IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE

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Dear Food Establishment Operator:

On April 2, 2008, two additions to the *Idaho Food Code* became official. These additions might impact how you operate your food establishment. As you are aware, the *Idaho Food Code* adopts, by reference, the 2001 Model Food Code of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and also includes specific wording applicable within Idaho. The full document can be found at: www.foodsafety.idaho.gov. This letter is intended to explain the additions and the implications that they might have for you.

Vendors at "Farmer's Markets" who are required to obtain a permit from the local district health department are now allowed to operate for the duration of the market season. In the past, vendors were required to secure a new permit several times during the season. The new definition of an "Intermittent Food Establishment" allows a vendor to operate at a particular market with one permit, for the duration of the market season.

Idaho Food Code Section 2 now requires that employees diagnosed with norovirus be excluded from working in the food establishment until they are cleared to return to work by a medical doctor, or more than forty-eight (48) hours have passed since the employee has not had any symptoms. Symptoms of norovirus include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, chills, and sometimes low-grade fever.

Norovirus is spread very easily and can become air-borne. It can be difficult to adequately clean and disinfect an area where an employee or patron has experienced the above symptoms. Because of this difficulty of cleaning and disinfecting the area, other employees or patrons can be exposed to the norovirus organism and can also become ill. For these reasons, an employee who experiences the above symptoms must not be allowed to work until he or she is no longer at risk of infecting others.

A food establishment operator or manager who is aware of an employee with symptoms of norovirus infection must contact the local district health department and seek guidance for when to allow that employee to return to work. Typically, norovirus infections are of short duration, but this depends on the individual.

Thank you for the efforts that you undertake to ensure food safety. If you have any questions about these changes, or any other aspect of the *Idaho Food Code*, please contact your local district health department or the Food Protection Program.

Sincerely,

Patrick L. Guzzle
Food Protection Program Manager