

Harvey's *E. coli* O157:H7 Outbreak Report Released

Food Safety Infosheet July 1, 2009



235 cases of *E. coli* O157:H7 were linked to a Harvey's restaurant in North Bay, Ontario, Canada in October 2008

Health authorities point to Spanish red onions as most likely source of the outbreak

Poor sanitation of onion dicer may have prolonged the outbreak

Contaminated onions were likely the cause of a pathogenic *E. coli* outbreak at a fast-food restaurant in North Bay, Ont., Canada that sickened 235 people last fall, health officials announced Monday.

A Harvey's restaurant was shut down from Oct. 12 to Nov. 12 after health officials linked it to the outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7, which causes severe abdominal cramping and sometimes bloody diarrhea.

The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit recently

released the findings of their investigation, which concluded "inconsistent" cleaning could be to blame.

"The epidemiological investigation indicated that this outbreak was caused by a point source at the Harvey's restaurant in North Bay, most likely contaminated onions," the report's authors wrote.

"Although the initial source of the contamination was not identified, the risk of exposure lingered on-site for about a week.

Inconsistent cleaning of the onion dicer may have perpetuated the contamination for several days."



What you can do

- Cleaning and sanitation of all equipment before and is important; some pathogens can survive on food contact surfaces (including onion dicers) for months.
- Storing equipment without cleaning and sanitizing is not a good practice.
- Equipment should be fully disassembled to allow for cleaning and sanitizing of hard to reach areas.
- Don't assume that equipment or utensils have been cleaned and sanitized.

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