



Virginia Rapid Response Team

Our Mission:

The Virginia Rapid Response Team's mission is to provide a rapid unified multiagency all hazards response to food/feed emergencies in order to minimize the social, economic and public health impact.

History:

In October 2009, the VDACS Food Safety Program was one of three states awarded a 3-year cooperative agreement from FDA to develop and sustain an all Food Hazards Rapid Response Team (RRT), encompassing both food and feed protection programs, through a process to further enhance and build the infrastructure of the State's food protection program. The desired outcome of RRT development is to minimize the time between agency notification of a human or animal food contamination event and implementation of effective control measures. To accomplish this, RRTs develop and maintain processes to:

- Prepare for and effectively respond to foodborne illness outbreaks and other food emergencies.
- Enhance intra-agency and interagency collaboration and communication.
- Jointly train and exercise staff to be ready to respond to events when they occur.
- Identify potential preventive practices to reduce foodborne illness and injury.

- Establish national best practices and tools that can be shared with other states to improve their response to food emergencies.
- RRT's operate using Incident Command System (ICS)/National Incident Management System (NIMS) principles and a Unified Command structure to respond to human and animal food emergencies.

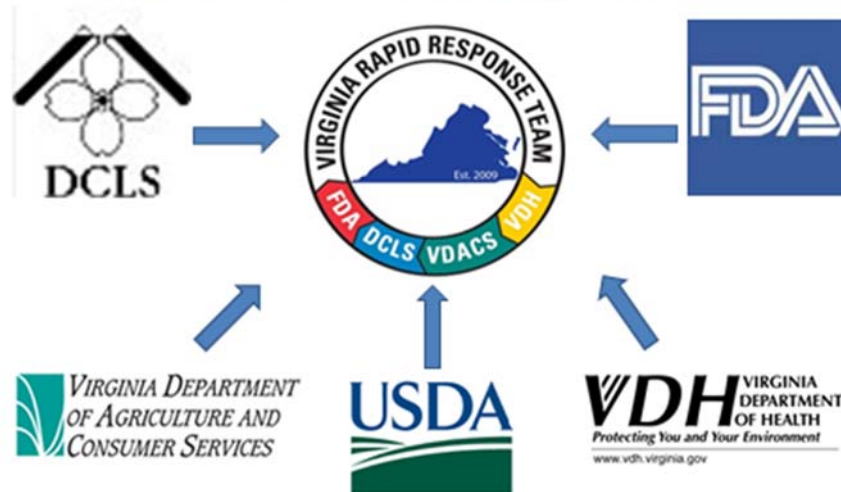
For more information on Rapid Response Teams visit:

<https://www.fda.gov/forfederalstateandlocalofficials/programsinitiatives/ucm475021.htm>

Membership:

- Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
 - Food Safety Program
 - Dairy Services Program
 - Agricultural Commodities Program
 - Office of Meat and Poultry Services
- Virginia Department of Health
 - Office of Epidemiology
 - Office of Environmental Health
 - Office of Shellfish Sanitation
- Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration
 - Baltimore District Office
- United States Department of Agriculture
 - Food Safety Inspection Service

VIRGINIA RAPID RESPONSE TEAM (VA RRT)



Response:

Rapid Response Teams responses and activations show how strengthened collaboration and capabilities can have a meaningful impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of a response.

Emergency response:

Through training, such as FDA classes and table-top exercises, the Virginia RRT is prepared to respond to emergency events when they occur. Below are examples of responses the VA RRT has participated in:

- Collaborates in food borne illness investigations
- Determines the safety of food products after vehicular accidents
- Responds to reports of employee illness at food establishments
- Investigates reports of illegally processed foods offered for sale
- Assesses the damage of foods in firms that manufacture, distribute or sell foods after disasters, such as fires, floods and emergency weather events

Additionally, the Virginia Rapid Response Team Members are trained to serve in the Virginia Emergency Operations Center during declared disaster situations.

Recalls:

Food producers recall their products from the marketplace when the products are mislabeled or when the food may present a health hazard to consumers, such as a potential contamination or has caused a foodborne illness outbreak. Visit FDA's Recalls, Market Withdrawals & Safety Alerts section to view recent recall information by product area, including food, drugs, biological products, devices, and cosmetics.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulates beef, poultry, and processed egg products. Please visit FoodSafety.gov for food safety and recall information from both FDA and USDA.

- <https://www.fda.gov/Food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/default.htm>

Food Borne Outbreaks & Illnesses:

While the American food supply is among the safest in the world, the Federal government estimates that there are about **48 million cases of foodborne illness annually** which is equivalent to sickening 1 in 6 Americans each year. Each year these illnesses result in an estimated 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths.

Did you know that Food Borne Illnesses are usually not from food you consumed just before you became ill? Please visit the following links to learn more about Food Borne Illnesses:

- [Foodborne Illnesses: What You Need to Know](#)
- [Bad Bug Book \(Second Edition\)](#)

If you wish to submit a complaint concerning a foodborne illness, or conditions at a food manufacturer or retail store, please [report it here](#).

Updates:

The Virginia RRT has activated three times since August 2016, with three primary food product recalls due to these investigations and at least forty secondary recalls removing contaminated and potentially contaminated foods from sale. We have participated in three joint investigations with FDA at food manufacturers to include environmental sampling and inspections.

The VA RRT has coordinated response, deployed investigators, sampled products and educated food handlers during several large food borne illness outbreaks throughout the Commonwealth. We have also coordinated surveillance and investigation sampling of high risk foods for pathogens in order to protect public health. All sample results are entered into a national data base in order to strengthen outbreak discovery and response.

For more information:

- <https://www.fda.gov/Food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/Outbreaks/default.htm>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/outbreaks/index.html>