Guidance for Clean-up of Vomiting and Diarrheal Events in Food Establishments

(June 2021)

Virginia Retail Food Regulatory Update

The Virginia Food Regulations & Retail Food Establishment Regulations (12VAC5-421 & 2VAC5-585) have been updated to include changes to the 2017 version of the US Food and Drug Administration's Model Food Code.

This update, effective June 24, 2021, requires food establishment to have written procedures for employees to follow when responding to vomiting or diarrheal events.

WHAT?

This guide serves to bring awareness to (1) the new requirement to have a written procedure to address vomit/diarrheal events in a food establishment, and (2) to provide guidance on how to effectively respond to such events in a manner to protect employees as well as the public. Make sure the plan you develop for your establishments includes the elements below then train your employees to follow the plan.

WHY?

When someone vomits or has diarrhea in a food establishment there is a high risk of transmission of illness in the establishment. By having a written plan and training employees on how to respond to these types of incidents you can limit the risk to your employees and customers. Employees who respond to these types of incidents should be properly trained to clean up fecal and vomit matter in a way that protects them, the customers, and food. Effective clean-up of vomit or diarrhea in a food establishment is an important means of preventing the spread of harmful pathogens in the establishment and should be handled differently from routine cleaning. An effective clean-up policy involves more stringent cleaning and disinfecting processes than the cleaning and sanitizing protocols food establishments normally use.

BE PREPARED

Assemble a response kit and frequently check supply stock to ensure easy access and rapid response. All employees should be trained on where to find your kit and supplies and how to use the kit properly. Suggested supplies include:

Sample Clean-Up Kit (Vomit/Diarrheal Response)			
Personal Protective Equipment	**Cleaning Supplies**	**Disinfectant**	**Misc.**
2 pairs of single-use gloves, plastic apron	1 sealable, plastic bag	1 quart bottle of disinfectant	'Caution'-'Wet Floor' signs or safety cones
1 face mask	1 scoop/scraper	Sanitization solution	Mop and mop buckets
1 pair of goggles	1 absorbent powder/solidifier (such as kitty litter)		

CLEAN UP PROCEDURES

You may use these suggested steps to clean up vomit or diarrheal events as your policy or you may modify these steps and develop your own policy.

Before Clean Up Begins

- Remove all individuals (employees and customers) within a 25 foot radius and ask them to wash their hands immediately.
- Block off the area, and if applicable dispose of all uncovered food, and single-use containers and utensils within a 25 foot radius.
- Put on personal protective equipment.

Clean up Surfaces

Many types of surfaces can become contaminated when someone throws up or experiences diarrhea in your establishment. It is important that you use the correct clean-up procedure for the surface(s) that are contaminated. Three types of surfaces are common in food establishments:

- Hard surfaces (floors, tables, utensils)
- Soft surfaces that cannot be laundered (carpet and upholstered furniture)
- Soft surfaces that can be laundered (linens, towels, and clothing)

Step 1: Cover

- Cover the vomit or diarrhea with paper towels or an absorbent powder (such as kitty litter) to soak up liquids.

Step 2: Remove

- Remove the paper towels or hardened powder with a scoop/scraper and immediately place them in a sealable plastic bag.

Step 3: Wash

- Prepare a solution of soapy water.
- Wash all surfaces contaminated with vomit or diarrhea with this solution. This includes all nearby surfaces possibly splashed by vomit or diarrhea, such as chair legs, tables, walls, shelves, or counters. Wash as wide of an area surrounding the vomit or diarrhea as is possible. Work from the clean areas towards the most contaminated areas to minimize the spread of infectious material.
- Rinse the soapy water from all surfaces with clean water.

Step 4: Disinfect (Disinfectants are chemicals that kill viruses and bacteria on surfaces. Sanitizers are chemicals that kill bacteria on surfaces. From EPA website.)

- Use paper towels or a mop with a disposable mop head, saturate all washed surfaces with a disinfectant.
- Prepare a chlorine bleach solution (CDC & EPA recommendations):
  - ¾ cup of concentrated bleach + 1 gallon water (concentration ~3500ppm)
  -OR-
  - 1 cup of regular strength bleach + 1 gallon water
- Use a spray bottle and saturate the area and surfaces (25 foot radius).
- Leave surface wet for at least 5 minutes. Always follow the directions on the disinfectant label.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize all surfaces intended for food or mouth contact before use.

After Clean Up

Step 1: Remove

- Remove all personal protective equipment and place in the plastic bag. Do not touch any of the surfaces that were just cleaned as they can be re-contaminated. All personal protective equipment must be taken off before leaving the area that has just been cleaned.
- Place all used cleaning supplies, such as paper towels and disposable mop heads, in the plastic bag. Seal the bag with a twist tie.
- Throw away all uncovered food near the vomit or diarrhea event as well as any food handled by the person who was sick.
- Remove all waste from the facility immediately following local, state, or federal rules.

Step 2: Clean mops and scoops

- Wash and disinfect mop handles and other reusable cleaning supplies, such as scoops/scrapers, using the same steps as used for hard surfaces.

Step 3: Wash hands

- Wash hands thoroughly before performing any other duties.

VDH Virginia Department of Health
To protect the health and promote the well-being of all people in Virginia.

Virginia Food Protection Task Force
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