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1. **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this procedure is to describe the process used by Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Food and Feed Safety Division (FFSD) Rapid Response Team (RRT), Retail Food Program (RFP), Manufactured Food Program (MFP), and Produce Safety Program (PSP) staff to respond to food-related emergency notifications. The procedure describes the appropriate information to be collected, assessed, and routed to the proper subject matter experts (SMEs) for follow-up actions. The procedure addresses both naturally-occurring and man-made emergencies.

1. **SCOPE**

This procedure applies to RRT, RFP, MFP, and PSP FFSD staff for requests for emergency response routed through channels including, but not limited to, the FFSD Main Line, the MDA Duty Officer, the [MDA.FFSDResponse@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.FFSDResponse@state.mn.us) inbox, listserv email notification, directly to a program representative, or via the media (news or weather service notification). Emergencies may include fires, water advisories, power outages, flooding, physical damage, sewage backups, and vehicle stops or accidents. Each of these scenarios is covered in more detail in the work instructions and checklists identified in Section 7: *RELATED DOCUMENTS*.

This procedure does not apply to responses to incidents of human or animal illness (see *RESP.50.02 – Foodborne Illness Outbreak Investigations SOP* or *Animal Illness or Death Response SOP*) or to general responses not resulting from an emergency event. Response procedure *RESP.50.01 – Investigation Procedures for Food or Environmental Contamination SOP* may be referenced for facility contamination or adulteration issues not resulting from emergencies like those outlined above. This procedure does not cover FFSD Feed Program responses (see *Feed Incident Response SOP*).

Furthermore, this procedure covers collecting and routing information to the proper SMEs for follow-up actions. It does not cover the procedures used during a facility or incident follow-up. Refer to the incident-specific work instruction (listed in Section 7: *RELATED DOCUMENTS*) for field procedure response actions.

1. **BACKGROUND**

MDA FFSD staff are responsible for food safety across the state of Minnesota. When incidents expand outside of Minnesota, federal staff, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), have significant roles. Incidents involving human illness among residents of Minnesota will require assistance from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). See *RESP.50.02 – Foodborne Illness Outbreak Investigations SOP* for additional guidance.

Routing requests for assistance in an emergency are quickly and most efficiently achieved by identifying one person who can get all the relevant information, assess the urgency of response, and share immediately with the proper subject matter experts to assign for follow-up actions.

There are several primary ways that FFSD staff are notified of emergencies. The first is when an individual contacts the Minnesota Duty Officer and the Duty Officer notifies the MDA Emergency Response group through email ([MDA.FFSDResponse@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.FFSDResponse@state.mn.us)) for assignment or further routing within MDA. There are several types of emergencies routed through the Duty Officer, since they act as a one-call hotline for the entire state and may receive calls from law enforcement, first responders, businesses, and the general public. These emergencies can include issues resulting from a natural disaster (physical facility damage, flooding, power outages, etc.), fires, spills, and traffic accidents, but also reports of illness or poisoning of humans or animals, or suspected tampering with human or animal food products. See *RESP.50.02 – Foodborne Illness Outbreak Investigations SOP* for responses to human illness and *Animal Illness or Death Response SOP* for responses to animal illness or death.

The second way that FFSD is notified is when State Patrol officers contact FFSD to report a commercial vehicle transporting food at unsafe temperatures or in unsanitary conditions. This direct communication between the State Patrol and MDA is the result of a collaborative effort between the two agencies to prevent potentially adulterated food from being distributed to the public.

Finally, FFSD staff may also receive notification of a “do not use water” or “boil water” advisory notification as it relates to drinking water safety. These notifications are received through an automated email from the MDH Drinking Water Protection Section and are typically handled by the MDA RRT. However, in instances where RRT staff is not available, the notification would be shared with the MDA Emergency Response group through the [MDA.FFSDResponse@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.FFSDResponse@state.mn.us) email for assignment or further routing.

While these are the primary routes of emergency notification, this procedure applies to any general notification of an emergency that falls within the procedure scope, defined in *Section 2: SCOPE*, above.

