Falls, S.D.	27	Rasmussen, Daniel C., CSI	Faribault, Minn.	28
Conner, Barbara S., CSI	Hanford, Calif.	24	Robbins, Edward L., CSI	Smithfield, Va.	32
Dinges, Lois F., SCS	Harrisonburg, Va.	35	Roberson, Dr. Francis W., VMO	Durango, Colo.	21
Doyle, Patrick R., FI-S	Cold Spring, Minn.	33	Robertson, Timothy A., CSI	Swan Lake, N.Y.	10
Durrance, Maxine, FI-S	Ellijay, Ga.	9	Threlkeld, William P., Sen.	Overland, Mo.	30
Felton, Larry M., CSI	Hot Springs, Ark.	31	Compinc. Invstgtr.		
Grundahl, Mark L., VMO	Milwaukee, Wis.	7	Tusinski, Joseph V., CSI	Smithfield, Va.	36
Haddad, Dr. Jamil Z., SVMO	Modesto, Calif.	28	Wilkus, James L., Economist	Washington, D.C.	20
Jordan, Dr. James M., SVMO	Ashland, Ala.	30	Williams Jr., Dr. Woodrow	Pine Bluff, Ark.	20
Murray, Terry L., CSI	Reading, Pa.	25	Oliver, VMO		
Nawaz, Dr. Tazmin, SVMO	Baltimore, Md.	31	Williams, Patricia, FI-S	Arcadia, La.	11
Nekola, Dianne L., Res.	Des Moines, Iowa	30	Wu, Joan F., Res. Mgmt. Splst.	Alameda, Calif.	31
Mgmt. Asst.			Youngblood, James, CSI	Forrest City, Ark.	22

From Outbreak to Prevention: Raw Stuffed Chicken Products that Appear Ready-to-Eat

By Bonnie Kissler, Jennifer Sinatra, Melanie Abley and Meryl Silverman
Phone: (404) 639-5012

Since 2005, FSIS, together with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and other public health partners, has investigated 12 salmonellosis outbreaks linked to raw, frozen, stuffed chicken products. Most case-patients did not follow package instructions as these products appeared to be fully cooked. In 2006, FSIS issued policy guidance recommending that labels be modified to indicate products are not cooked and that cooking instructions be validated. More recently, FSIS analyzed practices of establishments that manufactured product associated with four outbreaks that occurred between 2013 and 2015 and issued policy guidance on lessons learned related to sanitation, intervention use, and cooking instruction validation in the Draft FSIS Compliance Guideline for Controlling *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* in Raw Poultry.

In June 2015, the MDH identified two *Salmonella* Enteritidis illness clusters, both associated with consumption of raw, frozen, stuffed and breaded chicken products. For the first time, a majority of case-patients indicated on survey

questionnaires that they knew products were raw based on the label and stated that they followed cooking instructions. Each investigation resulted in recalls of raw, frozen, stuffed and breaded chicken products from a federal establishment. Intensified sampling at both establishments resulted in regulatory follow-up regarding controlling *Salmonella* in this type of product and in source materials used for their production.

The Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD) and the Office of Field Operations (OFO) are verifying that all establishments that produce this type of product have been identified (FSIS Notice 15-16). FSIS is considering sampling multiple locations at these establishments including poultry source materials, finished products and post par-frying food contact surfaces. An improved understanding of the production process of these products could identify vulnerabilities that could lead to prevention of illnesses associated with this product.

The Office of Public Health Science would like to acknowledge the many individuals in OFO, the Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit, the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education, and OPPD who helped with these outbreak investigations that resulted in policy changes.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **Notice 75-16, Verifying That Records Are Kept By Official Establishments and Retail Stores That Grind Raw Beef**
- **Notice 77-16, FSIS Sampling of Raw Ground Beef Products for Nutrient Content**
- **Notice 78-16, Designation of a New Slaughter Subclass for Feral Swine in the Public Health Information System**
- **Notice 79-16, Verification of Non-Food Safety Consumer Protection Regulatory Requirements - Change to the Poultry Class Standards**
- **Notice 81-16, Using Barcodes to Verify Eligibility of Imported Products with Missing or Completely Illegible Shipping Marks**
- **Notice 83-16, Replacement Certificates**
- **Directive 4791.1, Basic Occupational Safety and Health Program - Revision 3**
- **Directive 4791.16, Annual Attestation on Work-Related Conditions for Establishments Operating Under the New Poultry Inspection System**
- **Directive 5020.1, Verification Activities for the Use of New Technology in Meat and Poultry Establishments and Egg Products Plants - Revision 1**
- **Directive 6100.5, Post-Mortem Dispositions for Public Health Veterinarians**
- **Directive 6420.5, Verifying Poultry Slaughter Establishments Maintain Adequate Procedures for Preventing Contamination with Feces and Enteric Pathogens**
- **Directive 9040.5, Procedures for Evaluating and Verifying Implementation of Corrective Actions in Response to Detained or Rejected Export Product**

Administrative issues were also published.

- **Notice 76-16, Fiscal Year 2017 Accounting Codes in WebTA 3.8**
- **Notice 80-16, Standards and Procedures for Ordering FSIS Business Cards**
- **Notice 82-16, Special Provisions for the End of the 2016 Leave Year**

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Those seeking non-competitive positions within USDA should visit the USDA's Veterans and People with Disabilities Portal at www.usda.gov/vpdportal. This portal provides veterans and persons with disabilities a gateway to uploading resumes and related documents into a central resource from which USDA Human Resources staff and hiring managers can recruit to fill vacant positions non-competitively. Those eligible for a Veterans Employment Opportunity Act appointment or seeking competitive positions at USDA should visit the USAJOBS webpage at <http://usda.usajobs.gov>.

In addition to the department resources, FSIS Human Resources Specialist Ms. Kamir Carrillo can be reached at Kamir.Carrillo@fsis.usda.gov or (202) 440-1884. Carrillo educates veterans, disabled veterans and transitioning service members about FSIS careers and assists them with the recruitment process. She also provides guidance to FSIS hiring managers and human resources professionals about the hiring of veterans.

A key part of any effort at outreach and inclusion is listening. On May 14, 2016, FSIS held a listening session to

A Commitment to Our Nation's Veterans

provide an opportunity for veterans currently working in FSIS to speak out and answer key questions about transitioning from the military, applying for jobs and working at FSIS. FSIS Deputy Administrator Carmen Rottenberg was in attendance and provided opening remarks. Session participants included senior officials such as FSIS Assistant Administrator for Investigations, Enforcement and Audit, Carl Mayes and FSIS Assistant Administrator for Public Health Science, Dr. David Goldman. Among the issues discussed were retention rates, onboarding programs, "culture shock," and misconceptions about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This event provided valuable information for future policies related to hiring of veterans and was just one example of the Agency's ongoing effort to welcome and honor our veterans and make the best possible use of their dedication and skills.

FSIS will continue to work at ensuring that those who have put their lives on the line to protect the rest of us can transition more easily to continuing their public service, this time saving lives by protecting public health. To all veterans—thank you for your service.

2016 Peer Recognition Award Recipients

By Christina Williams, OM
Phone: (202) 708-8168

FSIS was proud to announce the new Peer Recognition Program (PRP) that was developed based on the employee feedback received through our Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. This program was designed for all FSIS employees to recognize their colleagues for exemplary performance, technical expertise, professionalism, dedication, teamwork and partnership, and improved service delivery. FSIS would like to extend congratulations to these employees who have received recognition under the PRP for fiscal year 2016.

Office of Management

Dawn Wadsworth
Mary Lou Werner
James Miller
Nicolette Shegstad
Thomas Reimler
Nancy Poole
Greg Kuzinski

Office of Field Operations

Dr. Leo Caffrey
Chris A. Bailey
Tammy Dulude
Connie Johnson
Robert Shondelmyer
Dr. James Todd Gaslin
Brad Koenigskecht
Marc Leroy

Office of Outreach, Employee Education, and Training

Deborah Arthur
Catherine Moffitt
Dennis Depperschmidt
Erin Kersse
Dean Norman & Dana
Grabiner
Commander Jeff Tarrant
Kaitlin Keller

Office of Data Integration and Food Protection

Janet Everhart
Giovanna Wiggington
Nacola Alexander

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"My work is exciting, and every day is different and challenging. At the end of the day, I find it gratifying to know that I play a part in ensuring that many types of meat and poultry products produced in the Raleigh district that enter commerce are wholesome and unadulterated. I am proud of the work I perform each day and confident about the meat and poultry products I purchase for my family," District Case Specialist Marilyn Bell said.

The Raleigh district also deals with the challenges of maintaining inspection coverage and filling positions in hard-to-fill locations. As a result, the district conducts outreach in its jurisdiction to attract perspective employees.

"When you get right down to it, we are all a family. In fact, last December we lost a food inspector, also our colleague,

Introducing the Raleigh District Office

due to a tragic car accident while on duty. The district leadership and employees knew the news of this tragedy would affect employees. So the district manager (DM) and his DDMs personally went to the work location to share the news with the employees. Several of the district office employees, who were former food inspectors, accompanied the DM and DDMs to share the tragic news and to step up and continue online inspection so they could deal with the news," Resource Manager Lorraine Jones said.

"Accomplishing the Agency's mission is the most important job we do, and working in the Office of Field Operations is where you really get a chance to experience what FSIS is all about," Jones said. "It is where our work has a crucial impact on the lives of people in the U.S."

Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

The Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (LTP) allows federal employees to donate annual leave for use by other federal employees who are experiencing a medical emergency. To be considered for assistance via the LTP, applicants must: 1) be a current federal employee; 2) obtain approval from their supervisor to be absent from work due to the medical emergency for which they are applying to the LTP program; 3) be experiencing a personal or family medical emergency that results in serious financial hardship for the employee because he/she has insufficient accrued leave to cover the absence; 4) submit a completed Form AD-1046 and provide a personal statement and a signed medical document that explains the medical emergency and the duration of the medical emergency; and 5) have the Form AD-1046 signed by their supervisor. Additional Information and forms can be found on USDA's SharePoint site at LTP. Send an email to sonja.tomlinson@fsis.usda.gov for assistance.

>>> **RECALLS**

Sept. 30	Pennsylvania firm recalls beef products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 adulteration.
Oct. 7	Pennsylvania firm recalls beef products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 adulteration.
Oct. 9	California firm recalls ready-to-eat Lunchables Ham and American Cracker Stackers product due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Oct. 12	California firm recalls rendered animal fat (pork lard) products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
Oct. 14	Louisiana firm recalls beef and veal products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O26 contamination.
Oct. 15	Pennsylvania firm recalls frozen popcorn chicken products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
Oct. 15	Michigan firm recalls turkey products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
Oct. 21	North Carolina firm recalls pulled pork products due to misbranding and an undeclared allergen.
Oct. 21	Georgia firm recalls canned organic roasted chicken breast due to possible foreign matter contamination.
Oct. 26	New Jersey firm recalls chicken and pork bologna products due to misbranding, undeclared allergens, and being formulated with uninspected meat and poultry products.
For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls .	

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Eight Common Email Security Mistakes

7. Using simple and easy-to-guess passwords.

Hackers use computer programs that scroll through common names to compile possible user names, and then send spam emails to those user names. When you open that spam email, a little hidden piece of code in the email sends a message back to the hacker letting him know that the account is valid, at which point they turn to the task of trying to guess your password. Capital letters, numbers and non-alphanumeric greatly increase the strength of your password by using a larger set of choices.

8. Using the same password for every site, or for too long.

Passwords should be changed every 90 days. Different passwords should be used for different sites, i.e., financial and social network sites.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Volume
20

Number
12

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



Photo contributed by LeighAnn Acree, OCIO.

FSIS employees joined Deputy Under Secretary (DUS) for Food Safety Al Almanza and FSIS executives for the Combined Federal Campaign's Breakfast with Executives event on October 27. Pictured, from left: Deborah Patrick, Chuck Williams, Roberta Wagner, Dan Smigal, Shercoda Smaw, Soumaya Tohamy, Jennifer Conrad, Natalie Reaves, Carmen Rottenberg, DUS Al Almanza, Karen Jackson, Abeni Ogun, John Filus, Sarah Edwards, Francisco Gonzalez, Chloe Dixon, Tempora Fisher, Joe Abbott. See more photos on page 11.

