



**BILL RICHARDSON**  
GOVERNOR

*State of New Mexico*  
**ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT**  
*Office of the Secretary*  
*Harold Runnels Building*  
*1190 St. Francis Drive, P.O. Box 26110*  
*Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502-6110*  
*Telephone (505) 827-2855*  
*Fax (505) 827-2836*



**RON CURRY**  
SECRETARY

**DERRITH WATCHMAN-MOORE**  
DEPUTY SECRETARY

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Immediate Release

Contact: Adam Rankin, NMED Communications Director  
Phone: (505) 827-0314

### **Environment Department Strives to Reduce Food-Borne Illnesses**

(Santa Fe, NM) – Since 2002, reported cases of Salmonella in New Mexico have decreased from 338 cases to 288 cases through 2004, the most recent year for which data is available. That decrease represents a drop in the incidence of Salmonella of about 14.8 percent to 15.1 cases per 100,000 people. The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), which regulates the food service industry, has been working to increase awareness of food-borne illnesses by emphasizing regulatory public health issues during inspections, providing free food handling and preparation training classes throughout the state, working in conjunction with the Department of Health to assist investigating food-borne illness outbreaks.

Nationwide, there are an estimated six million to 33 million illnesses and as many as 9,000 deaths every year due to food-borne diseases.

“Most people take food safety for granted, but over the years there have been a number of large food-borne illness outbreaks around New Mexico,” NMED Secretary Ron Curry said. “Through our 23 field offices and 43 food inspectors we hope to deliver the message of food safety to restaurants and food establishments, which includes annual church cookouts and pancake fundraisers, that improperly cooked food can make you sick and can even kill.”

The New Mexico Environment Department permits and inspects more than 6,700 food establishments statewide with a staff of 43 inspectors, who are also responsible for a host of other field inspections, such as septic systems and swimming pools.

NMED posts the occurrences of food borne illness within New Mexico at whom to contact, reported cases of food borne illness by city and year, as well as common symptoms at [http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/fod/Food\\_Program/foodborne.html](http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/fod/Food_Program/foodborne.html).

The food Web site also contains useful information on cooking tips, food safety for moms-to-be, public alerts & notices, links to hygiene education for children, and information on shellfish safety. The New Mexico Food Processing Regulations, and application forms are also online and easy to download. There are also links to the New Mexico Department of Health, American Dietetic Association, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, and U.S. Department of Agriculture.

To report a food-borne illness, please call either phone number listed below.

**New Mexico Environment Department**

[www.nmenv.state.nm.us](http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us)

1-877-654-8720 (8-5 p.m., Monday - Friday)

1-505-476-8600 (8-5 p.m., Monday - Friday)

**New Mexico Department Of Health**

[www.health.state.nm.us](http://www.health.state.nm.us)

1-505-827-0006 (24 hours, 7 days a week)

For additional information, please contact Adam Rankin, NMED Communications Director, at (505) 827-0314.

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