

EPI Update for Friday, July 18, 2008
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
Iowa Department of Public Health

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Hepatitis A exposure at a large restaurant and bar**
- **IDPH/CDC survey on health messages done with student assistance**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Hepatitis A exposure at a large restaurant and bar

A food service worker at Whitey's Bar and Billiards in Burlington has been diagnosed with Hepatitis A, a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis A virus that can be spread to others in food and drinks. Those who may have been exposed to Hepatitis A at this business include any individuals who consumed:

- Any drinks containing ice or a lemon slice

- Any items from the salad bar

- On any day from July 2 through and including July 13

All patrons who have been exposed need to receive a Hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin immediately. Although the vaccine and immune globulin reduce the risk of contracting Hepatitis A after exposure, some people may still become ill. Therefore, all patrons need to see their health care provider right away if they develop symptoms of Hepatitis A. Symptoms may include fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, diarrhea, dark urine and jaundice (the yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes). Immediate diagnosis of Hepatitis A allows family and friends to be given the vaccine or immune globulin quickly to reduce their risk of disease. All those exposed to Hepatitis A, regardless of receiving a vaccination or immune globulin, need to wash their hands every time they use the restroom and before touching anyone else's food.

Patrons who ate or drank the affected items from June 25 through July 1 are also at risk, although it is too late for them to receive the vaccine or immune globulin. They should be aware of the symptoms of Hepatitis A and contact their health care providers if they show symptoms.

The Des Moines County Health Department held two Hepatitis A vaccine clinics this week and will hold two more, from 9 AM to 8 PM on July 17 and from 9 AM to 6:30 PM July 18. The clinic will be held at the Des Moines County Health Department, 522 North 3rd Street in Burlington. Vaccine and immune globulin will be provided free of charge and an appointment is not needed during clinic hours.

For more information about the Des Moines County vaccine clinics, call 319-753-8290 or 319-753-8700. For all other questions please contact the CADE at 800-362-2736.

IDPH/CDC survey on health messages done with student assistance

A survey in the flooded areas of Iowa was conducted over the three-day July 4th weekend by IDPH and the CDC to look at on the way health messages were received and how effective those messages were. Nearly 400 residents in flooded areas of Benton, Johnson, Linn and Louisa counties were asked about specific health messages related to flooding. Students in public health programs from three Iowa universities assisted in this survey (University of Iowa, University of Northern Iowa, and Des Moines University).

Preliminary results showed that while many people remembered hearing messages about vaccinations and mold, few said they remembered messages about avoiding injuries or carbon monoxide poisoning, which are the most common and most serious risks associated with flood recovery. IDPH will review these survey findings to determine how best to get important health messages to the intended audiences in the future. Meanwhile, here are comments from two of the students about their experiences.

My days on the survey were spent in Cedar Rapids, North Liberty, Iowa City, and Vinton. I have dealt with loss in my career (especially when bedside nursing) but this was unlike anything I had encountered before. One man shared that he spends all day at his place of employment cleaning up after the flood, only to come home and have to face the arduous task of cleaning and recovering his home. He said, "It's too much." In Vinton where we ran into perhaps our saddest experience. A woman who lives alone was sitting in her car with her respirator mask around her neck. Her house had been condemned. She seemed so isolated and alone with her few possessions in her vehicle. She said to us, "What do I do now?" We had no answer for her but we both hope she had found some aid in her plight. The people's loss and sadness was palpable, but people seemed eager to answer our questions. Each day we were exhausted by the amount of tragedy we saw all around us. This experience was a valuable one for my education and as a health care leader. I was happy to give up a three-day holiday weekend to gain this unique experience. - *Genny Maroc from Des Moines University*

We found most people very willing to speak with us and to participate in the survey, taking time from their clean-up to answer questions from us - complete strangers. In the city of Cedar Rapids, we saw what it meant to be a true community; it was inspiring to see this firsthand. We found many homeowners were temporarily living with friends or neighbors. We saw neighbors helping neighbors with clean-up efforts, helping fellow citizens by providing meals in their churches or civic groups. Even surrounded by destruction and experiencing uncertainty, people had their humor still intact. For example, as we walked to a flood-damaged home, a little dog charged out with faux fierceness and bluster to greet us. Hearing the commotion the owner invited us back to the garage where he was

cleaning possessions. He told us the dog had already eaten three FEMA people that day and was full, so we were safe. Another lady emerged from her house and practically hugged us, until she realized we weren't from the gas company after all...but she answered the survey in any case. In another instance, a small girl listened quietly while her father answered our survey questions, then proudly volunteered that she had cleaned out her toy room to donate to kids who lost theirs...and the father verified that fact and their pick-up was loaded with her toys ready to be taken to a donation center. In the end, I was reminded of the true meaning of "community." It is not the homes and businesses that make the community, it is the people. Cedar Rapadians, in their worst days, managed to outshine most of us in our very best days. - *Sam Messer from the University of Iowa*

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

CADE Fall Updates – Save the Date

The following dates and times have been scheduled for the annual fall updates. Cedar Rapids – September 9; Marshalltown – September 24; Creston – October 22. The other three sites are pending. This year's updates will include a refresher on use of the Iowa Disease Surveillance System. A complete agenda will be announced soon.

Have a safe, healthy and happy week!

Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
Iowa Department of Public Health
800-362-2736