1. **RESPONSIBILITY**

**Division Director and Assistant Division Director** – The Division Director and Assistant Division Director ensure Program Managers and Supervisors are fulfilling the responsibilities of this procedure and related work instructions. Directorial staff may also serve as subject matter experts (SMEs) or assist in identifying SMEs to provide follow-up actions to initial notification, as necessary. Directorial staff will also communicate status of facilities to the Commissioner’s Office upon request.

**Program Managers –** All Program Managers are members of the MDA Emergency Response group and may be responsible for follow-up or assigning follow-up for incidents affecting their program area. Program Managers may also serve as SMEs or assist in identifying SMEs to provide follow-up actions to initial notification, as necessary.

**Program Supervisors and RRT Staff –** All Supervisors and RRT staff are members of the MDA Emergency Response group and may be responsible for follow-up or assigning follow-up for incidents affecting their program area. Supervisors may also serve as SMEs or assist in identifying SMEs to provide follow-up actions to initial notification, as necessary.

**FFSD Main Line Operator –** The staff person assigned to answer main line calls for FFSD is responsible for receiving and recording emergency situations, and sending pertinent information immediately to the MDA Response group through an email ([MDA.FFSDResponse@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.FFSDResponse@state.mn.us)). This individual will typically be staffed within the Program Administration and Support Unit (PASU).

**Inspectors** – Inspectors will receive and record emergency situations reported to them and send pertinent information immediately to the MDA Response group through an email ([MDA.FFSDResponse@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.FFSDResponse@state.mn.us)).

1. **DEFINITIONS**

**Emergency Contact Person** – The person with information about the food emergency the responder must contact in order to initiate the response. This may be a law enforcement officer, an employee at a food facility, or other external contact.

**Emergency Response Group** – The list of staff serving as primary responders to emergencies. The roster includes all FFSD Retail Food Supervisors, Manufactured Food Supervisors, RRT staff, Program Managers, and the Division Director and Assistant Director. Note that staff from the Dairy and Meat Inspection Division (DMID) and FFSD Feed Program are included in the Emergency Response Group, but are not subject to the requirements in this policy.

**Primary Responder** – An individual from the Emergency Response Group taking the lead on responding to an incident notification. The Primary Responder is responsible for immediately notifying the Emergency Response Group that they are taking responsibility for the response and/or assigning further follow-up.

