



Informational Bulletin

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MEAT PLANTS MUST BE ABLE TO OPERATE IF INSPECTORS DON'T SHOW UP DUE TO TERRORISM

BY BERNIE SHIRE

March 19, 2003

Mr. Jesse Majkowski
Acting Assistant Administrator
Food Security & Emergency Preparedness
3130 South, USDA-FSIS
14th Street & Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Majkowski:

We are writing you from AAMP to ask that USDA grant emergency powers to meat and poultry plants to open and do business, if for some reason inspectors can't or won't come to plants to carry out their inspection duties, due to a domestic emergency due to terrorism or some other kind of major disaster.

We appreciate the guidelines that FSIS has published in the form of a directive to both meat inspectors and meat processors to increase security of food producing plants due to the increased threat of terrorist attacks in the United States, because of the war in Iraq that is getting underway tonight or tomorrow.

But at the same time, the business interests of the inspected meat and poultry plants must be protected. We don't know that it would definitely happen. But it is possible that terrorist incidents might take place in the United States, because of the war in Iraq by United States and its allies to disarm Saddam Hussein.

If something like that were to happen, it might be possible that FSIS employees might not be able to get to their assigned plant to carry out their inspection duties. Or if something were to happen here in the US, some form of crisis, they might not feel safe or confident in leaving their families and going to their plant posts.

If that were to take place, there is no reason that meat and poultry plants should not be able to operate as usual, and produce their products. For that reason, USDA needs to grant authority for plants to open on an emergency basis, to operate and produce their products as they usually do. I don't think this issue was discussed in any of your emergency terrorism practice sessions, but it should have been.

Please let us know at AAMP as soon as possible what USDA is planning to do about this issue

Thanks for you help.

Sincerely,

Bernard F. Shire, Director
Legislative & Regulatory Affairs