A Look Back at *The Beacon* in 2016

By Leo O'Drudy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-8693

The Beacon's coverage throughout 2016 showed how FSIS employees impact the Agency's public health goals. Each of you has an impact on food safety, and FSIS is committed to engaging with you and sharing this message. In the January 2016 issue, the Agency unveiled a new Peer Recognition Program, so employees could recognize and show appreciation to outstanding colleagues. Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza also informed readers that the 2015 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) showed improvement in 16 out of 17 questions on employee engagement compared to the previous year.

"Each of you has an impact on food safety, and FSIS is committed to engaging with you and sharing this message."
Al Almanza

As individuals, employees, and members of various communities, we have all seen firsthand in *The Beacon* that who we are and what we do is greatly valued. In his March column, the Deputy Under Secretary announced the Administrator Awards to recognize outstanding employee performance in such categories as Excellence in Mission Results, Excellence in Workplace Harmony, Excellence in Safety and Health, Excellence in Civil Rights and Diversity, and more, while also noting that we all play a role in protecting public health and ensuring food safety.

Continued on page 10...

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

The Beacon Mission Statement

The Beacon newsletter is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education to provide relevant mission critical information to all FSIS employees. The Beacon provides employees information about the Agency's proposed regulations, policies, and programs; training opportunities; and important employee welfare initiatives to connect employees to the mission and build a cohesive community.

The Beacon enables employees to stay up to date with the latest events and see the Agency's mission executed in action.

Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education

Carol Blake, Assistant Administrator
Aaron Lavalley, Deputy Assistant Administrator
Karen Hunter, Acting Director
Greg DiNapoli, Editor-in-Chief
Leo O'Drudy, Deputy Editor
Felicia Thompson, Designer

Editorial Board:

Nina Anand Emeka Ndolo
Gabrielle Johnston Peggy Riek

Deadline for submissions
is the first day of the
previous month.

January issue – due Dec. 1
February issue – due Jan. 1
March issue – due Feb. 1

Submit contributions to
beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 690-3881
Fax: (202) 815-2707

We reserve the right to edit
all submissions for content,
clarity and length.

The FSIS Management Council

Alfred V. Almanza	Michael Watts
Carmen Rottenberg	Stephanie Wilkins
Cara LeConte	Carol Blake
Jane Doherty	Aaron Lavalley
Janet B. Stevens	Carl Mayes
Jennifer V. Sisto	Pete Bridgeman
Steve Fisher	David Goldman
Michael Erickson	Vivian T. Chen
Terri Nintemann	Dan Engeljohn
Soumaya Tohamy	Rachel Edelstein
William C. "Bill" Smith	Roberta Wagner

Deputy Under Secretary's Column

As we ring in the New Year, may 2017 bring happiness and success to you and

your families. The New Year also brings a change in Administration this January. At USDA, we have a transition team to ensure that this process is smooth and seamless.

As our current Administration does the important work of preparing to pass the torch on Inauguration Day, FSIS remains focused on our mission, which you all work hard to fulfill every day.



Alfred V. Almanza

The work of the Food Safety and Inspection Service is critical to ensure that the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged. You impact food safety every day by working to protect public health and prevent foodborne illness.

I appreciate your patience and resilience during change. No matter what is happening in the background, you've stayed committed to our primary goal—protecting public health and providing safe food for consumers. Your commitment to our mission is what makes the Agency effective and successful throughout the years.

So thank you for your patience, tolerance and flexibility. Moving forward, we will balance the adjustment of the incoming administration while simultaneously completing our mission, which remains the same. The work you do every day impacts the health and well-being of consumers worldwide. Thank you and I wish everyone a very happy holiday season.

DR. TEMPORA FISHER, DVM

Protecting Public Health, Mentoring the Next Generation

By Emeka Ndolo, OPACE
Phone: (202) 260-9491

Tempora Fisher is a Veterinary Medical Officer in the Office of Field Operations (OFO), working out of headquarters in Washington, D.C. Fisher works in the Recall Management and Technical Analysis Division (RMTAD), Domestic Operations Branch. RMTAD works with various FSIS program areas, industry and stakeholders to coordinate domestic and import food safety functions (e.g., recalls) in district offices across the United States. "My critical thinking and data-driven analyses used with the latest available scientific evidence and food production data with applications to statutes impact public health by ensuring a safe and wholesome national food supply," Fisher said.

Veterinary medicine and public health have always been a lifelong interest for Fisher. Early on, she was a student trainee in the pediatric ward of a local hospital as a high school student and a laboratory animal veterinary medical student/assistant at M.S. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. Fisher started her federal career in 2004 as a USDA 1890 National Scholar working in various program areas within FSIS, including the Office of Public Health Science (Eastern Laboratory) and in the Jackson District in a poultry processing plant. "Once I completed my Bachelors of Science in Agriculture at Southern University A&M College, and my Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree at Tuskegee University, I accepted a Veterinary Medical Officer position in headquarters. This position was a good fit for my background, interests, and experience," Fisher said.

Fisher says that she enjoys the daily impact she has in protecting the food supply. "It is truly an honor to uphold my veterinary oath and serve and protect the public in this capacity," Fisher said. She also states that she enjoys the people she works with. "Even though our staff is small, we



Photo contributed by Tempora Fisher, OFO.

work hard to successfully promote food safety," Fisher said. "My job involves a lot of communication with people throughout government, industry, and academia, so I enjoy the collaboration that accompanies that aspect of my job. One of my favorite experiences was giving a presentation on the FSIS recall process to a Chinese delegation who expressed having walked away with a better understanding of the process as a whole," she said.

In addition to her passion for public health, Fisher also has a passion for mentoring. Her message to her Agency colleagues is, "I believe that one should always take the time to mentor upcoming professionals in their field, even if you are an upcoming professional yourself. The success we come across in our personal and professional lives is due in part to someone taking the time to guide us through our everyday experiences. The Agency continues to make a huge impact in protecting public health through ensuring the safety of an ever-changing food system, and it will continue to do so by nurturing and sustaining talent," she said.

Fisher feels that the i-Impact initiative is helping to build a stronger FSIS team. "When you understand your individual role and how it links together with that of your colleagues, the team flourishes. When the team flourishes, the overall purpose of the organization--protecting public health--is upheld. When an organization flourishes, the world feels its impact," Fisher said.

In her time off, Fisher enjoys spending time with family and indulging in fine Creole cuisine from her home state of Louisiana. Fisher is also an accomplished musician whose most memorable instrumental and vocal performances have been with her family, who are also musicians, and with the church choir on a European gospel tour of France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Chen (Congresswoman Barbara Lee's office) and Carl Mayes. Pictured, background: employees from OPHS, OFO, OIEA and ARS. See more photos on page 11.

Photo contributed by Cheryl Henry, OIEA.

On October 11, the Office of Public Health Science (OPHS), along with the Office of Field Operations (OFO); the Office of Investigation, Enforcement, and Audit (OIEA); and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) celebrated the official opening of the new Western Laboratory at the USDA complex in Albany, Calif. The ceremony included the official ribbon cutting followed by a tour of the lab. Pictured, first row, from left: Yudhbir Sharma, Vivian Chen, Roberta Wagner, David Goldman, Andrew Hammond (ARS), Al Almanza, John Rivera, Howard Zhang, Allison Khroustalev, Max

New Version of Rosetta Stone Available Online and Now Accessible on Mobile Devices

*By Denise D. Gallman, OOEET
Phone: (301) 504-3346*

A new version of Rosetta Stone is now available with a new flexible, online language learning program with more than 30 languages. FSIS continues to offer full administrative access to Rosetta Stone features that include pre-designed lesson plans and tools that allow users to set their own direction.

FSIS has also acquired another version of Rosetta Stone called, "Enterprise." Enterprise features speech-recognition software; use of the immersion method to introduce new words and grammar concepts; and opportunities to interact with other learners with the help of a tutor. We now have 25 licenses available for this version.

The languages currently offered are: Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Dutch, English (British), English (American), Farsi, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese (Brazil), Russian,

Spanish (Spain), Spanish (Latin America), Swedish, Tagalog, Turkish and Vietnamese.

Rosetta Stone is also accessible via your mobile devices. The application offers you the experience of the same speaking, reading, grammar and pronunciation activities that you're practicing in the Rosetta Stone program on your computer. The app is free. Mobile device instructions will be provided once you have been granted a license.

With your supervisor's endorsement, FSIS employees can request to participate in the Rosetta Stone, self-paced on-line language instruction program. In total, OOEET has purchased 400 licenses, which are administered on a first-come, first-serve basis. Licenses are rotated every 120 days to allow maximum participation in the program. To participate in the program, talk with your supervisor about participating and complete the application. The application can be found at: <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/employee/training/eLearning/eLearning.jsp> or email RosettaStone@fsis.usda.gov for more information.

Atlanta

Introducing the Atlanta District Office

By Peggy Riek, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-7608

The Atlanta district, located in the southeastern United States, covers the states of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and two territories—Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The state of Georgia participates in the State Cooperative Inspection Talmadge-Aiken (TA) program, and South Carolina takes part in the Cross Utilization program.

The district employs a diverse workforce of 859 individuals who each day help the Agency accomplish its mission—protecting public health and preventing foodborne illness.

"We have employees in our district from all over the world who are dedicated to providing continuous inspection of meat, poultry and processed egg products while ensuring the safety of the U.S. food supply," said Resource Management Assistant Lesa Hardaway. "I especially like helping the inspectors with their travel arrangements here in the southeastern States and also in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to provide relief work or assist while employees are on leave or on detail."

Atlanta District Manager Phyllis Adams said, "District employees value their ability to work collaboratively with one another as a team, no matter what the challenges, to ensure that the Agency's mission is being accomplished. If an issue arises, team members feel very comfortable talking with fellow colleagues to address matters together. Most importantly, it makes me feel good when I see our employees keeping food safety at the forefront of the Agency's mission and knowing they will get the job done."

Within the Atlanta district, there are 644 federally inspected establishments, which include 58 red meat slaughter plants; 45 poultry slaughter plants, of which nine are New Poultry Inspection System establishments; three egg processing plants; and one catfish slaughter establishment (with more to come under FSIS inspection). The district also has 176 establishments that operate under dual jurisdiction with the Food and Drug Administration. Additionally, there are 39 custom-exempt operators which operate throughout Florida and Puerto Rico.

Establishments in the Atlanta district slaughter all species of red meat—cattle (cull, fat and veal), swine (market hogs and some feral hogs), sheep and goats. They also process poultry (broilers and fowl), ducks, goose, guinea fowl, ratites, squab and turkeys. The district also has poultry establishments that conduct halal, Buddhist (eviscerated) and Confucian (non-eviscerated) ritual slaughter. Additionally, the district also processes a great variety of processed products, including empanadas and chorizo-style sausage.

Supervisory Enforcement and Investigations and Analysis Officer (SEIAO) John Zeigler feels his work is exciting. "Each day you may have a to-do list, but anything can happen to change your plans for the day," said Zeigler. "As an EIAO, I am involved in the Agency's mission to ensure that consumers do not receive unadulterated product. Our work may even involve all 10 districts, especially during recalls. Through our inspection efforts, when we identify and locate unsafe food products, we immediately take action to remove the products from store shelves."



Photo contributed by Phyllis Adams, OFO.

Together, these team members in the Atlanta district office provide support for employees working in South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Pictured, front row, from left: Ghias Mughal, Dennis Reisen, Phyllis Adams, C. Jan Brown. Pictured, back row, from left: Beverly Winston, Kimberley Beall, Evette Manrique, Corliss Green-Dixon, E. Bryan Surgeon, Brenda Jones, Andre Pierce, Janie Law, John Ziegler. Not pictured: Debra Halteman, Gayle Yantzi, Lesa Hardaway, Rick Halteman.

Continued on page 12...

SNAPSHOTS



Portland, Ore.

On March 18, Assistant U.S. Attorney Hartley West (pictured, center) presented an award to Investigators Ryan Rogers (pictured, left) and Jessie Barragan (pictured right) for their efforts in an investigation that led to an 8.7 million-pound Class 1 recall of meat products and a conviction for preparing, selling and transporting adulterated meat food products in commerce. Photo contributed by Ryan Rogers, OIEA.

