FSIS NOTICE	26-08	4/16/08

CONTACTING THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION (PDD)
(FORMERLY THE TECHNICAL SERVICE CENTER)

I. PURPOSE

This notice provides an update on recent changes that have occurred in the Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD). In particular, the notice informs customers on how they can contact the Policy Development Division (PDD), formerly known as the Technical Service Center. The changes discussed in this notice will improve and expedite the customer's experience with PDD.

II. UPDATED TELEPHONE SYSTEM

Changes have been made to the telephone system to improve customer service and address recent changes to PDD and other program areas located in the Omaha facility. Callers are informed, through a series of menus and sub-menus, how to reach the most appropriate contact for their question. Please listen carefully to the new menu before choosing an option.

PDD answers technical questions related to general domestic inspection policies and on FSIS issuances, such as Directives, Notices, and IKEs. Callers with labeling and sampling questions should be aware of the following changes:

- The OPPD Labeling and Program Delivery Division (LPDD) in Washington, DC responds to questions concerning labeling, standards of identity, and use of ingredients

- The OPPD Risk Management Division (RMD) in Washington, DC responds to questions regarding sampling programs and sampling methods

Telephone calls regarding international inspection policies related to the export of meat, poultry, and egg products are answered by the Office of International Affairs (OIA). OIA export staff officers are located at the Omaha facility to answer questions from field personnel and industry related to the export library, interpretation of country

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requirements, veterinary agreements, and plant approval. Please follow the appropriate menu options.

Telephone calls regarding international policies related to the import of meat, poultry, and egg products need to be directed to the OIA import staff in Washington, DC at (202) 720-9904.

NOTE: Calls are forwarded free of charge to LPDD and RMD when customers use PDD toll-free number (1-800-233-3935) and follow the menu options.

PDD business hours are Monday through Friday 6:00 am to 5:00 pm (CT). PDD is closed on federal holidays. Effective December 31, 2007, a PDD contact person is no longer be available outside the hours of operation listed above.

After hours, if a caller has a food safety or food defense emergency, he or she can contact the appropriate Office of Field Operations personnel for assistance. Emergency contact phone numbers for the FSIS District Offices can be found on the FSIS website at www.fsis.usda.gov . Click on the "Contact Us" tab, then on the link to "Office Locations & Phone Numbers."

PDD continues to receive calls at the following numbers during normal business hours:

- (402) 344-5000
- (800) 233-3935 (toll free)

III. SUBMITTING QUESTIONS

Interested persons can find information and answers to commonly asked questions on the FSIS Web site home page. Find the category of question you would like to ask under the "I want to …" box on the right side of the FSIS home page. This Web site includes such resources as "Inside FSIS", "Ask a Food Safety Question" (http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Safety_Education/Ask_Karen/index.asp), and "AskFSIS an Inspection-Related Question" (http://askfsis.custhelp.com).

Questions can be submitted to PDD in two ways: i.e. through *askFSIS* or by telephone.

A. *askFSIS*
To provide the best possible service, PDD is asking Agency personnel, industry, and other customers to use the new web-based system called *askFSIS*, when submitting questions to PDD. The questions submitted should include as many details and facts about the issue as possible. The information will help PDD to provide timely and accurate responses to the questions received.

To access *askFSIS*, go to http://askfsis.custhelp.com . The *askFSIS* screen includes four tabs: Answers, My Questions, Login, and Help. The "Answers" tab is the starting point for keyword searches; it will also show a current list of the most popular topics viewed by customers. The "My Questions" and "Login" tabs are used to create an account for those visitors who wish to submit questions; check the status of a request; or revisit previously saved information. First-time visitors are encouraged to select the

"Help" tab for tips on getting started. Additional instructions are available in FSIS Notice 07-08, Using *askFSIS* at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISNotices/07-08.pdf.

