



Food Defense

FOOD PROTECTION CONNECTION



PROTECT YOUR CLIENTS FROM DELIBERATE FOOD CONTAMINATION WITH VIGILANCE AND SOUND STRATEGIES

We must be concerned with food defense and food safety. Unfortunately, acts of food terrorism—both foreign and domestic—have already been documented and have caused injury and death. As a responsible manager, educate yourself and your employees about the safety issues in your operation, the food industry, and the entire country. We must make every effort to identify and stop any potential deliberate food contamination. As managers and employees in the food service or retail industry, it's your responsibility to take action!

Each country, the United Nations, and the World Health Organization define Food Safety, Food Security, and Food Defense differently. The FDA (US Food and Drug Administration) through the FSMA (Food Safety Modernization Act) has mandated that all manufacturers, processors, holders, packers, and distributors of food in the US have proactive Intentional Food Adulteration Plans in place. Facilities covered under this rule must develop and implement a food defense plan that includes an analysis of vulnerabilities and implementation of mitigation strategies. This is not mandated for foodservice and retail facilities, but these facilities are at high risk as well and



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should do an assessment of their facilities, have a plan in place, and train their employees in food defense, defined below.

Food Defense

Food defense is the prevention of the deliberate contamination of food. Note that the action of the person contaminating the food is deliberate and not accidental. These individuals and their actions are designed to cause harm to people.

Food Safety

Food safety is the prevention of the accidental contamination of food. This accidental and unintentional contamination occurs from chemical, biological, or physical hazards.

No matter how these concepts are defined, by any given organization, together they each are very important to providing the safest supply of food to the public.

UNDERSTANDING FOOD DEFENSE AND EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Food defense is simple to practice; be aware, and pay attention to your surroundings, fellow managers, employees, customers, vendors, and your facility. No one knows a work environment better

than the employees who work there. Does something seem different? Is something out of place? Do not let anything out of sorts go unreported. Do not get complacent or lazy about your work environment and think 'That would never happen in *this* food service or retail establishment.' Be prepared! Though it may not occur often, food tampering, food hoaxes, and deliberate food contamination can happen and *has* happened.

Do not be overly distrustful or paranoid. The best defense is to simply be alert and aware of your environment, with a few daily precautions always in place. Food defense training will help both managers and employees know what to do to protect their workplace and customers. This will also define what to do if you suspect or become aware of a food defense issue.

Your responsibility as a manager or food employee is to prepare, serve, and sell safe food. Understanding food defense will protect you, your family, your business, and the food service or retail industry. The FDA recommends you take food defense steps to ensure the safety of customers, coworkers, and country. Standard operating procedures

will assure that, as an employee, you understand your responsibility and the important role you play in food defense every day. These standard operating procedures can include four broad categories: Employee Awareness, Customer Awareness, Vendor Awareness, and Facility Awareness.

EMPLOYEE AWARENESS

- Be a responsible employee. Communicate any potential food defense issues to your manager.
- Be aware of your surroundings and pay attention to employees who are acting unusual, different from their normal behavior.
- Limit the number of personal items brought into your work establishment.
- Be aware of who is working at a given time and where (in what area) they are supposed to be working.
- If you are assigned to the salad bar, self-service food, or displays, constantly monitor them. Let customers know there is employee presence in that area. Salad bars and

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open food displays are easy targets for someone wanting to do harm.

- Make sure labeled chemicals are in a designated storage area away from food, and not easily accessible.
- Ensure you and your coworkers are following company guidelines. If you have any questions or believe company guidelines are not being followed, ask for manager assistance.
- Take all threats seriously, even if it is a fellow coworker or customer blowing off steam. Report it!
- If the back door is supposed to be locked and secure, make sure it is.
- Look at food products every day for irregularities. If you use a food product and it's supposed to be green but today it's blue, stop using the product and notify your manager immediately.
- If you know an employee is no longer with your company and this person enters an "Employees Only" area, notify your manager immediately.
- Never allow strangers and friends of employees in the food prep area.
- Cooperate during all investigations.
- Do not talk to the media; refer all questions to your corporate office or an official spokesperson.
- If you are aware of a hoax or threat, alert your manager immediately.

CUSTOMER AWARENESS

- Be aware of any unattended bags or briefcases that customers bring into your operation.
- Be aware of any unusual behavior of customers. Some examples are uneasiness, pacing around, and attempts to enter areas that are not for customers.
- Monitor salad bars and self-service food areas or open food displays for any unusual customer activity.
- If a customer walks into an "Employees Only" area of your operation, politely ask the customer if he or she needs help, then notify a member of management.