Mexico City, Mexico

On October 18-19, FSIS and USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), in collaboration with Mexico's Servicio Nacional de Sanidad, Inocuidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria (SENASICA), held a two-day seminar for meat inspection officials from Mexico. The purpose of the seminar was to familiarize SENASICA's inspectors with FSIS inspection regulations and procedures. The seminar included presentations about FSIS microbiological and residue sampling programs; safe and suitable ingredients used in the production of meat, poultry and egg products; food defense; FSIS labeling; import inspection procedures; equivalence and the self-reporting tool; and the New Poultry Inspection System. FSIS' Francisco Gonzalez and Juan Rodriguez conducted the seminar. Photo contributed by Marduk I. Ramírez, SENASICA.



FROM THE **FIELD**

Princess Anne, Md.

On October 6, Ahmad Jilani (pictured) represented FSIS at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) annual fall career fair. UMES has a strong emphasis on agriculture, with programs such as food science and technology, and animal and poultry science. Jilani provided attendees with information on the application process, benefits and potential career paths with USDA and FSIS. Photo contributed by Ahmad Jilani, OFO.



Oswego, Ill.

On September 22, EIAOs Ramon Cana Alvarez and Josue Castillo performed outreach activities at a Jewel-Osco store. Ms. Elizabeth Holtz, Assistant Store Director for Jewel-Osco, joined in the outreach effort. Pictured, from left: Elizabeth Holtz, Ramon Cana Alvarez, Josue Castillo. Photo contributed by Ramon Cana Alvarez, OFO.

Forest Park, Ga.

On September 29, processing inspectors took part in a "Lunch and Learn" event. Front Line Supervisor Donna Savage facilitated the inspection team's training session as part of a webinar discussing the new labeling requirements for raw meat that contains added solutions. Pictured, first row, from left: Billy Peru, Harold Davis, Donald Roth, Yvette Assem, Dinon Phillips. Pictured, second row, from left: Trevell Stanbrough, Donna Savage, James Robinson. Photo contributed by Donna Savage, OFO.



Safety Corner: Annual Hearing Tests

By Curtis Wallis, OM
Phone: (510) 769-5750

The Agency has recently been asked by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to provide evidence of compliance with the Hearing Conservation Standard during investigations at a number of establishments. Two important components of this OSHA standard are required annually. They are the requirement for employers to provide employees with access to hearing tests and the requirement for employees to get training about hearing conservation.

Annual Hearing Tests

The Agency provides access to hearing tests to field employees through various means depending on location. One option is to get a hearing test at a Federal Occupational Health (FOH) clinic. There are more than 130 FOH clinics located throughout the country. Another option is to use one of the many private companies that the Agency contracts

with for hearing services. Supervisors should contact Lynn McGourty in the Office of Management at Lynn.Mcgourty@fsis.usda.gov for more information about where field employees can get a hearing test.

Training

All employees who are required to wear hearing protection are to complete annual hearing conservation training. Employees may complete AgLearn course "Hearing Conservation" to fulfill this requirement. Supervisors are to make the training material available to all employees who do not have access to a computer or email. Other training material, such as a PowerPoint presentation, that may be used to satisfy the annual training requirement is available from the Occupational Safety and Health Specialist for the district.

For more information about Hearing Conservation, please contact the Occupational Safety and Health specialist for your district.

ASKFISH

What information exactly is required on a catfish product label during the transition period? Our plant does not have an old inventory of labels because they print their own each day as needed. Does this require them to be in full compliance with FSIS labeling regulations now or do they still have until Sept. 1, 2017?

Labeling requirements for Siluriformes fish and fish products can be found in 9 CFR 541.7, which also reference 9 CFR 317. These regulations provide information for what is required on the label. In addition, Notice 23-16, Attachment 2 (page 12), provides inspection personnel with directions on how to address labeling deficiencies. Specifically, depending on the labeling deficiency observed, this could result in either the issuance of a Memorandum of Interview or a Noncompliance Record during the 18-month transitional period.

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Abney, Dr. Pamela A., CSO	Albertville, AL	13	McIntyre, William B., SVMO	California, MO	20
Allen, Thomas A., CSI	Benton, KY	25	Merrett, Frieda, CSI	Santo, TX	23
Bodiford, Loretta, CSI	Morganton, NC	24	Miranda, Roberto, CSI	Pembroke Pines, FL	20
Bryant, Virginia D., FI	Sumter, SC	17	Moss, Max R., CSI	Laurel, MS	16
Conner, Barbara S., CSI	Dinuba, CA	24	Renneke, Daniel C., CSI	Monticello, MN	30
Gray, Mary L., VMO	Athens, GA	28	Rios, Jr., Angel, Complnc.	Guayanabo, PR	36
Green, Gail T., FI-S	Perry, GA	10	Invstgtr.		
Halterman, David L., CSI	Lumber Bridge, NC	16	Robinson, James P., CSI	Newnan, GA	40
Malone, Linda A., Mgmt. & Prog. Asst.	Dallas, TX	32	Santiago-Mirabal, Yasmin L., FI	Jacksonville, FL	30
			Woodard, Card G., FI-S	Hillsdale, IL	30

Federal Benefits Open Season Ends December 12, 2016

By Burt Housman, OM
Phone: (800) 370-3747

The annual open season gives Federal employees and retirees the opportunity to review their plan choices and make changes. It also allows eligible employees to enroll for coverage. Employees have until Mon., Dec. 12, 2016, to make changes to the following programs participating in the annual Federal Benefits Open Season:

Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Programs:

You can enroll in, change or cancel an existing enrollment in a health plan under FEHB.

Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP): You can enroll in, change, or cancel an existing enrollment in a dental plan or the vision plan under FEDVIP.

Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS):

You can enroll in a flexible spending account health care and/or dependent care account under the FSAFEDS program. Unlike with other programs, employees MUST re-enroll in FSAFEDS each year to participate. Enrollments DO NOT carry over year to year.

For more information, go to:

OPM's website: <http://www.opm.gov/insure/health>

FSIS Intranet: <https://inside.fsis.usda.gov/fsis/emp/static/employee/benefits/healthcare/openSeason/openSeason.jsp>

Feel free to contact me or any other Benefits Specialist at the HRO Employee Services Section at (800) 370- 3747, Option 3. The Employee Personal Page (EPP) link for FEHB changes for Open Season will close on Dec. 12, 2016. If you make a change on EPP, PLEASE DO NOT send a hard copy to HRO.

All hard copy election forms (SF-2809) need to be completed and submitted to the HRO Benefits team by Dec. 12, 2016.

Fax to: (612) 370-2062

Mail to: USDA, FSIS

HRO-EMPLOYEE SERVICES SECTION

Butler Square West

N. 6th Street, Suite 420C100

Minneapolis, MN 55403

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **Directive 5720.3, Methodology for Performing Scheduled and Targeted Reviews of State Meat and Poultry Inspection Programs - Revision 2**
 - **Directive 7120.1, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry and Egg Products - Revision 38**
 - **Directive 8010.1, Methodology for Conducting In-Commerce Surveillance Activities - Revision 5**
 - **Directive 8091.2, Procedures for the Hazard Identification Team**
 - **Directive 13,000.3, Responding in the Public Health Information System to Industry Appeal of a Non-Compliance Record - Revision 1**
- *Administrative issues were also published:*
 - **Notice 84-16, Annual Notice of Right to Request Union Representation**
 - **Notice 85-16, Employee Line of Sight and the Agency's Strategic and Annual Plans; Strategic Plan Worksheet**
 - **Notice 86-16, Federal Employee Health Benefits 2016 Open Season**
 - **Notice 87-16, Holidays in 2017**

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FSIS employees have seen themselves and their colleagues highlighted in *The Beacon* in the *Photos of the Month* and *Snapshots from the Field*, which showcased outreach events, trainings, and important meetings and events around the country. The *Faces of Food Safety* columns continued to highlight the many ways our employees contribute to protecting public health through their passion, impressive work experience and educational background. *Beacon* readers were introduced to colleagues working in a variety of roles, to include Consumer Safety Inspector, Policy Writer, Microbiologist, and many more. We got to know many of the people who make up FSIS, and learned about the unique skills and perspectives they bring to the Agency to help accomplish our important mission, also demonstrating how those positions impact public health.

The Beacon reinforced diversity as a top priority for FSIS and USDA (including direct statements from Secretary Vilsack and Deputy Under Secretary Almanza), and highlighted one example of the efforts underway--recruiting and training recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

A Look Back at The Beacon in 2016

for long-vacant and hard-to-fill food inspector positions in remote areas of the country.

There were four issues of *The Beacon* that featured the i-Impact program with previews, explanatory articles, and the "i-Impact in Action" photo spreads. We also provided details about training presentations that were taking place around the country. i-Impact training has been a tremendous success with FSIS employees, with many providing feedback saying it has made it clearer than ever how each of us impacts food safety. Looking ahead, the Agency is preparing for the next i-Impact training, taking into consideration employee feedback and making updates to the information to align with the new Strategic Plan.

After an eventful 2016, *The Beacon* will be here for you next year as well, chronicling all that 2017 brings with informative and helpful articles highlighting the great work being done by everyone to protect public health. Have a food safe holiday season and a Happy New Year.

Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

The Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (LTP) allows federal employees to donate annual leave for use by other federal employees who are experiencing a medical emergency. To be considered for assistance via the LTP, applicants must: 1) be a current federal employee; 2) obtain approval from their supervisor to be absent from work due to the medical emergency for which they are applying to the LTP program; 3) be experiencing a personal or family medical emergency that results in serious financial hardship for the employee because he/she has insufficient accrued leave to cover the absence; 4) submit a completed Form AD-1046 and provide a personal statement and a signed medical document that explains the medical emergency and the duration of the medical emergency; and 5) have the Form AD-1046 signed by their supervisor. Additional Information and forms can be found on USDA's SharePoint site at LTP. Send an email to sonja.tomlinson@fsis.usda.gov for assistance.

Second Annual "Count Your Steps" Will Resume in January 2017

By Kerrie Tao, OM
Phone: (202) 403-0422

The Office of Management's Employee Safety, Health and Wellness Staff (ESWHS) has announced that the Second Annual Count Your Steps Challenge will take place from Jan. 1 to Feb. 28, 2017. The top five steppers will win prizes and recognition for their efforts. In preparation for the challenge, ESWHS is giving away "Be Well Kits" which include items such as a waist tape measure, a stretching poster, a pedometer, a healthy eating reference tool, and "The

Mayo Clinic Guide to Self-Care." The deadline to sign up is December 30.

During the challenge, participants will receive a weekly motivational email from the Work/Life and Wellness Group to help boost productivity and progress. Please check the upcoming editions of the Wednesday Newslines for more information on the Count Your Steps Challenge.

To sign up for the Challenge, get information on how to get your Be Well Kit, or if you have any questions, please contact Kerrie Tao, Wellness Program Coordinator, at worklifeandwellness@fsis.usda.gov.

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More Photos from the CFC Breakfast



FSIS employees come together for the Combined Federal Campaign's Breakfast with Executives event on October 27. Photo contributed by LeighAnn Acree, OCIO.

i-Impact is an FSIS internal communications initiative to help our employees connect to the mission of our Agency and demonstrate how every single employee has an impact on food safety and public health. To learn more about i-Impact, visit www.fsis.usda.gov/i-impact.

>>> **RECALLS**

Nov. 3	Missouri firm recalls beef products produced without the benefit of inspection.
Nov. 6	Wisconsin firm recalls chicken products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
Nov. 8	Wisconsin firm recalls beef and sausage products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
Nov. 8	New York firm recalls egg roll product due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Nov. 9	Missouri firm recalls beef products produced without the benefit of inspection.
Nov. 12	Missouri firm recalls ready-to-eat chicken breast products that may be undercooked.
Nov. 15	California firm recalls beef Shepherd's Pie due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Nov. 17	North Carolina firm recalls pork barbeque products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Nov. 17	Iowa firm recalls dried pork products due to insufficient dehydration.
Nov. 18	Georgia firm recalls ready-to-eat chicken breast products that may be undercooked.
Nov. 22	Iowa firm recalls products incorrectly labeled as pork gravy due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Nov. 22	Kentucky firm recalls roasted chicken quarters due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Nov. 22	New York firm recalls ready-to-eat chicken chili soup due to possible <i>Listeria</i> contamination.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

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The Atlanta district experiences staffing difficulties like most other districts, but especially at the food inspector level. "During this past year, we have been challenged with trying to reach out to prospective employees to look at the Food Safety and Inspection Service as the agency of choice and a great place to work," said Adams. Consequently, the district continues to conduct outreach at recruitment events and career fairs to draw applicants to the Agency. A large number of people apply for positions via USAJOBS.gov, but

Introducing the Atlanta District Office

after review of the applications, few may qualify. As a result, the district is rethinking how to better market, reach out and make a presence in areas where the establishments' locations are, especially in hard-to-fill areas like central Florida.

