

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture  
Food and Feed Safety Division**

|                                      |                            |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Document RESP.50.05                  | Page 1 of 7                |
| Version #: 1                         | Effective Date: 06/10/2016 |
| Title: <b>RRT Communications SOP</b> |                            |

**Table of Contents**

1. PURPOSE
2. SCOPE
3. BACKGROUND
4. RESPONSIBILITY
5. DEFINITIONS
6. PROCEDURES
7. RELATED DOCUMENTS (includes References, Attachments)
8. EQUIPMENT/MATERIALS NEEDED
9. SAFETY
10. CIRCULATION
11. APPROVAL/DOCUMENT HISTORY

**1. PURPOSE**

This document describes the procedure for Rapid Response Team (RRT) communications during a food or feed incident, both within the Minnesota Department of Agriculture Food and Feed Safety Division (MDA FFSD) and with relevant partners.

**2. SCOPE**

This procedure applies to FFSD (including RRT) staff during a food or feed incident. It describes communications within FFSD as well as other agencies involved in response to an incident, including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), United States Department of Agriculture Food Safety Inspection Service (USDA FSIS), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), law enforcement, and delegated agencies.

This procedure does not include communication with the public (see RESP.50.06 – Communication with the Public SOP), industry as a whole, or the involved facility(ies). The procedure also does not include communication with outside agencies on issues of a routine nature, for example, FDA contract work.

**3. BACKGROUND**

Effective communication throughout a response framework is necessary for a successful response, regardless of the size and complexity of the structure and incident. The Incident Command System (ICS) is used during complex incidents handled by the RRT. See *RESP.50.04 – ICS SOP* for guidance on RRT's use of ICS. Post-response evaluations can identify weaknesses in communication among operational personnel and agencies as a reason for inefficiencies in the response (see *RESP.50.03 – After Action Review SOP*).

The central role of effective communication in a response necessitates an established plan of communication to best utilize operational resources.

**4. RESPONSIBILITY**

**FFSD Managers and Inspection Supervisors** – Food Program Managers or Inspection Supervisors may serve as primary contacts to external agencies when appropriate and will participate in any meetings required.

**RRT Coordinator** – The RRT Coordinator will serve as the main contact with MDA and external agencies during response activities. Follow proper communication channels and

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture  
Food and Feed Safety Division**

|                                      |                            |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Document RESP.50.05                  | Page 2 of 7                |
| Version #: 1                         | Effective Date: 06/10/2016 |
| Title: <b>RRT Communications SOP</b> |                            |

procedures as defined in this SOP. Facilitate planning meetings and participate in all meetings required.

**RRT Investigator** – The RRT Investigator will assist that RRT Coordinator in communication within and outside the agency and participate in any meetings required. Serve as primary response contact as requested or when RRT Coordinator and RTO Supervisor are not available.

**RTO Supervisor** – The RTO Supervisor will provide guidance during investigation communications and participate in any meetings required. Serve as primary response contact when RRT Coordinator is not available.

## 5. DEFINITIONS

**Food** – Every ingredient used for, entering into the consumption of, or used or intended for use in the preparation of food, drink, confectionery, or condiment for humans or other animals, whether simple, mixed, or compound; and articles used as components of these ingredients (MN Statute 34A.01 Subd. 4).

**Incident** – Incidents include, but are not limited to: a known or suspect pathogenic contamination in a food processing facility (retail or manufacturing), a known or suspect pathogen contamination of food, human or animal illness suspected to be associated with contamination of food, weather-related emergencies (flooding, tornado/wind, ice storm), or possible/known bioterrorism event.

## 6. PROCEDURES

### 6.1 Initial Notification – FFSD Staff (Managers or Inspection Supervisors)

- 6.1.1** Immediately notify a key representative of the RRT (RTO Supervisor, RRT Coordinator, or RRT Investigator) upon receiving information about an incident. If an RRT member is not immediately available, notify a supervisor or program manager.

### 6.2 Initial Notification – RRT Coordinator or Designee

- 6.2.1** Upon notification of an incident or potential event, identify staff to be involved in the investigation. See Table 1: Minimum Incident Notification Requirements. Additionally, identify who is FDA Commissioned, Credentialed, or has signed a confidentiality agreement so MDA and FDA is aware with whom they can share confidential information obtained by FDA, if relevant.
- 6.2.2** Schedule a planning meeting following the initial notification of the incident as soon as possible, but within 24 hours of notification. Send an email with the following information to relevant or involved staff. The email should include the following:
- a.** Email subject line: “Investigation: (brief description of the investigation)”;
  - b.** Known facts about the incident;
  - c.** Whether an ICS structure has been or will be stood up, based on current investigation status;

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture  
Food and Feed Safety Division**

|                                      |                            |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Document RESP.50.05                  | Page 3 of 7                |
| Version #: 1                         | Effective Date: 06/10/2016 |
| Title: <b>RRT Communications SOP</b> |                            |

- d. Conference call number to be used for the planning meeting (if needed); and
- e. Resource availability and possible options for response (joint, individual agency response).

