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July 17, 2008Contact: Deborah Busemeyer, DOH Communications Director
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(505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475**FDA Clears All Tomatoes for Consumption
People Encouraged to Follow National Recommendations for Eating Peppers**

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health and New Mexico Environment Department today encouraged people to follow national recommendations that all tomatoes are safe to eat and people who are elderly, young or with compromised immune systems should avoid raw jalapeño and Serrano peppers.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced this afternoon that tomatoes on the market now are safe. Federal officials continue to believe tomatoes were involved in the national Salmonella Saintpaul outbreak that has sickened more than 1,200 people in 42 states, including 104 in New Mexico. However, FDA said it lifted the warning because there are no tomatoes coming into the market from areas that were potential sources of contamination.

“Federal officials are confident that is safe for people to eat tomatoes now,” said Health Secretary Dr. Alfredo Vigil. “However, the investigation continues, and New Mexicans who are concerned about Salmonella should avoid raw jalapeño and Serrano peppers until we hear differently.”

The Department of Health has not confirmed a new case since July 9. For the latest New Mexico case information, look up the Department’s website: www.nmhealth.org.

“The concerns about tomatoes have been trying for New Mexicans and we are proud of the State’s aggressive efforts in protecting residents from illness related to the fruit,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “We will continue to monitor

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Salmonella linked to raw jalapeño and Serrano peppers and will keep restaurants, schools and businesses apprised if actions must be taken related to this issue.”

Investigators from U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are in New Mexico now conducting more extensive interviews with patients in person and well people who live in the same neighborhoods. The Department of Health asked CDC to come to New Mexico to collect more information about the outbreak.

New Mexicans who think they are ill with symptoms of Salmonella should contact their physician for follow up and potential testing. Symptoms of Salmonella include fever, diarrhea and abdominal cramping.

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