While appropriately focused on the district's core food safety mission, employees have also been actively involved in the i-Impact and Feds Feed Families initiatives and developing the second edition of an employee cookbook, *The Tastes of Diversity*.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

January 2017



Jackson district personnel pose together during a recent i-Impact workshop. The group, with a combined 165 years of FSIS experience, shared their career stories, including how they started at the Agency and how they have been able to contribute to the food safety mission.

(From left) Donna Harrelson, Brian Westbrook, Bennie Noel, Christina Walker, James Christensen, William Richardson and Shannon Ridgedell.

Photo contributed by Christina Walker, OFO.

Inside This Issue

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.

A Glance Back at 2016

By Leo O'Drudy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-8693

Last month we looked back at a year of *The Beacon*. This month we broaden our scope to look at FSIS' accomplishments in 2016. Throughout the year, across all program areas, in every part of the country, a common and overarching theme is clear: FSIS employees continue to protect public health and are making significant progress in the fight against foodborne illness.

No review of the year can possibly overlook the two biggest events of 2016 for FSIS employees: the release of the new Strategic Plan for 2017-2021, and the launch of i-Impact. i-Impact has resounded with employees, making clear how each individual contributes to the mission of the Agency. It is in the process of being updated so that each employee's "line of sight" will reflect the new streamlined and focused Strategic Plan.

Of course, our primary focus as an Agency is not only looking inward on what affects us,

but even more so on what affects the safety of the public we serve. And there we have much to be proud of in 2016.

Announced in February, the new food safety pathogen reduction performance standards for chicken parts and comminuted poultry were described by Deputy Under Secretary Al Almanza as "one of our greatest developments this year." The standards are designed to reduce *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* in ground chicken and turkey products, as well as in raw chicken breasts, legs and wings, and our science-based risk assessment estimates that implementation of these standards could lead to an average of 50,000 averted illnesses annually.

FSIS also made significant improvement in food safety for beef products, with the implementation starting in May of the new rule on mechanically tenderized beef labeling. By requiring that such labels contain validated cooking instructions to thoroughly cook the interior of the beef, FSIS is helping to ensure that any pathogens that were pushed deep into the interior of raw beef by needles and blades are destroyed. Both

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The Beacon Mission Statement

The Beacon newsletter is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education to provide relevant mission critical information to all FSIS employees. The Beacon provides employees information about the Agency's proposed regulations, policies, and programs; training opportunities; and important employee welfare initiatives to connect employees to the mission and build a cohesive community.

The Beacon enables employees to stay up to date with the latest events and see the Agency's mission executed in action.

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Sarah Lichtman Peggy Riek

Deadline for submissions
is the first day of the
previous month.

February issue – due Jan. 1
March issue – due Feb. 1
April issue – due May 1

Submit contributions to
beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 690-3881
Fax: (202) 815-2707

We reserve the right to edit
all submissions for content,
clarity and length.

The FSIS Management Council

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William C. "Bill" Smith	Roberta Wagner

Deputy Under Secretary's Column

Happy New Year

Happy New Year! A lot has happened over the past year, and I hope you enjoy looking back on some of these memories in this issue's "Year in Pictures." More than anything this year, I've enjoyed getting to know all of you throughout the field on visits and during various events throughout the country.



Alfred V. Almanza

I'm wishing you all the best for 2017 and look forward to continuing our work toward our food safety modernization goals. The work we do to ensure food safety and protect consumers is successful because of your commitment and dedication every day. Thank you for your hard work and cheers to 2017!

See more pictures on
Pages 12 & 13



SABRINA KING

Ensuring Food Safety and Motivating FSIS Employees

By Emeka Ndolo, OPAE
Phone: (202) 720-9945

Sabrina King is an Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officer (EIAO), serving the Office of Field Operations (OFO) in the Atlanta district. As an EIAO, King performs food safety assessments (FSAs) in slaughter and processing facilities of various sizes. Focusing on the design of establishments' food safety systems and scientific support for processes and methodologies, King ensures that regulatory requirements are being met by industry, decreasing the likelihood of product contamination and/or adulteration.

"Carrying out FSAs has a positive impact on public health, because through the in-depth analysis of records, programs and written procedures, we are able to assess the safety of products produced at a particular establishment and take any action deemed necessary. This works to prevent unsafe products from entering commerce and keep the food supply safe for consumers," King said.

King began her food safety career while still in college. She needed a job during the summer, so she took a quality control position as a Yield Clerk at a small slaughter facility. At one point during her time there she was approached by the establishment's Inspector-in-Charge, who encouraged her to become a food inspector. She was intrigued by the work she had observed the processing inspector perform and after doing some research she applied to work at FSIS. She accepted a position as a Food Inspector, with the intention of only staying for a year or two. "Needless to say, I enjoyed the work within FSIS so much that after more than 18 years, I am still here," King said.

King's favorite part of the job is knowing that the work she does saves lives every day. She also says that having the opportunity to work with such a diverse group of colleagues, holding a variety of positions from the field to headquarters

and across different program areas as reasons why she enjoys working at FSIS. "Being able to conduct outreach sessions within the Agency, as well as externally, opens the lines of communication and promotes collaboration with industry and academia. By far, having the chance to work on multiple 'special projects' has provided me the greatest joy and the ability to explore my talents while on the job," King said.

As a first-time i-Impact trainer, King faced some challenges

at the beginning of the training sessions, which made her skeptical, but the enthusiasm and excitement that followed at the end really motivated her. "I knew that sharing the materials and my personal experiences had a positive effect on some of the employees," King



Photo contributed by Sabrina King, OFO.

said. "The emails and phone calls following the i-Impact sessions gave me such satisfaction. Having held a position as a Food Inspector made it easy for me to relate to what employees were feeling and share with them a different way of seeing things," King said. As a trainer, i-Impact has revealed a hidden talent that King had not noticed before, which is the ability to communicate a subject matter that might otherwise seem uninteresting, in such a way that it peaks the interest of the audience. "As an employee, i-Impact has shown me that the Agency is truly transforming. The understanding that transparency and open communication will lead to increased morale and a more positive work environment is what makes the "i-Impact" concept work," King said.

King is also a small business owner (she owns a printing, crafts and graphic design service), a caregiver of two elderly persons, and a single parent (with a son, a daughter and a great-nephew). "I enjoy attending worship services, going to the race track, working around the house, and 'flipping' vehicles, where I buy, repair and restore and then put them up for sale. Some of my other hobbies include sewing, decorating, hair braiding, baking and crafting," King said.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



On September 16, Nora Pihkala of the Office of Policy and Program Development visited a Foster Farms establishment in Fresno, Calif. The purpose of this visit was to observe slaughter and processing of raw poultry products. It was organized by the Alameda district office and facilitated by Frontline Supervisor Sara Leisgang. It was one of 11 establishments visited that week to inform policy development and implementation, including FSIS sampling procedures. (From left) Pamela Fields (OFO), Nora Pihkala (OPPD), and Manjinder Bath (OFO).

Photo contributed by Nora Pihkala, OPPD.

CID Investigator from Southeast Region Participates in Food Emergency Training

*By William Kaile, OIEA
Phone: (954) 218-0224*

On Nov. 15-16, 2016, Investigator William Tirado participated in "A Coordinated Response to Food Emergencies: Practice and Execution" training held at the Food and Drug Administration's San Juan district office in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The training was provided by the National Center for Biomedical Research and Training (NCBRT).

The NCBRT began at Louisiana State University as the Academy of Counter-Terrorist Education through a small subcontract with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Domestic Preparedness. The original charge was to develop a single course for law enforcement and emergency response personnel.

Course instructors are experienced state emergency managers that have responded to food emergencies in which the Food Safety and Inspection Service has been involved. Many cases have been represented by staff in the Compliance and Investigations Division (CID) of the Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit.

The training focuses on early detection, which is crucial in limiting the consequences of a food emergency such as human-made disasters, foodborne outbreaks or food



Photo contributed by Kilbert Paz, NCBRT.

Pictured, from left: Jeff Witte, New Mexico Secretary of Agriculture; Joe Reardon, Assistant Commissioner Consumer Protection, North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; John Tilden, Food Safety and Planning Response, Michigan Department of Agriculture; and William Tirado.

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ALAMEDA

Introducing the Alameda District Office

By Peggy Riek, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-7608

The Alameda district consists of the states of Arizona, California and Nevada. Establishments within California are often situated in heavily populated locations, whereas Arizona and Nevada establishments tend to be in remote areas. On March 7, 2016, as part of USDA's Blueprint for Stronger Service, FSIS' Office of Field Operations district office, the Office of Investigation, Audit and Enforcement and the Western Laboratory (December Photo of the Month from *The Beacon*) have all moved from an independent facility in Alameda, Calif., to a USDA facility in Albany, Calif. The Alameda district office employs 541 individuals and is considered to have the most diverse workforce of all 10 FSIS districts.

Alameda Management Analyst Necolia Chambers says, "I find my job to be interesting and exciting because I have the opportunity each day to work with people from different ethnic backgrounds who represent the American public. I assist owners, managers, Chief Executive Officers and Chief Operating Officers of small businesses, as well as large corporations, which produce many items like beef jerky, egg rolls, chicken nuggets and bacon. By assisting them with obtaining inspection services, I am actually helping to prepare them for producing safe, wholesome and correctly labeled and packaged food products," as well as helping them to fulfill their dreams of owning a business.

Since 1995, Alameda District Manager Dr. Yudhbir Sharma has been known for his personal philosophy and continues to share it today with new employees during orientation. "We are the eyes and ears for the American public. They buy products with the confidence that it is inspected and passed and they feed those products to their loved ones (children, elderly and even the sick). It is a trust that the American public has in you and me, and in order to maintain that trust, we have

a moral, legal and ethical responsibility to perform our best every day," Sharma said.

Sharma and his deputy district managers value and respect all Agency employees—the real assets who accomplish the FSIS mission. "We strive to be proactive in addressing issues and follow the Agency's rules, regulations, and established policies and procedures in addressing inspection and personnel issues," Sharma said.

Alameda district Enforcement, Investigations and Analysis Officer Cheryl Henry says, "The icing on the cake is coming to work in the Alameda district—an amazing place. I am a firm believer that attitude reflects leadership. The attitude of employees who work in the Alameda district is a direct reflection of the support and trust we have with our supervisors." She said, "As an i-Impact trainer, I am proud to tell people how my job and that of my coworkers' impacts food safety and supports the FSIS mission."

The Alameda district has a large population of establishment operators from varying ethnic backgrounds who produce a variety of food products to meet the

Continued on page 15...



Photo contributed by Matthew Heman, OCIO.

The Alameda district office staff provides support for employees working in Arizona, California and Nevada. Pictured, front row, from left: Michael Khoshaba, Tutu Sidhu, Mary Tomsha, Mary May, Amy Leider, Yudhbir Sharma, Virginia Felix, Suyin Cai, Michelle Tiojanco, Virginia Molano. Pictured, back row, from left: Al Ahmed, Necolia Chambers, Abdalla Amin, Sheryl Beckett, Cheryl Henry, Eryn Worthing.

SNAPSHOTS



Columbus, Ind.

On Nov. 21, 2016, CSIs William Imler III (pictured, left) and Angelina Schile (pictured, right) performed food safety outreach at a local grocery store. They handed out “Be Food Safe” water bottles, lunch totes and other various educational materials to shoppers. The CSIs also answered consumers’ questions about proper cooking temperatures for turkeys and other food safety questions, just in time for the holiday season. Photo contributed by Angelina Schile, OFO.

Evergreen, Colo.

