

**ASTHO-NACCHO Foodborne Surveillance & Outbreak Response Workshop  
July 1, 2008 – Arlington, VA  
Breakout Group Scenario 3**

## **Confusion Amasses in Norovirus Outbreak**

*Access Tribune – Friday*

Last Thursday, seven people found themselves inside bathroom stalls, some not daring to leave due to acute gastroenteritis. Access Airport staff and TSA were alerted of the problem and had three people transported to the nearest hospital. Four other people missed their flights and stayed in the airport with medical assistance.

The FBI and Access County Health Department determined that the four people remaining at the airport had attended the Annual National Red Caps Corporation, which was held in Next Door County. Three of the individuals had stayed at the Sleepy Eye Inn and one stayed at the Nap'n Go hotel in Next Door County.

By Friday afternoon, the Access County Health Department determined that the three people sent to the Access County Hospital had also attended the Annual National Red Caps Corporation meeting. Earlier this week, Access County Health Department announced that 4 more cases had been identified among airport taxi drivers and airport cleaning staff. One airport cleaning staff proclaimed, "I'm glad I wasn't working last week." A family member of one of the taxi drivers said, "It was a busy time for him whenever the National Red Caps Corporation held their annual conference; people flew in from all over the country to attend the conference every year."

Today, Access County Health Department reported all 9 of 11 cases were lab confirmed norovirus and all were related to the National Red Caps Corporation Meeting. National Red Caps Corporation has offices in Brook State, River State and Ocean State. River State Health Department told us that they get gastroenteritis complaints often, but last week they had a norovirus outbreak among one family after a BBQ.

The Red Caps Corporation Brook State office told us they did have a few employees out sick last week, but did not know about the outbreak at Access Airport even though the Brook Shield County Herald had a series of articles last week on an outbreak of stomach flu. Just two days after the outbreak here at Access Airport, 23 people became ill and were filling up Brook Shield Hospital.

Last Tuesday afternoon, Next Door County Health Department announced that they had 13 reported cases of Norwalk Virus in which all infected individuals had eaten at a local restaurant. They reminded the public about the importance of good hand washing and safe food handling, but were they related to the airport outbreak?

We spoke to Media University Norovirus expert. "Norovirus can be spread by eating food contaminated with norovirus or by contact with surfaces with norovirus. You can also get it from a person with symptoms. People may not have any symptoms for 1-2 days. So, it is important to practice good hand washing techniques." When asked if the Next Door County outbreak or the other outbreaks in River and Brooks States could be related to this Access County outbreak, the University expert stated "There is a possibility that these are all connected,

if they stayed at the same hotel, ate at the same restaurant, and then traveled to another location. We will have to wait for the CDC to do their job.”

Two recovering patients from the National Red Caps Corporation told us that they would “think twice before staying at either hotel next year.” We asked if they thought their outbreak was related to the one in Next Door County, but they had no idea that there was another outbreak. About 10 people did join them for dinner that last night outside of the hotel, at Smurf’s Mushroom. “But we had breakfast at the conference before we went to the airport.”

Next Door County told us there was an ill food worker at a local restaurant associated with their outbreak, but not at any local hotel. When asked about Smurf’s Mushroom, they declined to specify.

As yet, CDC has not made any announcements related to this outbreak or the others we identified. Smurf’s Mushroom has not responded to our inquiries. The National Red Caps Corporation assured us that they are working with Center State Health Department here in the area and have notified their meeting participants to keep an eye out for symptoms.

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#### Facts:

- Date: Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> day after initial cases of gastroenteritis.
- Day 1, Thursday – 7 people exhibited acute gastroenteritis in an airport, three were hospitalized and four received medical care within the airport.
- The four people remaining in the airport attended the National Red Caps Corporation in Next Door County. Three of these people stayed at the same hotel, the Sleepy Eye Inn. The other stayed at the Nap’n Go. Both hotels are in Next Door County.
- Day 2, the Access County Health Department announced that the three people who were hospitalized were also at the National Red Caps Corporation.
- Day 7, 4 more cases of Norwalk Virus are identified by Access County Health Department. Taxi cab drivers and airport cleaning staff have the virus.
- Today, Day 8, Access Health Department confirmed 9 of 11 were lab confirmed Norovirus cases and all were related to the National Red Caps Corporation.

#### Additional Information:

- National Red Caps Corporation has offices in Brook State, River State and Ocean State. River State Health Department had a norovirus outbreak among one family after a BBQ.
- Brook State office had a few employees out sick last week, but did not know about the outbreak at Access Airport.
- Two days after the outbreak at Access Airport, 23 people became ill and were filling up Brook Shield Hospital in Brook State.
- About 10 people did go to dinner in Next Door County at Smurf’s Mushroom, but also ate breakfast at the conference before going to the airport.
- Day 6, 13 cases of Norwalk Virus are reported, by Next Door County Health Department, on the following Tuesday.
- Day 8, Next Door County reported an ill food worker at a local restaurant associated with their outbreak, not at a hotel.