

Food Contamination Can Be Either Unintentional or Intentional

The U.S. food supply is potentially vulnerable to intentional contamination. As such, CIs also conduct surveillance activities related to food defense. The main goal of these activities is to identify potential security vulnerabilities that increase the risk of intentional contamination for meat, poultry, and processed egg products at in-commerce facilities.

What Is the Difference Between Food Safety and Food Defense?

Food safety refers to protecting the food supply from unintentional contamination because of pathogens such as *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, and *E. coli* O157:H7 and chemical and physical hazards.

Food defense refers to protecting the food supply from intentional contamination with chemical, biological, physical, or radiological agents. Food defense activities can include implementing additional security measures to:

- ✓ reduce the risk of someone intentionally contaminating the food supply, and
- ✓ minimize the impact of an incident.

Food Defense is VOLUNTARY. Businesses are not required to implement food defense measures. However, it is a best practice that further protects public health and the business brand. The in-commerce surveillance activities related to food defense can assist facility owners or operators with identifying potential vulnerabilities.

Resources for Additional Information

The USDA FSIS website (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov>) includes free food defense and emergency response resources and guidance information such as:

- Guidance on developing a food defense plan
- Guidance on food defense for processors and distributors
- Guidance on food defense for transporters and warehouses
- Guidance on risk mitigation measures
- Guidance through *askFSIS*, a Web-based service through which clients can submit questions and receive responses.

If you have additional questions, please contact the Small Plant Help Desk at 1-877-FSISHELP (1-877-374-7435) or by emailing InfoSource@fsis.usda.gov.



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FSIS Food Safety and Food Defense Information for In-Commerce Firms



USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

FSIS is the regulatory agency within USDA responsible for protecting public health by ensuring that meat, poultry, and processed egg products distributed in-commerce are safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged.



FSIS Compliance Investigators

FSIS Compliance Investigators (CIs) are responsible for carrying out the statutory authorities of the agency through surveillance, investigation, product control, and enforcement to ensure public health protection.

The main goal of these activities is to protect consumers during foodborne illness outbreaks and from unintentionally and intentionally contaminated foods.

FSIS in-commerce surveillance activities related to food safety include verification that meat, poultry, and processed egg products are wholesome and not adulterated. CIs will verify that:

- ✓ Products are not held under insanitary conditions under which they may become contaminated or harmful to health.
- ✓ Records are kept in a manner that correctly discloses all transactions involved in the business activity subject to FSIS regulations.

What Can a Business Expect When an FSIS Compliance Investigator Conducts In-Commerce Surveillance and Food Defense Activities?



- ✓ During surveillance, the CI may ask questions about the conditions, storage, handling, preparation, and transportation of meat, poultry, or processed egg products. The CI may also take samples of these products. The CI may surveil appropriate equipment and the internal and external conditions of the facility.
- ✓ The CI will record any findings and present a hard copy, FSIS Form 5420-3, Food Defense Surveillance Findings, Sensitive Security Information, to the management of the facility.



- ✓ The CI will present a business card and his/her credentials (e.g., name, phone numbers, office of employment location) upon arrival.
- ✓ The CI will announce that he/she is there to conduct a surveillance or food defense activity.
- ✓ If CI is visiting a business whose activities are open to the public (e.g., a retail store), the CI is not required to make prior contact before or upon entering the firm. The CI is required to report to management personnel when discussing issues involving food safety/defense and any other type of visit.

What Can You Do To Protect Your Products?

There are simple, low-cost measures you can implement to prevent your products from intentional contamination. One of the first and most important ways to protect your customers, employees, and business is to develop a **Food Defense Plan**. Key elements should address:

- ✓ Outside Security
- ✓ Inside Security
- ✓ Personnel Security
- ✓ Incident Response

Other Food Defense Plan elements can include:

- ✓ Prevent unauthorized access to food preparation and storage areas.
- ✓ Monitor self-serve areas (e.g., salad bars, condiment areas) for evidence of tampering.
- ✓ Require delivery personnel to sign in a logbook and present positive photo ID.
- ✓ Restrict access to chemical storage areas.
- ✓ Keep receiving dock doors locked from the inside.
- ✓ Conduct background checks on employees.
- ✓ Train employees on food defense awareness and on how to report suspicious incidents such as threatening telephone calls or customer behavior.
- ✓ In the event of an incident, contact your local law enforcement.

By having a Food Defense Plan, you will contribute to a safer, more secure food supply. Additional benefits of a food defense plan may also include:

- ✓ Reduction in the risk of unsafe products, theft, and economic losses.
- ✓ Possible reduction in company liability.