On Nov. 21, 2016, Investigator Jaime Murphy provided information about food safety to grocery shoppers at a local King Soopers. She talked with shoppers about food safety and how to avoid getting a foodborne illness during the holiday season. She passed out food safety resources and answered questions on how to defrost a turkey, what temperature it should be cooked at and what to do with the leftovers. Murphy talked to some shoppers who were cooking a turkey for the first time, and others who had cooked many turkeys but needed help remembering the safe internal cooking temperature. Photo contributed by Jamie Murphy, OA.



Albuquerque, N.M.

On Nov. 14, 2016, OIEA Investigator Guillermo Orquiz attended his daughter Natalia Orquiz’s (pictured, right) 4th grade class for career day. Guillermo presented food safety information and information about his job to the class and parents. He also provided outreach materials, including insulated lunch bags, food safety magnets and brochures about how to properly cook a turkey—just in time for Thanksgiving. Photo contributed by Guillermo Orquiz, OIEA.



FROM THE **FIELD**



Buffalo, N.Y.

On Nov. 2, 2016, Northeast OIEA-CID Investigator Kari Skiver and Supervisory Investigator Debbie Dietz represented FSIS at the 2016 Port of Buffalo Trade Day at the Harbor Center Ice Rinks and Marriott Hotel. Trade Day is a collaborative event between U.S. Customs and Border Protection, other participating government agencies and the Canadian Consulate; the purpose is to give trade partners (importers, exporters, carriers and brokers) a chance to meet and speak with representatives from various regulatory agencies. (From left) Margaret Pelczynski, APHIS, Kari Skiver, Debbie Dietz. Photo contributed by Kari Skiver, OIEA.



Huntsville, Ala.

On Nov. 16, 2016, EIAO Gerry Tidwell (pictured, left) and Dr. Pablo Nieves (pictured, right) attended the Hiring Our Heroes job fair event on behalf of FSIS. More than 29 veterans; active duty military members; guard and reserve members; and military spouses visited the FSIS table to get information on job openings and FSIS' food safety mission. Photo contributed by Pablo Nieves, OFO.

Little Rock, Ark.

On Oct. 29, 2016, EIAO Marcia Lucas; her husband, Dr. John Lucas; and CSIs Alicia "Denise" Hickman and Paula Henson participated in outreach activities at the 6th Annual Arkansas Cornbread Festival. The festival had about 3,500 participants, many of whom stopped by to pick up food safety information between tasting various sweet and savory cornbreads around the festival. (From left) John Lucas, Paula Henson. Photo contributed by Alicia "Denise" Hickman, OFO.



Annual Safety Requirements

By Michael Lyons, OM
Phone: (402) 344-5145

1. Lockout/Tagout Program:

A. Training: Training must be provided to inspection personnel before they perform pre-operational process verification inspection, verification of pre-operational or operational corrective action (refer to FSIS Directive 4791.11, Rev. 1 Part IX).

B. Inspection: An inspection of the energy control procedures must be conducted annually (refer to FSIS Directive 4791.11, Rev. 1 Part XII).

C. Retraining: Retraining must be provided whenever a change occurs in the employee's assignment, machines, equipment, energy control procedures or processes. Additional training is also required if the annual inspection reveals a deviation or inadequacy in the employee's knowledge or use of the approved procedure (refer to FSIS Directive 4791.11, Rev. 1 Part XIII). Annual refresher training is not required unless requested by management.

2. Hearing Conservation Program:

A. Noise Monitoring: Monitoring must be repeated if there is a change in production processes, equipment or controls that increase noise exposures (refer to FSIS Directive 4791.1 XIII. B.)

B. Audiometric Testing: Annual audiometric testing must be offered to inspection personnel who work in environments that are at or exceed 85 decibels.

C. Annual Training: Annual training must be provided to inspection personnel who work in environments that are at or exceed 85 decibels.

3. Workplace Safety and Health Inspections:

A. Offices: Conduct annual office safety and health

inspection using Form 4791.23, Safety and Health Inspection Checklist for Office Facilities, and post completed form on bulletin board (refer to Directive 4791.13, Part One).

B. Establishment Facilities: Conduct annual plant facility safety and health inspection using Form 4791.24, Safety and Health Inspection Checklist for Plant Facilities, and post completed form on bulletin board (refer to Directive 4791.13, Part One).

4. The OSHA 300, 300A and 301 Forms:

A. OSHA Recordkeeping begins January 1, using the OSHA 300 and 301 forms. Post the OSHA 300A summary page February 1st to April 30th from the previous calendar year.

5. Hazard Communication Program Training:

A. Training must be provided to employees exposed, or potentially exposed, to hazardous chemicals. Relief employees are also to be trained when entering a new establishment. For example, if an establishment uses Peroxyacetic acid (PAA) as an antimicrobial, all IPP must receive training about the hazards of exposure to PAA. Typically this training is accomplished by reviewing the Safety Data Sheet. Additional training must be provided whenever a new hazardous chemical is introduced to the work area (refer to FSIS Directive 4791.5, Part V).

6. Occupant Emergency Plan Training:

A. Training must be provided when the plan is first developed; when new employees, relief employees and visitors come to the workplace; when new equipment, materials or processes are introduced and when emergency procedures are updated or changed (refer to FSIS Directive 4791.6, Rev. 2, Part XVI).

If you have any questions regarding annual safety requirements, please contact the Occupational Safety and Health Specialist assigned to your district.

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adulterations that affect the food chain. FSIS plays a significant role in responding to food emergencies, and this performance-level course emphasizes the need for food emergency response personnel and industry to enhance

their response. The training opportunity also helped OIEA investigators to and meet to their local, State and Federal counterparts and gather contact information.

Food Emergency Training

Performance Management Training Now Available on AgLearn

By Julaine McCabe, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8598

The Office of Human Resources (OHR) is excited to announce the recent development of our new Performance Management Training Platform. The platform was established to provide year-round performance management training through a series of courses that focus on the five phases of the Performance Management System. The courses are now available online through AgLearn. In compliance with Departmental Regulation 4040-430, all employees and supervisors are required to receive Performance Management training within the first 3 months of entering on duty or assuming a supervisory position, and refresher training at least every 2 years.

Completion of any of the following four courses meets the Performance Management training requirement:

- *FSIS-Performance Management - Planning*
- *FSIS-Performance Management - Monitoring and Developing*
- *FSIS-Performance Management - Evaluating*
- *FSIS-Performance Management - Recognizing and Rewarding Employees*

Each of these courses includes an overview of the Performance Management System for employees and supervisors, and provides knowledge and strategies to use during each phase.

OHR has also developed *FSIS-Performance Management - Writing Effective Accomplishment Reports*. While completion of this course does not meet the Performance Management training requirement, it provides information on the steps for employees to use to write effective accomplishment reports in order to demonstrate that they meet the expectations in their performance plan. We encourage employees not to wait until the end of the performance year to start creating their accomplishment reports.

The courses can be accessed by searching the AgLearn catalog for the specific course title. Employees who complete the training in AgLearn will automatically receive credit. Hard-copy training modules of each of the courses are available upon request. Supervisors can request hard copies by sending an email to PerformanceManagement@fsis.usda.gov and indicating which of the courses they are requesting. Employees who complete the hard copy training will receive credit once the Training Affirmation form is completed and submitted to their supervisor. Supervisors are to email all completed Training Affirmation forms to PerformanceManagement@fsis.usda.gov.

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A Glance Back at 2016

consumers cooking at home and eating out at restaurants, are safer as a result of this important reform.

Consumers of retail deli products have reason to be happy about 2016, as FSIS has been following through on its best practices guidance for controlling *Listeria* in that sector with a nationwide survey seeking to learn whether the guidance is really being used. Stay tuned for more on this effort.

In March, the Agency began exercising jurisdiction over Siluriformes fish. Although the transition process will not be completed until Sept. 1, 2017, FSIS has implemented the program smoothly and taken on these new responsibilities very capably.

Among our top priorities is ensuring humane handling of animals at slaughter. The year brought improvements in humane handling for veal calves, with the exclusion of non-ambulatory calves from the food supply. Previously they had

been allowed to enter the food supply if they could walk after being warmed and rested, but FSIS found potential for inhumane treatment, and enacted policy to ensure humane handling of these calves.

As important as strengthening regulations, upgrading practices, and tightening standards are, however, we must also make sure that establishments, especially small and very small ones, can keep up with it all and succeed. This year, the Office of Outreach, Employee Education, and Training expanded their outreach to small and very small plants with the new Small Plant Help Desk Virtual Representative to answer questions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

As we move into 2017, FSIS employees can be confident that we will build on the achievements of a successful 2016 and—guided in our work by the new 2017-2021 Strategic Plan—continue to protect the public.

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Ahmad, Mustaq, SVMO	Salisbury, Md.	35	Karczynski, Carmen, SVMO	Chattanooga, Tenn.	20
Akinleye, Dottie M., Bud. Analy.	Washington, D.C.	43	Louck, Linda L., FI-S	Monmouth, Ill.	15
Armstrong, Patricia, FI	Nashville, Ark.	18	Maltby, John A., SVMO	Huntingburg, Ind.	33
Assem, Yvette A., CSI	Lake City, Ga.	31	Marquez, Vincent S., Compl Invst	Alameda, Ca.	38
Backes, Lynn M., FI-S	Melrose, Minn.	9	McCafferty, James N., CSI	Great Falls, Mont.	30
Bailey, Barbara K., FI-S	Grannis, Ark.	32	Miranda, Maria N., Mgmt Analy.	Washington, D.C.	39
Bell, Milton W., CSI	Collinsville, Ala.	40	Nichols, Richard A., FI-S	Plainwell, Mich.	32
Burns, Randal K., FI-S	Ottumwa, Iowa	13	Pelinsky, Carl E., CSI	North East, Pa.	40
Busch III, Alfred G., SVMO	Hammond, La.	32	Perez, Jose I., CSI	St. Petersburg, Fla.	32
Cherry, Faye M., CSI	Dudley, N.C.	38	Pierce, Jefferson, CSO	Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.	41
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Florida Man Charged with Unlawful Sale of Horse Meat

By José E. Pereira Jr., OIEA
Phone: (954) 578-1404

Investigators from the Compliance and Investigations Division (CID) of the Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit in the Southeast Region, along with the Miami-Dade Police Department and State Attorney's Office, worked together in an undercover operation that resulted in the arrest of the owner of Manuel Ranch in Hialeah, Fla., on Nov. 18, 2016.

The Miami-Dade Police Department charged the owner of Manuel Ranch with the unlawful sale of horse meat. The undercover investigation conducted by Miami-Dade Police Department and USDA resulted in the purchase of several packages of unidentified meat. CID Investigators submitted the unidentified meat to the Eastern laboratory in Atlanta, where it was confirmed to be from equine species.

"The collaboration between my office, the Miami-Dade Police Department and USDA has been essential in the first successful infiltration at this level, into the extremely close-knit and secretive world of an illegal horse meat operation in Miami-Dade County," State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle said in a statement. "This unregulated slaughter of

horses and uninspected meat presents a real safety and food security issue that puts lives in jeopardy and our agricultural community at risk."



Pictured, from left: Miami-Dade Detective Lazaro Santos; José Pereira; Mark Tabb; Miami-Dade Lieutenant Richard Garcia; Miami-Dade Sargent Richard Zahalka; Miami-Dade Detective Marcus Lois; William Kaile; and Miami-Dade Detective Mario Fernandez.

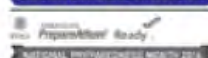
Photo contributed by Detective José Suarez, Miami-Dade Police Department.

FSIS 2017 Annual Plan

The FSIS 2017 Annual Plan (AP), which parallels our newly released FSIS 2017-2021 Strategic Plan (SP), is now available. The AP provides specific information about our core activities for this year, and the measures and milestones tied to them. This year, for the first time ever, FSIS also plans to report our progress on goals related to the SP and AP to our workforce on a quarterly basis to provide more transparency and accountability.

This coming year, FSIS will increase its focus on modernizing through using scientific techniques such as whole genome sequencing and improving data collection, along with advanced analytics. By continuing to adopt new and innovative advancements, we will be able to continue to modernize food safety and strengthen public health. Our focus also extends to maintaining a well-trained and engaged workforce, and on improving our processes and services. You can find the SP and AP at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/strategic-planning>.

