

Advisory: Consumers Urged to Throw Away Potentially Contaminated Foods

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The Michigan departments of Agriculture and Rural Development and Health and Human Services are cooperating with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and local law enforcement in Ann Arbor on an investigation involving intentional food contamination at retail grocery stores in Ann Arbor.

Thanks to citizen tips, the suspect was apprehended by the Ann Arbor Police Department. During interrogation, the suspect admitted to intentionally contaminating salad bars and/or produce sections of at least three grocery stores in the greater Ann Arbor area – Whole Foods, Meijer, Inc. and Plum Market – at least twice in the last month. The suspect claims to have sprayed the food with a mixture of a commercial mouse poison, alcohol-based hand-sanitizer and water. Samples have been sent for further laboratory analysis to determine concentration.

The chemicals found in this mixture are a form of anti-coagulant, similar to what is found in medicines that have an anti-clotting function. Based on the known ingredients in the mixture at this time, MDHHS does not anticipate any adverse health effects on individuals who may have ingested potentially contaminated products.

The stores involved have been contacted and additional samples have been collected by law enforcement for further testing. MDARD food inspectors are in the stores this evening conducting follow-up assessments of the potentially affected stores.

“Out of an abundance of caution and to protect public health and food safety, I encourage consumers to dispose of any foods purchased from salad bars, olive bars and ready-to-eat hot and cold food areas from these stores between mid-March and the end of April,” said Jamie Clover Adams, MDARD director. “Although most of these types of foods may have already been eaten or disposed of, some may still be in refrigerators or freezers.”

Based on FBI investigation, there is the potential that other stores in Michigan may also have been targeted. These stores include:

Busch's
2240 S Main Street
Ann Arbor, MI

Cupcake Station
116 E Liberty
Ann Arbor, MI

Family Fare
2026 North Saginaw
Midland, MI

Kroger
3838 Richfield Road
Flint, MI

Meijer, #108
7300 Eastman Ave
Midland, MI

Meijer, #64
3145 Ann Arbor-Saline
Ann Arbor, MI

Meijer, #213
9515 Birch Run Rd
Birch Run, MI

Millers Mini Mart
3001 Bay City Rd
Midland, MI

Plum Market
375 North Maple
Ann Arbor, MI

Target
2000 Waters Road
Ann Arbor, MI

Tsai Grocery
3115 Oak Valley Drive
Ann Arbor, MI

Walmart
910 Joe Mann Blvd
Midland, MI

Walmart
7000 E Michigan Ave
Saline, MI

Whole Foods
990 W Eisenhower Pkwy
Ann Arbor, MI

Whole Foods
3135 Washtenaw Ave
Ann Arbor, MI

“While the risk for adverse health effects appears to be low, more investigation is being done to determine what level of exposure may have occurred,” said Dr. Eden Wells, chief medical executive, MDHHS. “If you have any health concerns, contact your healthcare provider or call Michigan Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222 with questions.”

The departments would like to acknowledge the diligence of employees at Whole Foods, the quick response of the FBI, law enforcement agencies, and local health officials, and those who provided tips via social media, which has led to a speedy resolution to this issue.

Food industry employees and consumers are reminded to be vigilant and to report any suspicious activities. Remember, “If you see something, say something.” Any suspicious activities should be immediately reported to local law enforcement.

Examples of things to watch for include employees or strangers who:

- spray unknown substances in your store
- enter or exit your operation through the wrong doors

- hang around display cases, exposed food displays (e.g., produce or salad bars) or cold/hot food displays
- loiter in aisles
- leave suspicious materials in your store

MDARD and MDHHS will continue to coordinate with all agencies involved, along with Washtenaw County Health Department and Michigan's retail grocery industry. Updates will be provided as new information becomes available.

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