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Governor

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State Health Commissioner

Indiana State
Department of Health
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DATE: March 24, 2009
TO: All Local Health Departments
Attn: Chief Food Specialist
FROM: A. Scott Gilliam, MBA, CP-FS
Manager, Food Protection Program
SUBJECT: FDA Warns Consumers of Oysters

Suggested Action: **FDA Alert; The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is advising retailers and food service operators not to offer for sale oysters; Recommend notification to establishments that may carry this product via phone, fax or e-mail.**

From the information provided by FDA, the product may have been distributed in Indiana. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is advising retailers and food service operators not to offer for sale oysters harvested between Feb. 24 and March 17, 2009, from Mississippi Area 2C, located in the Mississippi Sound portion of the Gulf of Mexico near Pass Christian, Miss. Retailers and food service operators can check the tag or labeling that should accompany all raw molluscan shellfish to verify its origin. Please notify this office at 317-233-7360 if any oysters are found.

FDA Warns Consumers, Food Service Operators, and Retailers to Avoid Oysters Recently Harvested from Mississippi Area 2C

Nearly a dozen illnesses linked to raw oysters from area near Pass Christian

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is advising retailers and food service operators not to offer for sale oysters harvested between Feb. 24 and March 17, 2009, from Mississippi Area 2C, located in the Mississippi Sound portion of the Gulf of Mexico near Pass Christian, Miss. Further, consumers are advised not to eat such oysters. Consumers who are uncertain about the origin of oysters they currently have should contact the place of purchase to determine if the oysters are from the affected area as the Agency investigates an outbreak of norovirus illnesses associated with the oysters. Norovirus is a foodborne pathogen that can cause acute gastroenteritis in humans.

Eleven individuals reported becoming sick after eating raw oysters at a restaurant in Chattanooga, Tenn. Test results by the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department and Tennessee Department of Health confirmed that the patients were infected with norovirus.

Symptoms of norovirus illness usually include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and some stomach cramping. Sometimes people also have a low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, and a general sense of tiredness. The illness often begins suddenly, and the infected person may feel very sick. In most people the illness is self-limiting with symptoms lasting for 1 or 2 days.



Retailers and food service operators can check the tag or labeling that should accompany all raw molluscan shellfish to verify its origin. Individuals who have eaten raw oysters harvested from the affected area during the specified dates and have experienced symptoms of norovirus infection are encouraged to contact their healthcare provider and local health department.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources closed Area 2C to harvesting on March 17, 2009, to protect the public health. The FDA is working with the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources to investigate potential sources of pollution that may have caused the area to become contaminated. The FDA is testing oysters harvested from the area and will continue to provide updates as this investigation unfolds.

People with weakened immune systems, including those affected by AIDS, chronic alcohol abuse, liver, stomach or blood disorders, cancer, diabetes, or kidney disease should avoid raw oyster consumption altogether, regardless of where the oysters are harvested.

For more information on seafood safety, please visit www.cfsan.fda.gov/seafood1.html or call FDA's Food Safety Hotline at 1-888-SAFEFOOD.

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