

Botulism Recall: The Epi Response

Pam Pontones, MA

Director, Surveillance and Investigation

Indiana State Department of Health

Role of Surveillance and Investigation Division (SID)

- Track cases of disease
- Investigate disease outbreaks
- Coordinate with other program areas and partners
- Provide educational information
- Serve as media spokespeople

Role of State Health Commissioner

- Broad public health police powers
- Statutory authority: 410 IAC 1-2.3
- Recall food products
- Seize or embargo food products
- Exclude or restrict food handlers
- Inspect establishments
- Close establishments

Outbreak Unfolds

- July 11: Ft. Wayne hospital notifies ISDH SID of two possible botulism cases in Whitley County residents
- ISDH SID notifies CDC Botulism hot line per protocol to assess cases and order antitoxin
- CDC informs ISDH that two recent cases in Texas had consumed hot dog chili sauce—inquire about consumption of similar products

Outbreak Unfolds

- Arrangements made to collect food samples at the home and clinical samples from the hospital for submission to ISDH Laboratories
- SID contacts ISDH Food Protection Program (FPP) regarding food samples
- Antitoxin delivered from Chicago quarantine station and administered that night to both patients

Urgency

- Urgency much higher: possible contaminated food item in widespread distribution
- Botulism very serious, potentially fatal, disease requiring intensive medical care and considered potential bioweapon

Investigation Continues

- July 12: Learned both cases had consumed chili made with same products as Texas cases
- Whitley County Health Department sends clinical and food samples to ISDH—forwarded to CDC
- July 14: Serum and food samples test positive for botulinum toxin type A
- July 17: CDC notifies FDA about similar food products consumed by interstate cases—ISDH FPP also notifies FDA

Investigation Continues

- July 18: FDA issues initial recall notice
- July 19
 - USDA issues expanded recall notice
 - ISDH issues Indiana Health Alert Network message regarding symptoms, testing, recall and contact information
- July 21
 - FDA contacts ISDH FPP regarding updated recall
 - ISDH FPP contacts ISDH Office of Public Affairs to forward recall information to media outlets

Why This Recall Was Unique

- Hot dog chili sauce recalled first
- FDA learns of many other food items, adds others to recall list incrementally
- Eventually **91** items on list
 - Wide variety of products
 - Included both FDA and USDA products
 - Over 50 million cans in distribution
 - 16 of 17 suspected cans at plant test positive
 - Unlikely retailers, long shelf life of products

What Worked at ISDH

- Expertise of program areas involved
- Strong, collaborative relationships
- Recall implementation in Indiana
 - Indiana recall about 5.6% ineffective
 - South Carolina recall about 30% ineffective
- Indiana Health Alert Network (IHAN)

Challenges at ISDH

- Internal and external communication
- Lack of ISDH after hours contact information
- Case information leaked to media via police scanner
- Recall implementation in Indiana
 - Conducting audits
 - Enforcing recalls
 - Heeding recall information

Education

- Use of media
 - Can widely distribute information
 - Accuracy is key
 - No reporting in some areas
- Internet access
 - Posting information on ISDH Web site
 - E-mail information exchange
 - IHAN

Questions?