**6.2.3** Facilitate the planning meeting. The planning meeting should include discussion of the following:

- a. Summary of incident.
- b. Determination of severity and prioritization,
- c. Determination of type of response (joint response between MDA and FDA, MDA response only, etc.),
- d. Information-sharing regulations, and
- e. Any observations that are ambiguous, unclear or do not meet the level of preponderance should not be included for penalty assessment.

**6.3 FDA/MDA Response Communications – RRT Coordinator**

- 6.3.1** Receive notification from the FDA Minneapolis District Office (MIN-DO) for threats or probable threats to the food supply within the State of Minnesota. MIN-DO must communicate all necessary information to allow MDA to adequately protect human and animal health in Minnesota. FDA MIN-DO also has primary responsibility for communicating with other districts or offices within the FDA.
- 6.3.2** Notify FDA MIN-DO of threats or probably threats to the food supply both within and outside the State of Minnesota. Communicate all necessary information to allow FDA MIN-DO to adequately protect the human and animal health in the United States. Notify FDA MIN-DO of any communications with agencies in other states.
- 6.3.3** Ensure a primary contact is communicating with MIN-DO (e.g. Division Director, FFSD Manager, FFSD Supervisor, or other RRT staff) if RRT Coordinator is not available or is not the appropriate contact for the situation.

**6.4 Communication with Law Enforcement and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) – RRT Coordinator**

- 6.4.1** Notify local law enforcement if an incident occurs with suspect or implicated criminal activity. This notification is required. Contact local law enforcement by dialing 911; other law enforcement contact information can be found on MN Statewide Emergency Contact Info List.
- 6.4.2** Notify the Department of Justice (DOJ) through the DOJ/Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Weapons of Mass Destruction Operations Unit if a threat involving biological, chemical, or radiological agents or indications that instances of disease may not be the result of natural causes. Contact information for the FBI can be found in the MN RRT Contacts List. This notification is required. The FBI, in turn, immediately notifies the National Operations Center

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture  
Food and Feed Safety Division**

|                                      |                            |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Document RESP.50.05                  | Page 4 of 7                |
| Version #: 1                         | Effective Date: 06/10/2016 |
| Title: <b>RRT Communications SOP</b> |                            |

(NOC) and the National Counterterrorism Center. Examples of these kinds of incidents include>

- a. Products or commodities which are suspected to have been tampered with (may be contaminated with chemical, biological, or physical hazards)
- b. Compromised access to a facility
- c. Discovery of or notification by industry of counterfeit food products
- d. Verbal or written threats to a specific food product, food facility, group of facilities, or industry
- e. Notification of other malicious, criminal, or terrorist action (or if found during an investigation or inspection)

**6.4.3** All action undertaken in response to such an incident must be conducted in such a way to avoid compromising a law enforcement investigation.

**6.5 RRT Communications to Other External Agencies – RRT Coordinator**

**6.5.1 USDA Food Safety Inspection Services (FSIS)**

- a. Notify USDA FSIS Office of Field Operations (OFO) Des Moines District Office contact if an incident occurs that involves a Minnesota food or meat facility regulated by USDA.
- b. If, during a foodborne illness outbreak investigation, an FSIS-regulated product is suspected of causing human or animal illness, notify the Office of Public Health Science (OPHS) Applied Epidemiology Staff (AES) Investigation Team for Minnesota shall be notified.
- c. If an FSIS-regulated product is analyzed by the MDA Laboratory and found to be adulterated, prompting a recall, notify both the OFO Des Moines District Office and the OPHS AES Investigation team for Minnesota.
- d. If intentional contamination of a food item is suspected or implicated, contact the OFO Des Moines District Office. Also see 6.4 for law enforcement contact procedure.
- e. Reference RRT Contact List for key points of contact with USDA.

**6.5.2 Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and MDA Delegated Agencies**

- a. If an individual case or case cluster of suspected foodborne/waterborne illness is detected in a Minnesota resident, refer the ill person(s) to the Minnesota Foodborne Illness Hotline (1-877-366-3455 or 651-201-5655) and notify MDH Foodborne Epidemiology.
- b. Notify appropriate MDA delegated agencies and MDH Environmental Health (EH) if RRT begins an investigation of a cluster of suspected foodborne/waterborne illness (such as a traceback investigation) which includes retail firms or firms in delegated agency territories.

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture  
Food and Feed Safety Division**

|                                      |                            |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Document RESP.50.05                  | Page 5 of 7                |
| Version #: 1                         | Effective Date: 06/10/2016 |
| Title: <b>RRT Communications SOP</b> |                            |

- c. Notify relevant staff from MDH EH, MDA delegated agencies, or MDH Foodborne Epidemiology if a food product is analyzed by the MDA Laboratory as a part of an outbreak investigation and found to be adulterated. Request the MDA Laboratory shares isolate information with MDH Public Health Laboratory (PHL).
- d. If intentional contamination of food item is suspected or implicated in a foodborne illness outbreak investigation, notify relevant staff from MDH EH, MDA delegated agencies, or MDH Foodborne Epidemiology. Also see 6.4 for law enforcement contact procedure.
- e. Reference RRT Contact List for key points of contact with MDH EH, MDH Foodborne Epidemiology, and MDA delegated agencies.

