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NEWS RELEASE

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SAFE TURKEY AT THANKSGIVING

The Thanksgiving turkey is an important central theme in the upcoming holiday celebration. Since turkey can also be a source of foodborne disease, a few hints about storage and cooling might be helpful for preventing illness to family members and guests.

- Refrigerate a fresh ready-to-cook whole turkey immediately. Because fresh turkeys are fresh, they are also just as perishable as fresh meat and fresh fish. Be sure to loosely wrap the giblets and store them separately.
- Keep frozen turkeys frozen and tightly sealed in the original plastic covering before thawing. **Never thaw at room temperature.** Always thaw frozen turkey in the refrigerator. This takes time – sometimes several days for larger turkeys (about 1 day for every 5 pounds) – so plan ahead. Another safe way to thaw a turkey is to place the wrapped turkey in a clean container and run cool tap water over it. (Be sure to keep the water running).
- Wash the turkey thoroughly before cooking. Be careful to clean and disinfect all surfaces and utensils that come in contact with the raw turkey prior to their contact with other cooked foods. A good disinfecting solution is one (1) tablespoon of household bleach to one (1) gallon of water.
- Ideally, it is best to cook stuffing separately to keep bacteria from growing in the turkey cavity.

- If you plan on brining your turkey, please remember that the turkey must be refrigerated during this process (45 degrees F or below).
- If you would like to stuff the turkey, do so just before cooking. If it is necessary to make the stuffing ahead of time, refrigerate it separately after preparation and stuff the turkey just before placing it in the oven. Under no circumstances should the turkey be stuffed and refrigerated overnight.
- Cook the turkey thoroughly. It's best to use a meat thermometer to be sure the turkey and stuffing has been cooked to a minimum temperature of 165 degrees F; be sure to take the temperature in the thickest part of the turkey. Never partially cook a turkey and then finish cooking it later. Bacteria can survive in partially cooked turkey.
- If making gravy, be sure to cook giblets thoroughly and bring the gravy to a boil. Keep the gravy very hot (140 degrees F or above) prior to use. Refrigerate immediately after the meal.
- As soon as possible after dinner, remove all stuffing from the turkey and store in a clean separate container. Remove turkey from bone and place the turkey and stuffing in the refrigerator or in the freezer immediately.
- Leftover turkey? Be creative. Take left-over vegetables and turkey and make a deep dish pie or make and freeze personal T.V. dinners. Take a little of everything, fill an aluminum tin, cover with foil, and freeze. **All food and gravies should be reheated to at least 165°F before serving.**

For more information please contact the Division of Environmental Services at 622-7838, Monday – Friday, 8:00am until 4:00pm.