



1020 Washington St. N, Twin Falls, Idaho
208-737-5900 www.phd5.idaho.gov

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NEWS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

Contact: Melody Bowyer, Environmental Program Manager, 737-5909

September is National Food Safety Awareness Education Month

TWIN FALLS - South Central Idaho Food Safety Awareness Coalition is sponsoring public education programs to promote food safety during National Food Safety Education Month in September. According to Melody Bowyer, Food Protection Program Manager for South Central Public Health District (SCPHD), the observance will reinforce food safety education and training for food service workers and educate the public on the proper ways to handle and prepare foods at home. These educational programs are developed in conjunction with a national program sponsored by the USDA.

The theme for this 14th year observance of food safety is **“Be Food Safe: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill!”** It stresses the importance of:

- washing hands, utensils, and cutting boards
- separating raw meats and poultry apart from other foods
- making sure foods are thoroughly cooked (recommends the use of a food thermometer)
- chilling leftovers and takeout foods within two hours

The informational program extends into food establishments as well as the home.

Each year, SCPHD inspects over 1,100 food establishments in south central Idaho. Included are food outlets ranging from fast food restaurants to schools and institutional facilities, from fine dining establishments to convenience stores. These inspections help ensure public health and prevent the spread of food borne illness.

During inspections, inspectors concentrate on risk factors affecting food borne illness and teach food handlers how to use sound practices and proper sanitary procedures when working with food.

Additionally, SCPHD spearheaded the effort to form South Central Idaho Food Safety Awareness Coalition with members from the food industry, other governmental agencies, and public institutions. The Coalition has been working together since October 2006 to A.C.E. (advocate, collaborate, and educate) the food establishments as well as the public about food safety.

Special educational infomercials have been produced specifically for National Food Safety Education Month to demonstrate safe food handling at food establishments and at home. They will demonstrate the proper way to wash hands before and after handling or eating food. They will also show the proper way to thaw frozen foods and cook foods to safe temperatures to ensure adequate pathogen destruction. Airing of these infomercials was funded through a grant from the FDA.

For more information on National Food Safety Education Month and how you can help, contact Melody Bowyer at 208-737-5909.

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