

## Somerset County Department of Health Innovative Food Defense Initiative

Somerset County Department of Health (SCDOH) received funding through a US FDA Innovative Food Defense grant to create engaging, user-friendly materials to educate workers in small retail food establishments.

As a result, SCDOH developed a series of cartoons that simplify several food defense concepts, creating uncomplicated ways for public health staff to enhance understanding and implementation of food defense strategies during routine interactions with small, independent retail foodservice operations.

Response from local foodservice workers is positive and encouraging. The ability of these cartoons to simplify complicated topics in a visually appealing way is a positive step towards improving food defense awareness in a wider range of food establishments.

SCDOH encourages use of these materials, and looks forward to your feedback.

### Scenarios:

#### Cartoon #1: Unknown Food Source

Concept: Only use food product from suppliers that are known and trusted.

#### Cartoon # 2: Illness Symptoms

Concept: Take all reports of foodborne illness seriously. Promptly notify person in charge of illness claims.

#### Cartoon # 3: Employee Contamination

Concept: Introduction of unknown or harmful substances into a food product should be promptly reported to the person in charge.

#### Cartoon #4: Suspicious Person

Concepts: Checking identification of visitors in food preparation areas is important. Unknown individuals should not be allowed in food preparation or storage areas. Non-employees with valid business should be accompanied in foodservice areas at all times.



Some suggestions for use:

- ❖ **Just in time training.**  
During a regulatory inspection, you observe a non-employee (e.g. delivery person, pest control operator, etc.) enter the kitchen without being asked for identification. Use the appropriate cartoon to start a conversation about the benefits of verifying who is authorized to be in food prep areas.
- ❖ **Reinforcing a concept.**  
The cartoon on illness symptoms can be useful when discussing what health conditions should be reported to the health department. It may also be a helpful introduction to reviewing employee illness exclusions/restrictions.
- ❖ **Casual (passive) training.**  
Leave a cartoon behind in employee break areas, for casual reading and conversations. Follow up with employees at a later time for Q & A, or encourage management to do so.
- ❖ **In-service training / pre shift meetings.**  
The cartoons were designed as learning tools and conversation starters. Inspire the person in charge to use a cartoon to foster buy-in on establishment policies.
- ❖ **Create a local food defense training program in your agency.**  
Use these cartoons and additional free FDA food defense resources to integrate food defense principles into your food protection program.

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**For up-to-date information and Food Defense resources, visit:**

**<http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodDefense/>**



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