The recent onslaught of two hurricanes nearly back-to-back in the U.S. Gulf Coast region has brought to light many areas where improved “storm preparedness” need to be addressed. Among the many issues that has since become more obvious are those dealing with food manufacturing, distribution and/or retail and food service operations that also store perishable food items.

What can be done to reduce the risk to losing perishable items? What can be done to get premises that are without power for extended periods back into sanitary condition so they can then begin their normal operations?

These are many of the questions that have plagued businesses that have undergone the unheralded effects left by the recent hurricanes, Katrina and Rita.

Although Oklahoma may not receive the type of ravages that Gulf Coast communities have come to know, there are other situations that equate to emergency situations in food operations: storms, such as rain, snow and ice; flooding; and tornadoes which can result in extended power outages. The U.S. Department of Agriculture-Food Service Inspection Service maintains a Web site, located at www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Emergency_Preparedness_Fact_Sheets/index.asp, that includes a variety of materials describing what consumers, manufacturers and distributors of foods need to do in order to prepare themselves in case of emergency situations.

In mid-August, New York State Department of Health became inundated with hundreds of reports of gastrointestinal illness with symptoms including diarrhea, abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting, fever, headache and loss of appetite. By early September, the numbers had totalled more than 2,200 illnesses.

Samples taken at the Seneca Lake State Park spray water attraction had confirmed the presence of the parasite, Cryptosporidium, in two of the parks water storage tanks.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have now designated Recreational Water Illness as the term used to describe illnesses that are spread by swallowing, breathing or ingesting contaminated water (www.cdc.gov/healthywater).
Food Safety Exploration

“Cake batter” ice cream is recalled

After 14 people from four western and mid-western states became ill this summer from *Salmonella typhimurium* acquired from eating “cake batter” ice cream, the Food & Drug Administration published an alert to food retail and food service establishments about this and similar types of products.

The problem arises from the use of dry cake batter directly into ice cream mix to give the flavor of “cake batter.” However, most cake batter mixes are meant to be baked in cakes. Therefore, any low level of pathogen that might be present and easily killed by baking, would not be killed when adding the cake mix directly to ice cream.

In this particular outbreak, the ice cream mix was pasteurized, but the cake mix, which had label instructions to “bake before use,” was added subsequently to the pasteurized ice cream. These types of products, such as cake batter milk shakes, cookie dough ice cream, etc, present a potential health hazard to consumers.

The FDA warns that these dry mixes are not considered “ready-to-eat” products, and steps need to be taken to eliminate potential pathogens that might be present if they are to be used in consumable products.

PETER’S REMARKS, continued from page 1

order to reduce foodborne illness and provide sanitary conditions for food service can be obtained online at www.health.state.ok.us/program/cpd/256.pdf.

Oklahoma is also home to many food manufacturers, and there is additional food code that relates to good manufacturing practices, GMPs, for those that manufacture, process or hold food in Oklahoma, which can be found at www.health.state.ok.us/program/cpd/260.pdf.

As we approach this holiday season where there are traditions of family or social gatherings with extended meal periods, please be mindful to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold, so everyone may enjoy a safe meal. A FAPC news release on food safety tips may be found at www.fapc.biz/pages/releases.htm.

ILLNESS, continued from page 1

having contact with contaminated water from swimming pools, spas, lakes, rivers or oceans. In the past, similar situations occurred in shallow “kiddie-pools,” whereby a toddler was shedding E. coli O157:H7 in his diaper unbeknownst to the toddler’s supervising adult or other patrons. The incident resulted in the spread of that illness by a similar route of accidental ingestion of contaminated pool water.

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