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FROM : National Wildfire Coordinating Group
REPLY TO : NWCG@nifc.gov
DATE : 07/25/2009
SUBJECT : SAFETY ADVISORY : Final Safety Advisory Norovirus

Recently approximately 100 individuals associated with the Redrock/Trailer 1 incident in the Great Basin experienced acute gastroenteritis. The Washoe County, Nevada, District Health Department has confirmed that the illness that moved through the camp was norovirus. While the source of this norovirus outbreak is unknown at this time, in the United States only the common cold causes more infections per year than noroviruses.

The symptoms of norovirus are:

- Nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea accompanied by abdominal cramps.
- Headache, fever/chills, and muscle aches may also be experienced.

Symptoms are usually brief and last only 1 or 2 days. However, during that brief period, people can feel very ill and vomit, **often violently and without warning**, many times a day, which can result in dehydration:

- Dehydration is the most serious health effect that can result from norovirus infection.
- By drinking juice or water you can reduce your chance of becoming dehydrated.
- Sports drinks do not replace the nutrients and minerals lost during this illness.

Symptoms usually begin 24 to 48 hours after ingestion of the virus, but can appear as early as 12 hours after exposure. Norovirus illness is usually brief in healthy individuals lasting 1 or 2 days. There is no evidence that sick persons can become long-term carriers of the virus, but the virus can be in the stool and vomit of infected persons from the day they start to feel ill until to 2 weeks after they feel better.

Persons with norovirus symptoms should not work in settings in which they may have the ability to contaminate food, water, or any objects that may come in contact with others and they should not be placed back into these work settings for 3 days after they recover from their illness.

If a norovirus outbreak is suspected on an incident the following measures should be taken:

- Individuals exhibiting symptoms of acute gastroenteritis should be separated from other

incident personnel. They should remain separated for 72 hours after symptoms cease.

- Use of common items should be eliminated. For example, instead of placing salt and pepper shakers on tables use single serve packages dispensed with individual meals; eliminate buffet lines/salad bars where multiple people use the same utensil to get food.
- Restrooms and portable toilets should be cleaned frequently instead of once daily.
- Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness.
- Report any suspected norovirus illness to the local health department and through agency channels to the Geographic Area.

Incident personnel should wash their hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds of vigorous rubbing followed by a thorough rinse and drying with disposable towels. **This is the single most important procedure for preventing the spread of the infection!**

Further information on dealing with infectious outbreaks during incidents is being developed. Reference the Center for Disease Control's website for more information on norovirus at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/gastro/norovirus.htm>.