2016: A YEAR



IN PICTURES



2015 Field Service Laboratory Customer Survey Results

By Kay Stapleton, OPHS
Phone: (706) 546-2379

The Field Service Laboratories (FSLs) have received the 2015 customer results. Your responses and comments provide valuable feedback to the laboratories on what we are getting right and where improvements can be made. The survey was sent to a random sample of 433 FSIS employees in different program areas who might have used the services in the past year. The response rate for the survey was 42 percent. The majority of responses came from the Office of Field Operations followed by the Office of Investigations, Enforcement and Audit. The survey results and comments were shared with laboratory directors, supervisors, sample handling supervisors, as well as Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) direct personnel. The laboratories received 97 percent or greater satisfaction in the following areas: Timely Delivery of Supplies, Accuracy of Supplies, Reporting of Results, How Well Laboratories Follow Sample Discard Policies, Clarity of Reasons for Discarded Samples, Timely Response to Inquiries and Satisfaction to Inquiries.

Customer satisfaction has greatly improved since the first survey sent out in 2007. This is due in part to your feedback, comments and suggestions. Topics of concern in this year's survey included:

- **Discards:** Discards are always an issue for the inspectors and the labs. The laboratories are directed to discard only when absolutely necessary. Sometimes samples arrive at the laboratories and cannot possibly be analyzed for the testing requested and provide reliable results for legal scrutiny. This may be of no fault to the inspector or the labs. Sample discard codes are not decided upon by the laboratories but by the Office of Policy and Program Development. The laboratories must follow these policies.
- **Laboratory results:** *Can they be emailed?* LIMS-Direct is the current method for posting results and is updated every 15 minutes.
- **Supplies:** *Can supply requests be placed in the Public Health Information System (PHIS)?* PHIS is a contracted function of the Agency, and therefore, is not under the auspices of the laboratories as is the LIMS.

Thanks again for your participation and all of the comments submitted. We hope all of our customers will participate in the 2016 survey and provide customer feedback.

ASKFISH

Do the immediate containers need to have the required information as per 9 CFR 541.7, 317.1 & 317.2 when they are shipped from one federally inspected establishment to another?

Catfish products shipped from one establishment to another must be fully labeled as per 9 CFR 541.7, which references Part 317. The labeling requirements in 317.1 apply to fish and fish products shipped from one establishment to another for further processing. The immediate containers must bear: 1) product name; 2) handling statement (e.g., Keep Refrigerated); 3) USDA legend and establishment number; 4) name and address of manufacturer, packer or distributor; and 5) ingredients statement (if composed of more than one ingredient). Because this product is being shipped from one federal establishment to another federal establishment for further processing, a net weight, nutrition facts and safe handling instructions are NOT required. Note that handwriting on labels is not permitted except for the following two exceptions: adding the value of random net weights in open net weight statements or marking checks in pre-printed check-off boxes.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **Notice 88-16, FSIS Continuing Education (Pilot) Program 2017 Spring Semester**
- **Notice 89-16, Completion of the FSIS Western Laboratory Relocation**
- **Notice 90-16, Sampling Project Codes for the Fiscal Year 2017 National Residue Program**
- **Notice 91-16, List of Electronic Communications Operations Persons**
- **Notice 92-16, Follow-Up Sampling In Poultry Carcass Establishments Not Meeting Salmonella Performance Standards**
- **Notice 93-16, Imported Raw Pork Products Sampled for *Salmonella* Analysis**
- **Notice 97-16, Quarterly Establishment Information Letters about Sampling Results**
- **Notice 98-16, Inspection of Closed-Face Sandwiches for Export to Canada**
- **Notice 99-16, Revised FSIS Form 9135-3 and Instructions for the Signature on Export Certificates for Canada**
- **Notice 100-16, Completion of the PHIS Plant Profile Foreign Country Export Questionnaire**
- **Notice 101-16, Information Technology Procurement Process Improvement**

Administrative issues were also published:

- **Notice 94-16, Changes to E-Authentication Security Questions**
- **Notice 95-16, Hiring Excellence Mandatory Training**
- **Notice 96-16, Hiring Excellence**

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needs of a multitude of cultures. Currently, the district has approximately 740 federally inspected establishments, including 251 dual-jurisdiction establishments, 218 custom-exempt operators in California, one New Poultry Inspection System establishment, seven egg inspection establishments, 25 import houses, and two catfish processing establishments under FSIS jurisdiction.

Within the Alameda district, FSIS personnel inspect the slaughter and processing of a great many species, including beef, veal, pork, sheep, goats, chicken, turkey, ducks, ostrich, guineas, Silky chicken and squab. Alameda establishments also conduct Buddhist, halal, kosher and Confucian ritual slaughter. The majority of Alameda's establishments are small and very small facilities; however, the district also handles some of the largest slaughter and processing facilities in the nation.

"I am the first entry point into the operations of the Agency when prospective business owners want to get started with inspection services for their businesses. Performing the duties as a grant curator, I provide inspection information to business owners, discuss the need for inspection services, and assist them with the application process to become FSIS-inspected establishment owners. If they seem overwhelmed, I assure them about the free service the Agency offers to ensure food safety, continually working with them to finish their application process," Chambers said.

Back in 2010, the Alameda district started an initiative to have zero recalls from undeclared allergens on the label, which raised awareness of allergen issues not only within the

Introducing the Alameda District Office

district but throughout the Agency. Another accomplishment in California, being one of the largest dairy cow states, was the issue of drug residues in meat. "I worked closely with establishment owners, the Food and Drug Administration, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, and the State of California who in turn worked with dairymen to raise awareness and strive together to improve the issue of drug residues in meat," Sharma said.

The district plans to leverage its diverse workforce by continuing with outreach efforts and offering assistance to address challenges facing small and very small establishments to overcome technical hurdles and language barriers.

"In 2017, we will build on the success of pathology correlation and face-to-face meetings with in-plant supervisors to equip them with the knowledge and tools to address personnel inspection issues from 2015 and 2016. We will double our efforts to further improve and enhance communication at all levels by engaging field employees through work unit meetings and conference calls. This will result in more consistent application of the FSIS policies, more effective regulatory oversight at the plant level, and provide an added benefit of building team spirit to achieve our Administrator's vision of 'one team, one goal' at all levels as well as result in more engaged employees, better compliance and be a better place to work. The district will also continue to enhance our collaboration with our Federal and State partners through face-to-face meetings and conference calls," Sharma concluded.

>>> **RECALLS**

Nov. 23	Oklahoma firm recalls ready-to-eat chicken that may be undercooked.
Dec. 4	Oklahoma firm expands recall for ready-to-eat chicken that may be undercooked.
Dec. 8	Washington firm recalls meatloaf products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Dec. 12	California firm recalls beef products due to misbranding.
Dec. 15	Pennsylvania firm recalls breaded veal products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Dec. 21	Texas firm recalls beef and cheese tortilla products due to possible foreign matter contamination.
Dec. 22	South Carolina firm recalls pork skin products due to possible <i>Salmonella</i> contamination.
Dec. 23	New York firm recalls veal products due to possible <i>E. coli</i> O26 and O45 contamination.
Dec. 24	Texas firm recalls Cajun style dirty rice containing chicken products and turkey Cajun dinner kits containing dirty rice due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

The Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (LTP) allows federal employees to donate annual leave for use by other federal employees who are experiencing a medical emergency. To be considered for assistance via the LTP, applicants must: 1) be a current federal employee; 2) obtain approval from their supervisor to be absent from work due to the medical emergency for which they are applying to the LTP program; 3) be experiencing a personal or family medical emergency that results in serious financial hardship for the employee because he/she has insufficient accrued leave to cover the absence; 4) submit a completed Form AD-1046 and provide a personal statement and a signed medical document that explains the medical emergency and the duration of the medical emergency; and 5) have the Form AD-1046 signed by their supervisor. Additional Information and forms can be found on USDA's SharePoint site at LTP. Send an email to Sonja.Tomlinson@fsis.usda.gov for assistance.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Ave., Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.



Food Safety and
Inspection Service

Volume
21

Number
2

The Beacon

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH FOOD SAFETY

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Tell us your FSIS stories!

Send articles to beacon@fsis.usda.gov. Photos must be submitted as a separate attachment in .jpg format. Provide a media release form for photos of individuals under 21 years of age.



The USDA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) recognized OIG's Jesse Barragan and FSIS Compliance Investigators Ryan Rogers and Edgar Jaimez from the Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit's Western Region with OIG's second highest award for their extraordinary efforts to prosecute individuals who disregarded food safety standards and misled the public about a company's food safety practices that resulted in a 8.7 million pound recall of potentially contaminated beef products.

Rogers, Jaimez and Barragan, along with the United States Attorney's Office, were instrumental in

successfully prosecuting a former federally inspected beef slaughter establishment in California for violating provisions of the Federal Meat Inspection Act. As a result of the investigators' efforts, the company's owners and two of its managers were convicted of preparing, selling and/or transporting adulterated meat food products in commerce. Pictured, from left: David Gray, Edgar Jaimez, Jesse Barragan, Ryan Rogers and Phyllis Fong. Photo contributed by Jesse Barragan, OIG.

FSIS at USDA's Agricultural Outlook Forum

By Leo O'Drudy, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-8693

Each February, USDA holds the annual Agricultural Outlook Forum, a widely-attended event where USDA offices and agencies including FSIS, host panel discussions and presentations on current agricultural topics. This year's Forum will take place February 23-24 at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, Va., just outside of Washington, D.C.

Typical attendees of the public forum include scientists, government employees, people from major agricultural firms, agriculture trade associations, agriculture-oriented media outlets, and non-profit groups such as consumer and environmental organizations. USDA has made an effort in recent years to encourage attendance by students, farmers, and ranchers.

Our FSIS Administrator and Acting Deputy

Under Secretary, Al Almanza, will be moderating the FSIS session on the topic "The Role of Data in Food Safety." With increasing amounts of data available, regulators, industry, and academia have



a wealth of information with which to inform decision-making and policy. Data analyses may motivate establishments to improve performance and can highlight strengths and weaknesses,

Continued on page 9...

The Beacon Mission Statement

The Beacon newsletter is prepared by the Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education to provide relevant mission critical information to all FSIS employees. The Beacon provides employees information about the Agency's proposed regulations, policies, and programs; training opportunities; and important employee welfare initiatives to connect employees to the mission and build a cohesive community.

The Beacon enables employees to stay up to date with the latest events and see the Agency's mission executed in action.

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Sarah Lichtman

Brittany Woodland

Deadline for submissions
is the first day of the
previous month.

March issue – due Feb. 1

April issue – due May 1

May issue – due June 1

Submit contributions to
beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Phone: (202) 690-3881

Fax: (202) 815-2707

We reserve the right to edit
all submissions for content,
clarity and length.

The FSIS Management Council

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Administrator's Column

Dear FSIS Employees,

This month, I want to give you a brief update on our transition. As you know, the President nominated former Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue for Secretary of Agriculture. While Governor Perdue goes through the confirmation process, we continue to work with the transition team in support of our mission, I am serving as both FSIS Administrator and Acting USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety. During this time, it's important for you to know that we remain committed to our Agency goals, including our modernization.



Alfred V. Almanza

This past November, we released our Agency's Strategic Plan, which details a road map for FSIS' modernization throughout the next five years. One of the highlights in our Strategic Plan is the modernization of the Public Health Information System (PHIS). PHIS has been and will continue to be an important part of FSIS' modernization efforts because data in PHIS is essential to the Agency to identify food safety systems that need an increased focus.

I've been with the agency for almost 40 years now, and have seen quite a few changes during my time here. One of the biggest has been the shift from paper to electronic data, which has been extremely helpful for our inspection workforce. This month, we are hosting a webinar for industry and employees to explain the new electronic export component that will be implemented in June 2017. This change in PHIS means that the export application and certification system will be available in an electronic format as an alternative to the paper-based process that we've been using for many years.

It will be much easier and more efficient to use an electronic version of PHIS for export certification than paper forms. This update to the system is just one result of our focus on modernization. Data from PHIS has been essential to the Agency to identify sampling gaps and food safety systems that need increased focus. Looking forward, FSIS will continue to use information from PHIS to improve food safety.

Thank you for your commitment to public service, hard work, and modernization of our food safety system.

