



Communications Toolkit | Industry Relations

During an outbreak, you will need to communicate with the facility, establishment, or venue in which the outbreak is occurring. These can be difficult conversations as the operator grapples with the ramifications of an outbreak associated with their business or product. Preparing in advance and offering support can build trust and facilitate information sharing, making your job easier.

This toolkit is a compilation of resources that can be used or modified when working with Industry or an establishment during a foodborne illness outbreak.



Key Point:

When dealing with facilities, establishments, or venues from which an outbreak has occurred, you should keep your public information officer and legal department updated. You may need their assistance with obtaining records and developing communication messages.

In this toolkit

[Summary slides](#) template that can be used to share information.

Fact sheets you can provide implicated facilities:

- [E. Coli \(Spanish\)](#) • [Listeria \(Spanish\)](#) • [Salmonella \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Norovirus: Facts for Food Workers](#) • [Detecting & Investigating Outbreaks](#)

The [Can Restaurant Managers Talk with Sick Workers?](#) guide helps managers understand their rights.

[Obtaining Food Transaction Records from Credit/Debit Cards](#) guide.

[Non-cooperation letters](#) can be useful for challenging facilities.

[Customer](#) and [Government Shopper Card Request](#) forms can be modified to meet your needs.

A [Distributor and Supplier Information Form](#) can be used for traceback or you can use the [Traceback Information Gathering worksheet](#).

[Contact us](#) for help with developing scripts you can use when calling an implicated facility about an outbreak.

More resources

- ASTHO's [Communication in Risk Situations](#) manual
- CDC's [Crisis Emergency Risk Communication](#) Checklist
- CDC's [Everyday Words for Public Health Communication](#)
- [CIFOR Industry Guidelines](#)



Preparing for Communication with Implicated Facility

CDC surveyed companies about the best way to communicate with them during an outbreak and came away with the following 5 tips for successful communication:

1. Share information in writing, ahead of any scheduled calls:
 - Summary of epidemiologic data
 - Map of cases
 - Information about ill people
2. Explicitly identify the reason for the call at the beginning
 - Emphasize the gravity of the situation
3. Focus on outbreak data rather than background information
 - Provide factsheets regarding the pathogen and investigation process in advance of the call.
4. Make it clear what the “ask” of the company is, or if the call is for information sharing only.
 - Example asks: customer list, traceback information, deep clean, employee training.



You may need to remind restaurant managers that they can ask their workers about foodborne illness.

5. Provide a contact list so companies know who to send information to or call with questions.
 - Epi, EH, Dept of Ag, etc.

Getting what you Need from an Implicated Facility

Need Shopper Card Data?

Many grocery store chains offer shopper cards to their customers. Generally, all purchases made using a shopper card can be recalled by the store and can help identify products and brands that may have caused illness. Retail chains differ in what they require for the release of these records.

The first step in obtaining records is to identify the company contact for shopper card requests. Your Environmental Health partners may know who this is or you can contact the store manager.



Then see what they require. It is often easiest if the case requests the information directly.

Need Customer Contact Information?

If the restaurant, firm or venue are reluctant to give you customer contact information, you may try sending a formal letter requesting it.



Need Traceback Information?

If you need to get traceback information for a product. It may be helpful to refer the store owner/operator to the CIFOR Industry Guidelines so they can better understand the outbreak investigation process and utilize the tools and resources available to them.



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