**6.5.3 MDA Laboratory Services Division (LSD)**

- a. Discuss the following as soon as possible with a key contact in the Microbiology Laboratory or Chemistry Laboratory sections:
  - i. Laboratory capacity, availability, and expertise;
  - ii. Type of analyses to be performed;
  - iii. Prioritization and timeframe (when to expect sample results); and
  - iv. Sample scheduling.
- b. Reference RRT Contact List for key points of contacts in LSD.

**6.5.4** Coordinate communication with the public and media with the ICS Information Officer (when applicable) or the MDA Communications office pursuant to *RESP.50.06 – Communications with the Public SOP* as well as *RESP.50.07 – Data Protection and Data Requests SOP*.

**Table 1: Minimum Incident Notification Requirements**

| Situation<br><i>(For clarity, may further define or include examples)</i>   | Agencies to Contact* |          |  |          |                                     |                             |
|---|----------------------|----------|--|----------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|   | Local Health         | MDH      | State/Local Regulatory in other states | CDC      | Federal Regulatory (FDA, FSIS, EPA) | State Law Enforcement & FBI |
| Local cluster(s) of suspected foodborne/waterborne illness detected   | Required             | Required | -                                      | -        | -                                   | -                           |
| Clusters across multiple counties, cases dispersed throughout state, or cases with matching serotype/subtype/PFGE | Required             | Required | <i>Situational</i>                     | Required | <i>Situational</i>                  | -                           |
| Clusters detected in multiple states, food  | Required             | Required | Required                               | Required | Required                            | -                           |

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture  
Food and Feed Safety Division**

|                                      |                            |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Document RESP.50.05                  | Page 6 of 7                |
| Version #: 1                         | Effective Date: 06/10/2016 |
| Title: <b>RRT Communications SOP</b> |                            |

|   |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| product or water suspected or implicated  |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| Microbiological food testing by regulatory agency prompts recall                  | Required | Required | Required | Required | Required | -        |
| Illness or positive sample prompts major recalls, requiring significant resources | Required | Required | Required | Required | Required | -        |
| Intentional contamination of food item is suspected or implicated                 | Required | Required | Required | Required | Required | Required |

\*See contact list for specific information

**7. RELATED DOCUMENTS (includes References, Attachments)**

*RESP.50.03 – After Action Review SOP*

*RESP.50.04 – ICS SOP*

*RESP.50.06 – Communications with the Public SOP*

*RESP.50.07 – Data Protection and Data Request SOP*

*RESP.50.09 – Emergency Contact List Use and Maintenance SOP*

MN RRT Contact List

[https://connect.mn.gov/sites/dfid2/rrt/RRTResourceLibrary/Contacts%20and%20Commissioned/MN%20RRT%20Contacts\\_List.xlsx](https://connect.mn.gov/sites/dfid2/rrt/RRTResourceLibrary/Contacts%20and%20Commissioned/MN%20RRT%20Contacts_List.xlsx)

MN Statewide Emergency Contact Information List

<https://connect.mn.gov/sites/dfid2/rrt/RRTResourceLibrary/Contacts%20and%20Commissioned/MN%20State%20Local%20Env%20Health%20Contacts%20directory%202015.pdf>

FMD 50 FDA-State Communication Field Management Directive (including FDA SOPs related to communications during an event)

MOU with Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)

MOU with Laboratory Services Division (LSD)

**8. EQUIPMENT/MATERIALS NEEDED**

N/A

**9. SAFETY**

N/A

**10. CIRCULATION**

This policy will be circulated to the following groups: FFSD Inspection Staff and Supervisors, RRT Staff, FFSD Program Managers, the FFSD Division Director, Compliance Officers, and FFSD office support staff. The policy will also be shared with all relevant agencies, including regulatory, public health, animal health, law enforcement, laboratory, and delegated agencies. A standing version is stored electronically on the SharePoint SOP site.

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture  
Food and Feed Safety Division**

|                                      |                            |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Document RESP.50.05                  | Page 7 of 7                |
| Version #: 1                         | Effective Date: 06/10/2016 |
| Title: <b>RRT Communications SOP</b> |                            |

**11. APPROVAL/DOCUMENT HISTORY**

| <b>Document History</b> |                      |   |
|-------------------------|----------------------|---|
| <b>Version #</b>        | <b>Status (I, R)</b> | <b>Change History</b>   |
| <b>1</b>                | <b>R</b>             | Previous version FOOD.50.05 – RRT Communications SOP transferred to Response (RESP). Updates also made due to division structure changes. |
| <b>Approved By:</b>     |                      | <b>Date</b>   |
|                         |                      |   |
| <b>Approved By:</b>     |                      | <b>Date</b>   |
|                         |                      |   |

I = Initial document; R = Revised document