Sincerely,
AI

Michael Partridge, CSI

Field Inspector Enjoys New Challenges Each Day

By Brittany Woodland, OPACE
Phone: (202) 260-3999



Photo contributed by Michael Partridge, OFO.

Partridge verifies product temperature.

Michael Partridge is a Consumer Safety Inspector (CSI) serving in the Office of Field Operations (OFO) in the Philadelphia district. As a CSI, Partridge greatly impacts food safety as he ensures that FSIS establishments operate within a sufficient food safety system. While protecting the nation's supply of meat, poultry and processed egg products, Partridge's duty as a CSI is to ensure

that FSIS-regulated products are safe, secure, wholesome, unadulterated and properly labeled. In addition to these duties, he also conducts regulatory oversight activities inside the plants in matters relating to other areas of consumer protection.

Partridge embarked on his FSIS journey in January 2010. Prior to joining FSIS, Partridge had worked in the food industry for 30 years. He had worked for two different companies as a general manager in charge of their food safety systems. During his past employment, Partridge explains that he had the opportunity to meet a lot of CSIs and their supervisors, many who tried to get him to become a CSI for FSIS. Time passed, and 14 years later, Partridge found himself in search of something different and more challenging. He realized that he was experienced and knowledgeable in the meat and poultry business, and when it was again suggested that he should become a CSI for FSIS, he did.

Partridge enjoys the work that he does for FSIS.

"I like to work with the establishments and ensure they are treated fairly," said Partridge.

"Working for FSIS, I find that there are always new things to learn and each day a new challenge may be presented. Everyone I have worked with in FSIS from the district office, Headquarters (Washington, D.C.), and my fellow inspectors have been kind, fair, friendly and a pleasure to associate with. I like to work with the establishments and I like to ensure they are treated fairly," he said.

With aspirations of becoming a Compliance Investigator or a Front Line Supervisor, Partridge continues to learn and get involved whenever he can. He took the lead in the Philadelphia district for the Feds Feed Families campaign, and joined his District's Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee and the Circuit Safety Committee to help ensure all inspectors in the area are working in safe conditions. Additionally, Partridge has volunteered for the FSIS Food Safety Discovery Zone, and enjoys helping his fellow inspectors when needed.

Outside of FSIS, Partridge loves to spend time with his wife and two children. "My wife and I always strive to do things together as a family (yes...including eating meals) and we try to keep our children involved with activities (karate, gymnastics, piano lessons, archery, Cub Scouts and the science club), and when my wife and I have time, we actually do karate with the kids," said Partridge. On the weekends, Partridge spends his time shopping, doing yard work and helping out neighbors and friends when needed.

Partridge likes to remind his coworkers, "Remember not to be too serious in life, not to let the things we cannot control upset us and if it does let it go quickly. Tomorrow is another day and it will be different - whether good or bad - but since we control our destiny we can affect how the day is. We can do whatever we want in our lives and we do have some control over our lives; we just need to make sure our brain knows that."

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



In November 2016, Maryann Sklavos, a consumer safety inspector who works in Rochester, Minn., had the opportunity to travel to the Island of Mindanao in her native Philippines.

Many of Maryann's family still live and farm in this small community. During her stay, Maryann (with cap, in center of group)

spoke with approximately 50 school-aged students about her journey from their village to the United States. She also shared her experiences working for FSIS and the importance of proper cooking and handling of meat products. Photo contributed by Maryann Sklavos, OFO.

Go Red for Women

By Kerrie Tao, OM
Phone: (202) 403-0422

February is American Heart Month and it is a great time for all employees, but especially women, to commit to a healthier lifestyle and make small changes that can lead to a lifetime of good heart health. One in four women die from heart disease each day in the U.S., making it the leading cause of death for women. FSIS employees can show their support for the woman/women in their lives on Wed., Feb. 22, 2017, by wearing red, learning about cardiovascular risk and taking action to live longer, healthier lives.

The American Heart Association (AHA) conducts research and raises awareness to improve the cardiovascular health of all Americans. The month of February has been dedicated to cardiovascular health since President Lyndon B. Johnson declared the first American Heart Month in 1964.

While cardiovascular disease is the nation's leading cause of death for women, important steps can be taken by



everyone to reduce our risk and improve our overall health. Visit AHA's website to learn more about preventing heart disease at <https://www.goredforwomen.org/home/live-healthy/prevent-heart-disease/>.

If you or your workgroup participates in Wear Red Day on Feb. 22, submit your images, captions, which include the following: everyone's name and title, the name of program area, plant number (if applicable), date and location (city and state) the photo was taken, and the photographer's name and title to WorkLifeandWellness@fsis.usda.gov. Submissions may be included in future Agency publications.

Introducing the Eastern Laboratory

By Autumn Canaday, OPACE
Phone: (202) 720-3099

Athens, Georgia sits northeast of Atlanta, surrounded by trees, antebellum history and the enormous University of Georgia campus. About one mile away from the university campus is the FSIS Eastern Laboratory, which serves as one

Despite some misconceptions, no samples in the Eastern Laboratory are discarded, or not run, unless sample integrity is in question. "There's a misconception that laboratory personnel trivialize the efforts that field employees spend to collect samples," Beacorn said. "They may think that we discard or refuse to run samples for little or no reason. That is not the case. All field service laboratories are accredited to



Photo contributed by Dr. Marcus Head, OPHS.

Team members that comprise the Eastern Laboratory staff come together for a group photo in front of the USDA's Agricultural Research Service, Richard B. Russell Research Center, Athens, Ga., where they work.

of only three FSIS field service laboratories in the country that receive samples sent in by field personnel or compliance investigators. Four branches (Microbiology Screening, Microbiology Characterization, Chemistry and Pathology) work together to analyze samples and produce the accurate results and data, which are later developed into FSIS' regulatory decisions. "All of our activities support Goal 1 in the Strategic Plan," said Eastern Laboratory Director Frankie Beacorn. "We have a unique role within the Agency because we connect the field activities with headquarters staff by performing analyses on product collected by inspectors, public health veterinarians and compliance personnel."

Beacorn, a former biosecurity officer, oversees 90 employees who support the laboratory—from microbiologists to veterinary pathologists and laboratory support workers. Beacorn notes that laboratory personnel realize and respect the challenges that field personnel encounter on a daily basis, as well as the industry costs associated with holding the product from entering commerce until the lab result is available.

ISO 17025 standard. So that means that there are policies and procedures in place to ensure that sample integrity is maintained, especially for raw products which will be analyzed for microorganisms."

Along with routine testing, you can also find personnel at the Eastern Laboratory examining options to modernize analytical methods, electronically capturing of information with the Laboratory Information Management System and providing detailed information concerning cases to field public health veterinarians. "The Eastern Laboratory offers consumer protection by identifying contaminated food and preventing it from going into commerce," Beacorn said. "So we work as a team to service our two primary in-house customers."

One of those in-house customers is any FSIS personnel who inspect FSIS regulated products or investigate compliance issues. The other customer is any FSIS headquarters employee who reviews, analyzes and makes regulatory decisions based on the Eastern lab's analytical data. The lab's services

Continued on page 10...

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE FIELD



Fayetteville, Pa.

During a Work Unit Meeting held in the East Berlin circuit of the Philadelphia District on Oct. 25, 2016, CSI Marie Phillips was presented with an award for her role in identifying product contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*, leading to a voluntary recall of the product.

Pictured, from left: Hany Sidrak, Marie Phillips, Susan Scarcia.

Photo contributed by Marie Phillips, OFO.

Miami, Fla.

On Dec. 10, 2016, personnel from the Office of Investigation, Enforcement and Audit participated in the Children's Holiday celebration at Miami-Dade Community College North Campus. This activity provides a day of fun for children while they learn about science, farming, animals native to the area and, of course, food safety.

Children in attendance enjoyed meeting "BAC" and receiving coloring books, food safety stickers and other information on food safety. Parents received informational materials such as "Food Safe Families" and "A Consumer's Guide to Food Safety: Severe Storms and Hurricanes." Despite rainy weather, about 1,200 children and adults attended the event.



Pictured, from left: Jose Pereira, Mark Tabb, Sandra Fabregas-Ruiz, "BAC" (William Kaile) and Douglas Fulgham.

Photo contributed by Mark Tabb, OIEA.

OSHA Inspection Support

By Curtis Wallis, OM
Phone: (510) 769-5750

An inspection by an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) compliance officer is normally conducted without advance notice. That is why, these visits can be stressful and confusing. However, the FSIS Environmental Safety and Health Group (ESHG) is ready to support you through the process.

As soon as an OSHA inspector arrives at your establishment, it is important to contact your district office and the FSIS Occupational Safety and Health Specialist (OSHS) for your district. If possible, the OSHS will participate in the OSHA opening and closing conferences and can help clarify

FSIS safety and health policies and assist with supporting documentation.

You should also be aware that if an OSHA citation is issued, FSIS has the opportunity for an informal conference with the OSHA Area Director. During this conference it is often possible to work out a settlement agreement to resolve the issues, extend abatement dates and remove or downgrade citations. Alternatively, FSIS only has 15 working days after receipt of citations to formally contest the alleged violations by written notice to the Area Director.

The OSHA citation is typically sent to FSIS at the establishment where the inspection was conducted. Therefore, it is important that the OSHS be notified as soon as possible to assist you with the response process.

FY2017 Information Security Awareness Training

By Jennifer Dallis, OCIO
Phone: (202) 692-4206

The Federal Information Security Management Act and the Office of Management and Budget guidance require all USDA employees, contractors, partners and volunteers to complete annual Security Awareness and Training (SAT). The FY2017 SAT course and assessment was assigned automatically to AgLearn users on Oct. 1, 2016. Paper-based training is required for those employees who were unable to receive the AgLearn assignment. Paper-based training is also available for those without computer access or who require an alternative to the online training. Copies of the paper-based materials will be distributed by FSIS' Center for Learning directly to the locations where required. Copies of the materials will also be sent to the district offices to use during New Employee Orientation. Field employees who are GS-7's and below, without computer access, will be issued an SAT booklet to read and an exemption form to sign. The form states that the employee has read the material and is not required to take the exam.

Network access will be removed from any employee, contractor, partner or volunteer who has not completed the required training by March 31, 2017.

Help/Contact Information:

- FSIS AgLearn link is FSISAgLearn@fsis.usda.gov. You can also call 1-800-336-3747 for general information.
- Contact the AgLearn Help Desk at AgLearnHelp@genphysics.com or via phone at (866) 633-9394 for assistance with the SAT online course. Contact information can also be found on the AgLearn "Contact Us" page.
- If you have questions about the training or would like paper-based materials, contact the SAT Team at SAT@fsis.usda.gov.
- For E-Authentication account assistance or need assistance with your computer, contact the FSIS Help Desk by submitting a Footprints ticket at <http://service/footprints> or by calling 1-800-473-9135.

Performance Management: What's in it for me?

By Julaine McCabe, OM
Phone: (612) 659-8598

Here are some of the key benefits of a good performance management system:

Working toward common goals: It's easy to get so caught up in our daily work that we forget about our purpose in an organization. Yet our individual performance drives organizational performance. It's important that everyone understands the Agency's mission and goals, how their work supports the organization, and how they contribute to our mission.

Clear understanding of job expectations: When employees and supervisors have a clear understanding of their jobs and individual duties, expectations and goals are easier to both communicate and comprehend. Each individual is held accountable for their own duties and responsibilities. Performance management empowers you to think about and clarify your role in the organization. Setting clear goals and expectations helps support this. These goals and expectations should balance organizational results with the perspectives of stakeholders, which include customers and employees. To be credible, performance expectations must be: clear, specific, and understandable; reasonable and attainable; measurable, observable or verifiable and results-oriented; communicated in a timely fashion; and foster continual improvement in productivity. General measures of performance include quality, quantity, timeliness, cost-effectiveness and manner

of performance. Activities or job duties themselves are not measures.

Continuous feedback and learning: Regular feedback facilitates better communication in the workplace. Performance management helps you to identify your strengths and weaknesses. Most importantly it gives you a better understanding of how your performance is being assessed and monitored. This builds employee confidence and adds to your contribution in the workplace. Performance management can be a motivational tool, providing you opportunities to not only feel more satisfied, but to go beyond what is expected. If supervisors and employees are not communicating throughout the year, the system doesn't work, so we must ensure we have a performance feedback process that helps improve a continuous dialogue between supervisors and employees. Performance management is not something that's looked at only at the beginning and end of the rating cycle, with just one mid-year progress review – it's a continuous, ever changing process, reflecting and measuring the work employees are performing for the Agency.