VENDOR AWARENESS

Vendors and service personnel are commonplace in food service and retail establishments. They tend to come and go. Employees and managers pay little attention to what



ALWAYS ASK FOR IDENTIFICATION

from any vendor or service person that enters restricted areas of your establishment. If you do not recognize the regular delivery person, ask for their ID.

they are doing while in the establishment. We assume they know what they are there for and allow them to go about their business. Unfortunately, this can also be an easy entrance for someone wanting to do harm.

Always ask for identification from any vendor or service person that enters restricted areas of your establishment. If you do not recognize the regular delivery person, ask for their ID.

- When items are being delivered, stay with the delivery person.
- Monitor all products received and look for any signs of tampering. Do not accept questionable deliveries.
- Never accept items not listed on your invoice. If the vendor attempts to give you additional items not listed, notify your manager.
- If a service person arrives, do they have an approved work order? Where are they scheduled to do work in the facility? If you are unsure, verify with your manager.

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- Do not allow vendors or service persons to roam freely throughout your operation.
- Also, though not a vendor or service person, always ask for identification from your inspector or any person claiming to be a government or regulatory employee.

FACILITY AWARENESS

No one knows the surroundings more than the employees who work there every day. If something seems wrong or out of place, report it.

- Report and document all equipment, maintenance, and security issues to your manager.
- Be aware of the inside of your facility, including unusually open doors and windows.
- Be observant of the outside of the facility, including the dumpster and outdoor storage areas.
- Always report anything out of the ordinary.

DEALING WITH HOAXES

False accusations or fraudulent reports of deliberate contamination of food can be equally damaging to your facility. As a responsible employee, notify your manager if you suspect a false alarm has occurred.

FDA A.L.E.R.T.

The Food and Drug Administration has a Food Defense training program called A.L.E.R.T. Food Defense 101 was designed by FDA to provide a resource for preparedness against an intentional attack against the nation’s food supply. This training is intended to provide understanding and guidance for implementing common sense, realistic, and effective Food Defense Plans. You can find this program at: <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/FDTraining/index.cfm>

It’s very important we all do our part to ensure a safe food supply. Don’t have the attitude “It won’t happen to me.” The risk of intentional contamination is real! Though the risk may be relatively low, the consequences can be extremely high. **E**

SOURCES

- www.fda.gov
- Paster, T., & Vaccaro, M. (2013). The HACCP Food Safety Manager Manual for Food Service and Retail Establishments, Chapter 2, Food Defense. Abington, PA: Instruis Publishing Company.

A.L.E.R.T. FOOD DEFENSE 101

A L E R T	ASSURE	How do you ASSURE that the supplies and ingredients you use are from safe and secure sources?
	LOOK	How do you LOOK after the security of the products and ingredients in your facility?
	EMPLOYEES	What do you know about your EMPLOYEES and people coming in and out of your facility?
	REPORTS	Could you provide REPORTS about the security of your products while under your control?
	THREATS	What do you do and who do you notify if you have a THREAT or issue at your facility, including suspicious behavior?

SAN CE Questions | FOOD PROTECTION CONNECTION



This Level II article assumes that the reader has a foundation of basic concepts of the topic. The desired outcome is to enhance knowledge and facilitate application of knowledge to practice.

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- Food Defense is
 - Prevention of the accidental contamination of food. This unintentional contamination occurs from chemical, biological, or physical hazards.
 - Prevention of the deliberate contamination of food. The action of the person contaminating the food is not accidental.
 - Having a two year supply on hand in case of food emergency
- Employees must
 - Be aware of their surroundings and pay attention to employees who are acting unusual, different from their normal behavior
 - Be aware of their surroundings, however realize that some people may act unusual, but this is ok
 - Be aware of their surroundings, but not report something if they see it for the first time
- Monitor the _____ for any unusual customer activity.
 - Storage room
 - Deli counter
 - Salad bars and self-service food areas
- Hoaxes are
 - False accusations or fraudulent reports of deliberate contamination of food
 - True accusations or reports of deliberate contamination of food
 - Calls from concerned customers
- All vendors must
 - Enter through the front door
 - Show identification when they arrive
 - Be allowed to roam freely throughout the facility
- The four categories of food defense standard operating procedures discussed in this article were
 - Vendor Awareness, Consumer Awareness, Facility Awareness, Employee Awareness
 - Disgruntled Employee Awareness, Customer Complaint Awareness, Facility Repair Awareness, Vendor Identification Awareness
 - Vendor Compliance, Consumer Compliance, Facility Compliance, Employee Compliance
- The FDA program offered online for Employee Food Defense Training is
 - D.E.F.E.N.D.
 - A.L.A.R.M.
 - A.L.E.R.T.

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