
FSIS DIRECTIVE

5420.8,
Revision 1

1/26/2005

HOMELAND SECURITY THREAT CONDITION RESPONSE – COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROCEDURES

I. PURPOSE

A. This directive details the Communication and Public Affairs Procedures that the Office of Public Affairs, Education, and Outreach (OPAEO) personnel will follow in the event that a Threat Condition Elevated (Yellow), High (Orange), or Severe (Red) is declared by the Department of Homeland Security. In such an event, OPAEO personnel are to follow the instructions in this directive for the duration of the declared heightened Threat Condition.

B. This directive also:

- provides specific emergency communication instructions on how OPAEO personnel will respond in the event of a change in Threat Condition to Elevated (Yellow), High (Orange) and Severe (Red), whether or not there is a specific threat involving the food supply; and
- establishes effective communication to address food security concerns of stakeholders in order to reassure the public of the safety of the food supply and protect public health.

II. CANCELLATION

FSIS Directive 5420.8, dated 6/25/04

III. REASON FOR REISSUANCE

This directive is reissued in its entirety to provide clarification of responsibilities in the event of a Threat Condition Elevated (Yellow).

IV. REFERENCES

FSIS Directive 5420.1, Homeland Security Threat Condition Response – Food Security Verification Procedures
OPAEO Emergency Communications Plan
OPAEO Emergency Operations Checklist

V. BACKGROUND

In 2002, the White House Office of Homeland Security established a Homeland Security Advisory System based on color to provide a comprehensive and effective means to disseminate information regarding the risk of terrorist acts to Federal, State, and local authorities and to the American people. A declaration of a Threat Condition Yellow by the Department of Homeland Security indicates that there is an elevated risk of terrorist attacks. A declaration of a Threat Condition Orange by the Department of Homeland Security indicates that there is a high risk of terrorist attacks. A declaration of a Threat Condition Red reflects a severe risk of terrorist attacks. While the threat declaration may or may not involve the nation's food and agricultural sector specifically, it is imperative that any such declarations be communicated effectively and rapidly to all program areas within FSIS so that appropriate actions can be taken to respond to the threats and to ensure the security of meat, poultry, and egg products. Because of the emergency nature of responding to a credible threat of a terrorist attack, OPAEO personnel must clearly understand their roles and what will be required of them in order to properly respond to that threat.

VI. NOTIFICATION

A. In the event of a declaration of any Threat Condition:

- Elevated (Yellow), when there is a significant risk of terrorist attacks
- High (Orange), when there is a high risk of terrorist attacks, or
- Severe (Red) which reflects a severe risk of terrorist attacks,

by the Department of Homeland Security, the Office of Food Security and Emergency Preparedness (OFSEP) will inform the FSIS Administrator and senior executive leadership of all FSIS program areas. The Office of the Administrator will issue an e-mail letter to all employees notifying them of the heightened threat condition. OPAEO personnel should only begin implementing these procedures when instructed to do so by the OPAEO Assistant Administrator (AA) or designee. In that event, OPAEO personnel are to follow the instructions in this directive for the duration of the declared heightened threat condition. Because of the roles played by OPAEO personnel during the performance of their assigned duties, they are likely to be in a position to have to respond to stakeholders on food security issues. OPAEO will be prepared to inform stakeholders of Agency actions taken under heightened Threat Conditions.

VII. SPECIFIC THREAT CONDITION ACTIVITIES

The following are the actions to be taken in the event of a declaration of:

A. Threat Condition Elevated (Yellow) or High (Orange) with no specific threat to the food and agriculture sector.

1. OPAEO personnel will continue normal operations and take no further action unless instructed to do so by the OPAEO AA.

2. OPAEO will coordinate with the USDA Office of Communications and FSIS Emergency Management Committee (EMC) to determine the next steps.

3. OPAEO will coordinate with other Agency offices to assess the need to expand the operating hours of the Meat and Poultry Hotline (the Hotline).

4. The senior executive leadership of OPAEO will review with staff the OPAEO Emergency Communications Plan, complete the appropriate section of the OPAEO Emergency Operations Checklist, and review emergency procedures per USDA Office of Operations and FSIS OFSEP e-mail notifications.

B. Threat Condition Severe (Red) with no specific threat to the food and agriculture sector.

1. The senior executive leadership of OPAEO will take all actions on the Emergency Operations Checklist listed under Threat Condition Orange and Red with no specific threat to the food and agriculture sector.

2. Assess the need to activate the OPAEO Emergency Communications Plan.

3. In coordination with USDA Office of Communications, OPAEO will notify industry, employees, and other appropriate constituents of the change in threat level, with any necessary instructions, and provide updates as information becomes available.

4. OPAEO will coordinate with OPHS to expand the operating hours of the Hotline.

C. Threat Condition High (Orange) with a specific threat to food and agriculture sector.

The senior executive leadership of OPAEO will take all actions on the Emergency Operations Checklist specified under Orange and Red with no specific threat to the food and agriculture sector, and under Orange with a specific threat to the food and agriculture sector.

D. Threat Condition Severe (Red) with a specific threat to the food and agriculture sector.

In addition to taking all actions on the Emergency Operations Checklist specified under Orange and Red with a specific threat to the food and agriculture sector, the senior executive leadership of OPAEO will activate the OPAEO Emergency Communications Plan.

E. Downgrading of a threat condition will be communicated by OFSEP to OPAEO personnel through the senior executive leadership of OPAEO. Upon receiving such notification, OPAEO will return to normal operating procedures.

Direct all questions related to this directive through supervisory channels.

/s/ Philip S. Derfler

Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy, Program, and Employee Development