

THE 5 “WS” AND THE “HOW” OF THE CASE

Answers to Questions the FBI Teams May Ask for Public Health Officials (PHOs)

Be ready to answer questions for the FBI teams, using the information on this sheet. Note: Don't identify the suspect food as orange juice. Let the FBI investigation teams discover that fact.

Who was interviewed?

- Sick people
- People who didn't get sick, but who had eaten at the same restaurants
- Food workers at the suspect restaurants, to make sure that none of them was sick around that time

When did the sick people become ill?

- Between June and July of 1999

What did the investigators ask during the interviews with the sick people?

- What were their symptoms?
- When did their symptoms first appear?
- Where had they eaten in the last week or so?
- What did they eat?
- Was anyone else sick in their household?

What did the outbreak victims have in common?

Their symptoms:

- 95% of patients reported diarrhea
- 70% reported fever
- 55% reported chills
- 40% reported bloody diarrhea

Where did the sick people eat?

- **Seattle:** 4 restaurants
- **Portland:** 1 restaurant

What does this tell us?

- Because the outbreak occurred in multiple locations and multiple states:
 - A point-of-service (POS) cause can probably be ruled out.
 - The outbreak was probably due to a food or beverage.

Through interviews the investigators were able to pinpoint the food establishments where the food violation might have occurred.

Rationale

- A POS violation may be ruled out because POS outbreaks often involve:
 - Workers who are ill and have not properly washed their hands after using the bathroom.
 - Improper handling or storage of a food.

It's unlikely that the same worker violations would occur at the same time in multiple locations.

What did the people interviewed eat?

Those who got sick:

- **Seattle:** chicken fingers, hamburger, green salad with tomatoes and either a strawberry-orange-banana smoothie or a mango-orange smoothie
- **Portland:** orange juice, linguini with shrimp, mussels and scallops, mixed green salad with cucumbers and carrots, and a hot fudge and banana sundae

Those who didn't get sick:

- **Seattle:** hamburger or grilled cheese sandwich, mixed green salad with tomatoes or French fries, and a strawberry milk shake
- **Portland:** linguini with shrimp, mussels and scallops, mixed green salad with tomatoes, and a hot fudge sundae.

What does this tell us?

- The people who did not consume the orange juice or a smoothie with orange juice did not become ill.
- Case controls are important in narrowing a likely food or vehicle causing the illness.

How was the source of the contaminated orange juice identified?

- Through the traceback, FDA discovered that all the food establishments involved in the outbreak had purchased orange juice from the same manufacturer.

Why did people get sick from drinking orange juice?

- It was discovered that the manufacturer was not processing the juice according to safe food-processing procedures.

What was done to prevent further outbreaks?

- FDA instituted a nationwide recall of all unpasteurized orange juice manufactured in the 2-month period in question.
- FDA has proposed regulations to assure the safety of unpasteurized juices.