Training on the performance management system is available through AgLearn. In compliance with DR 4040-430, all employees and supervisors are required to receive performance management training within the first three months of entering on duty or assuming a supervisory position and refresher training at least every two years. Questions on performance management can be sent to PerformanceManagement@fsis.usda.gov.

FSIS Employee Connections is an employee-centric publication that focuses on employees' off-duty activities, personal accomplishments and creativity. As a quarterly supplement to The Beacon, the Connections features the personalities that make up FSIS through employee profiles, inspiring community service, and creative visual and literary works.

Send submissions for the Spring 2017 issue by March 1. Email submissions to FSISConnections@fsis.usda.gov. Photos should be hi-resolution JPGs. Include approval from your supervisor, Deputy Assistant Administrator or Assistant Administrator.

Questions? Contact Laura Reiser at (202) 720-7894 or Felicia Thompson at (202) 603-2150.

Recent FSIS Retirees

Thank you for your service and dedication to public health.

Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service	Name and Position	Duty Station	Years Service
Adey, Kevin, CSI	Des Moines, IA	33	Purser, Linda F., CSI	Collins, MS	19
Anwar, Dr. Chaudhry, VMO	Livingston, CA	32	Riek, Margaret M., Wri Edit	Washington, DC	42
Bennett, Marchell M., Resource Mgmt Asst	Dallas, TX	38	Rivera, John J., Lab Dir	Albany, CA	42
Crivickshank, Lynn C., SPVY Chemst	Athens, GA	37	Self, Alice D., Biolcl Sci Lab Techncn	Athens, GA	36
Garber, Daniel L., FI-S	Dakota City, NE	13	Smallwood, Patricia J., FI-S	Lewiston, NC	22
Gibson, Dr. James E., SVMO	Collins, MS	14	Standridge, Cheryl, Consmr Safety Offcr	Breaux Bridge, LA	27
Glass, James M., Micrbiol	Athens, GA	40	Stasheski, Curtis J., CSI	Kittanning, PA	12
Grant Jr, Castillo S., CSI	Orlando, FL	24	Steyee, Omar D., CSI	Columbus, MT	40
Griess, Jeffery L., Complnc Invstgr	Lincoln, NE	31	Sutton, Dr. Cynthia E., SVMO	Guntersville, AL	9
Grimes, Samuel K., CSI	Jack, AL	29	Takenaka, Glenn T., CSI	Kalaheo, HI	25
Henriod, Lyle F., FI-S	Hyrum, UT	6	Tiwana, Dr. Jagdish, VMO	Sonora, CA	13
Kelley, Glenda A., Mgmt Anlys	Washington, DC	43	Toma, Paul A., Complnc Invstgr	Pittsburgh, PA	36
Manning, Michael, Chemst	St. Louis, MO	6	Walker, Ricky D., CSI	Vicksburg, MS	29
Martinez, Barbara J., Off Automation Asst	Hope, AR	47	Witcher, Loretta A., Biolcl Sci Lab Techncn (Micrbiolgy)	Athens, GA	21
McLaughlin, Lesly C., CSI	Chicago, IL	35	Wooten, Jack E., FI-S	Livingston, CA	31
Mergen, Steven CSI	Storm Lake, IA	45	Wright, Donna K., CSI	Dayton, VA	24
Moore, Donna K., Fnanci Speclst SI	Washington, DC	37			

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which may lead to improved food safety practices. The distinguished panel includes three speakers.

Jeremy "Todd" Reed, FSIS' Senior Advisor for Data Integration and Food Defense, will discuss Federal data collection, release, and usage; particularly how FSIS collects and manages data and how that information can be used to improve the safety of the food supply;

Frank Yiannas, Vice President of Food Safety and Health for Walmart, will discuss industry data sharing and usage, and how establishment-specific and industry-collected data and results are used to enhance performance and make improvements in food safety;

FSIS at USDA's Agricultural Outlook Forum

And finally, Timothy Beatty, Professor of Agricultural Economics, University of California at Davis, will discuss how data can inform cost-effective food safety policy, covering the collection and analysis of facility-specific data to inform evidence-based policy, with a focus on food safety regulations that influence public health.

The FSIS session will be held on February 23 as part of the "Agriculture for the Future" track. For the benefit of those who cannot attend, the presentation slides will be posted online soon after the Forum. For more information about the Ag Outlook Forum, visit <https://www.usda.gov/oce/forum/>.

POLICY UPDATES

FSIS issues notices and directives to protect public health. New issuances are available at www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations.

- **Notice 03-17, Applying the USDA Export Stamp to Pallet or Conveyance**
- **Notice 04-17, Assessment and Verification Reviews of An Official Livestock Establishment's Robust Systematic Approach Plan For Humane Handling and Slaughter**
- **Notice 05-17, Eligibility of Italy to Export Raw Pork to the United States**
- **Directive 7120.1, Safe and Suitable Ingredients Used in the Production of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products**
- **Directive 4280.1 - Student Employment Program**
- **Notice 02-17, 2017 Mileage Reimbursement Rates - Correction**

An administrative issuance was also published:

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Staff Spotlight: Introducing the Eastern Laboratory

are streamlined into three major focuses. The first of these focuses is antimicrobial resistance and whole genome sequencing (WGS). FSIS has partnered with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the National Institutes of Health to standardize methodology for WGS for more accurate and efficient epidemiological tracking of foodborne illnesses and outbreaks, and their origins. The Eastern Laboratory implemented WGS and analyzes 100 percent of isolates from regulatory programs. Lab personnel have also worked to conduct training and begin sequencing activities at the Midwestern Laboratory and Western Laboratory.

Jovita Haro is a microbiologist who considers the opportunity to learn from co-workers a part of the reason why she is excited to come to work each day. "From expertise in database management, to the use of cutting-edge technology, we have a team with a remarkable set of capabilities—so the opportunity to learn from such talent is greatly appreciated," Haro said.

Haro's enthusiasm for learning and appreciation of teamwork is shared by chemist Ralph DiCosty. He describes the office culture as one of teamwork, open communication and hard work. "Our work helps to assure the public of a safe food supply," DiCosty said. "In the chemistry branch,

we test meat and poultry samples each day for a wide variety of compounds, which includes antibiotics, hormones and metals. Any violations we find are then passed on to enforcement personnel."

Much of the lab's work occurs under tight deadlines, which requires collaboration and a razor-sharp focus. In the past year, the lab has been able to offer 24-hour turnaround for results, despite being understaffed. The lab has also successfully implemented *Siluriformes* testing, and piloted and implemented the use of neutralizing Buffered Peptone Water for poultry rinses.

Eastern Laboratory personnel work together by volunteering to help other sections complete work when necessary. The chemistry staff, computer assistants, microbiology staff and pathology staff have all assisted one another by logging in and preparing samples, getting shipments repacked for the field, and helping wherever help was needed. This type of teamwork is what makes Laboratory Director Beacorn beam with pride when she speaks about her team.

"I would like to acknowledge their dedication and hard work during a stressful time period this year," Beacorn said. "Our employees are well trained, well qualified and highly motivated to do their jobs—and they do their jobs very well."

ASK~FISH

Q: Can the lid or top of a product packing box cover any part of the labeling?

A: All mandatory labeling features must be visible.



National African American History Month The Crisis in Black Education February

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Black History Month, or National African American History Month, is an annual celebration of achievements by black Americans and a time for recognizing the central role of African Americans in U.S. history. The event grew out of "Negro History Week," the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating black history.

This month the USDA is hosting a Department-wide African American History Month Observance on Feb. 25, 2017, from 10-11 a.m., in the South Building's Jefferson Auditorium in Washington, DC. The theme of this year's USDA event is "Hallowed Grounds: Sites of African American Memories."

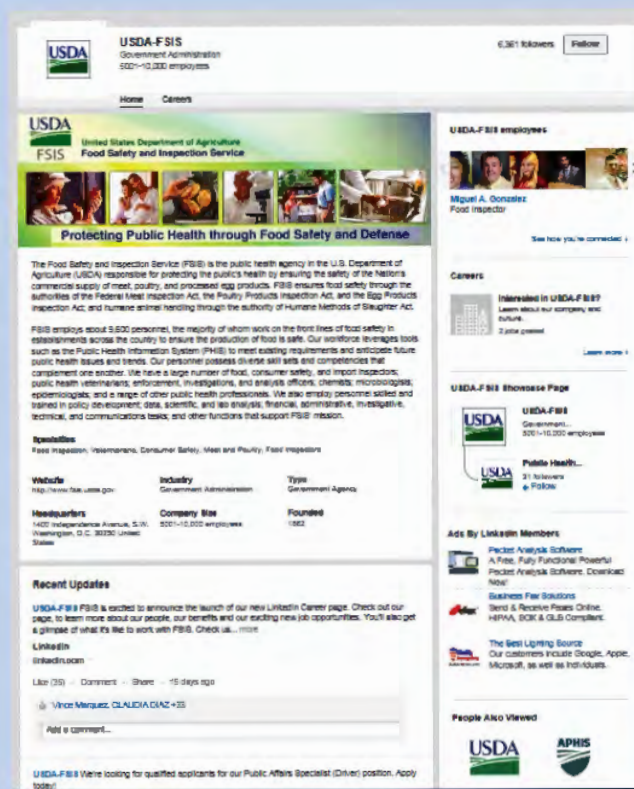
For more information, contact Damali Carr, a Civil Rights equal employment specialist, at (301) 504-7755.

FSIS Launches New Career Page on LinkedIn

The Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Education is excited to announce the launch of the new *FSIS LinkedIn Career* page on *LinkedIn.com*. The Career page gives visitors a sneak peek at the life, culture and careers available at FSIS. With links to available job opportunities, FSIS benefits, the Agency's i-Impact video and other mission-related information, the page provides a realistic glimpse of what it's like to work with the Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Take a moment to check out the page, follow us and share our posts with your network at USDA FSIS LinkedIn Career page at <https://www.linkedin.com/company-usda-fsis-beta/225343/>.

If you are not a LinkedIn member, and would like to join for free, sign up by visiting *LinkedIn.com*.



>>> **RECALLS**

Jan. 5	Missouri firm recalls pork and turkey products due to misbranding.
Jan. 9	New York firm recalls chicken tender products that may be contaminated with plastic and misbranded.
Jan. 10	Texas firm recalls chicken breast product due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Jan. 12	Massachusetts firm recalls chicken soup product due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Jan. 14	Canadian firm recalls pork ribs products because the products were repacked and distributed without the benefit of federal inspection.
Jan. 18	Massachusetts firm recalls chicken salad products due to misbranding.
Jan. 19	Idaho firm recalls chicken products due to misbranding and undeclared allergens.
Jan. 20	Massachusetts firm recalls ready-to-eat chicken products due to a potential process defect, resulting in the potential survival of bacterial pathogens in the products.
Jan. 25	Colorado firm recalls pork sausage products due to misbranding.

For more information, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls.

Donate to the Leave Transfer Program

The Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (LTP) allows federal employees to donate annual leave for use by other federal employees who are experiencing a medical emergency. To be considered for assistance via the LTP, applicants must: 1) be a current federal employee; 2) obtain approval from their supervisor to be absent from work due to the medical emergency for which they are applying to the LTP program; 3) be experiencing a personal or family medical emergency that results in serious financial hardship for the employee because he/she has insufficient accrued leave to cover the absence; 4) submit a completed Form AD-1046 and provide a personal statement and a signed medical document that explains the medical emergency and the duration of the medical emergency; and 5) have the Form AD-1046 signed by their supervisor. Additional Information and forms can be found on USDA's SharePoint site at LTP. Send an email to Sonja.Tomlinson@fsis.usda.gov for assistance.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

FSIS employees and applicants for employment wishing to file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint must first contact an EEO Counselor by calling (301) 504-7755 or 1-800-269-6912, or writing to the FSIS Civil Rights Division at USDA/FSIS, 5601 Sunnyside Ave., Building 1, Room 2260, Mail Drop 5261, Beltsville, MD 20705. Contact must be made with an FSIS EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the personnel action.