When submitting questions through *askFSIS*, be aware that the web-based application automatically filters and forwards the questions to the appropriate division, as follows:

- **PDD**-Questions regarding general domestic inspection policies and FSIS issuances
- **LPDD**-Questions concerning labeling, standards of identity, and use of ingredients
- **RMD**-Questions regarding sampling programs and sampling methods
- **OIA**-Questions regarding international inspection policies (both import and export)

B. Telephone Calls

To provide the best customer service possible and to ensure that there is a complete record of calls, PDD records the questions received from callers and the answers provided in response. Each caller is required to provide to PDD his or her name, telephone number, plant name and number, and e-mail address. Without this information, PDD is not able to give a detailed response to the caller, such as a policy clarification or follow-up information.

If several parties (e.g., Inspector-in-Charge (IIC), Front Line Supervisor (FLS), plant management) will be affected by the response to a question, all parties should be present on the call, when possible. This ensures that PDD can address all concerns at once and be certain that everyone on the call clearly understands the response.

IV. SUBMITTING DOCUMENTS FOR PDD REVIEW

Customers can submit technical documents (e.g. Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point plans, Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures, supporting documents, Food Safety Assessments) to PDD for review and comment. The preferred mechanism for submission is through *askFSIS* as an attachment but documents may also be submitted to PDD via fax or regular mail. Every effort is made to respond in a timely manner; however response times will depend on the complexity of the materials submitted, available staffing, and work requirements. There are also situations in which the submittal requires discussion with other Agency staffs, resulting in the need for additional time in which to develop an accurate response.   See IV. C. below for contact information.

So that it may provide complete and accurate responses in a timely manner, PDD requests that customers do the following when submitting documents:

A. Submittals by FSIS Personnel. FSIS personnel should:

- Conduct an initial review of the material. If several levels of FSIS management are involved with an issue (e.g., IIC, FLS, District Office), it is important that all parties review the material before submitting to PDD.
- Provide a clear summary of any technical or regulatory concerns that arise from the initial review of the material. PDD must know the concerns of all FSIS personnel involved in order to provide an informed response.
- Especially in large documents, identify within the document where there are specific concerns.
- Send all related documents, data, information and comments to PDD (e.g., summary of test results, Noncompliance Records, Notice Of Intended Enforcement, Suspension Letters, Letters from Process Authorities)
- If the issue has been discussed with PDD in the past, include the name of the Staff Officer who was contacted.
- Allow sufficient time for PDD to assign, review, and comment. PDD believes that it is better to take a little extra time to ensure that the answer is right than to rush and provide an incorrect response.

When asked by non-FSIS customers how to submit documents to PDD for review, FSIS personnel provide them with the information in Sections B and C below.
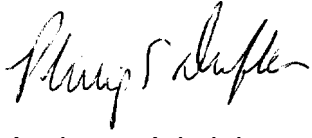
B. Submittals by Other Customers: Other customers should:

- Submit all relevant documents, data, and information that is to be reviewed.
- Include the reason for the submission and identify any specific technical or regulatory issues that PDD should focus on, including providing methods used and interpretation of any analytical or other data submitted.
- Especially in large documents, identify within the document where there are specific concerns.
- If the issue has been discussed with PDD in the past, include the name of the Staff Officer who was contacted.
- Allow sufficient time for PDD to assign, review, and comment. PDD believes that it is better to take a little extra time to ensure that the answer is right than to rush and provide an incorrect response.

C. Methods of Submission:

1. *askFSIS:* Please include the statement "[For Technical Review]" (without quotation marks) in the subject line. This will ensure that the material is assigned to the appropriate staff officer for review and comment.

2. Fax: (402) 344-5005 : Please include "For Technical Review" on the cover sheet

3. Mail: Policy Development Division
"For Technical Review"
1299 Farnam Street
Landmark Center, Suite 300
Omaha, NE 68102

Refer questions to PDD through *askFSIS* or at 1-800-233-3935.

Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development