1. **PROCEDURES**
   1. **Receive and Route Initial Emergency Notifications - Recipient of Initial Notification (FFSD Main Line Operator, Facility Inspector, etc.)** 
      1. During business hours, identify notifications that are emergencies and that require immediate response by a member of the emergency response group. These include, but are not limited to, calls or emails from:
2. State Patrol officers reporting a commercial vehicle suspected of transporting adulterated food;
3. Food companies reporting an emergency situation that endangers food safety or public health (e.g. physical damage following a natural disaster, power outage, facility fire, etc.); or
4. Law enforcement or food companies reporting a vehicle accident or vehicle roll-over resulting in potential or actual damage to food in transit.
   * 1. Record information relevant to the response using questions in the “Information to Collect and Email” column in the document *Initial Contact Form – Food, Feed, Dairy and Meat Scenarios and Response*. Questions asked may vary depending on the emergency scenario type. However, always collect the following information:
5. Full name of the caller
6. Job title of the caller (store manager, State Patrol Officer, etc.)
7. Phone number of the caller
8. Full name, job title, and phone number of the emergency contact person, if different than the caller
9. Short description of the emergency
   * 1. Notify the caller that a responder will be reaching out to the emergency contact person at their earliest availability. Share information from the “Information to Convey” column in the *Initial Contact Form – Food, Feed, Dairy and Meat Scenarios and Response*. Information may vary depending on the emergency scenario type.
     2. Immediately send the information in an email to the [MDA.FFSDResponse@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.FFSDResponse@state.mn.us) distribution list. Inspectors should also include their Supervisor in the notification.
   1. **Review Emergency Notification - Primary Responder** 
      1. Review the notification and determine if your program area is affected by the incident. Review should take place as soon as the notification is received.
      2. Send a reply back to the [MDA.FFSDResponse@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.FFSDResponse@state.mn.us) email to indicate that the primary responder will lead in responding to the emergency (e.g. “RRT has it”, “Manufactured Food Program has it”, etc.) *or* to indicate that no action from FFSD is required. This response should take place as soon as possible, but within an hour of receipt of the notification. This role is often filled by a Program Manager position within the group of primary responders.
      3. If no follow-up is needed, notify the emergency contact person if appropriate or requested. The response is complete. No additional documentation is required.
   2. **Call the Emergency Contact Person and Collect Additional Information – Primary Responder**
      1. Identify the type of emergency based on the description provided. Be prepared to ask specific questions about the emergency situation.
      2. Call the emergency contact person as soon as possible.
      3. Collect information about the emergency.
      4. If the emergency contact person does not have answers to all the scenario-specific questions, get the name, title, and telephone number for those who can answer the questions (for example, the towing company or entity that owns the food).
      5. Follow up with any additional parties to gather relevant information.
      6. Provide basic instructions to the caller, as necessary, to assist with the initial response. Refer to the Emergency Response Work Instructions (referenced in *Related Documents*) for situation-specific instructions.
      7. Record any relevant information and emails and store within the Emergency Response OneNote notebook.
   3. **Assess Additional Follow-Up Needs – Primary Responder**
      1. Assess whether further FFSD follow-up actions are needed based on the additional details gathered.
      2. If follow-up is needed, continue to step 6.4.3. If no follow-up is needed, the response is complete. No additional documentation is required.
      3. Contact the appropriate Program Supervisor ( Produce Safety, Retail Food, or Manufactured Food) and provide summary of the incident and current status, including a link to the OneNote notebook containing documentation of the initial response
   4. **Assign Follow-Up - Supervisor, Program Manager, Assistant Director, or Director**
      1. Receive request from the primary responder for follow-up. Identify area inspector or inspector not conducting higher-priority work to conduct the follow-up. RRT assistance may also be requested, particularly in situations where multiple facilities must be contacted for follow-up by phone.
      2. For in-person, individual facility follow-ups, assign to the inspector by creating a complaint in USA Food Safety (USAFS). Provide all background collected as part of the initial response to the inspector via email. Follow-up documentation will be stored in USAFS as part of the inspection report.
      3. For multiple-facility phone follow-up, assign to the inspector(s) or RRT staff via email. Provide all background collected as part of the initial response to the inspector. Follow-up documentation will be stored in OneNote outlining follow-up activities and any findings of interest.
      4. Provide guidance to inspector or RRT staff conducting follow-up. Refer to appropriate work instructions and checklists based on the type of emergency.
      5. Communicate impact and actions taken back to FFSD Management or Directorial staff upon request. Refer to the USAFS inspection report or OneNote documentation as appropriate.
10. **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Animal Illness or Death Response SOP

Feed Incident Response SOP

Initial Contact Form – Food, Feed, Dairy and Meat Scenarios and Response

RESP.50.01 – Investigation Procedures for Food or Environmental Contamination SOP

RESP.50.02 – Foodborne Illness Outbreak Investigations SOP

RESP.WI.50.10 – Facility Fire WI and checklist

RESP.WI.50.11 – Water Advisory WI and checklist

RESP.WI.50.12 - Power Outage WI and checklist

RESP.WI.50.13 – Facility Flooding WI and checklist

RESP.WI.50.14 – Physical Damage and Sewage Backup WI and checklist

RESP.WI.50.15 – Food in Transit WI and checklist

1. **EQUIPMENT/MATERIALS NEEDED**

N/A

1. **SAFETY**

N/A

1. **CIRCULATION**

This policy will be circulated to FFSD office staff responsible for answering the MDA Main Line, including: Licensing Lead Worker, Licensing Liaison, and members of the PASU; FFSD Managers, Supervisors, and Inspectors (excluding Feed Program staff); RRT staff; and the FFSD Division Director and Assistant Director. The current version will be stored electronically on the FFSD document control site.