



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH • DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**NEIL ABERCROMBIE**  
GOVERNOR

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH DETERMINES BACTERIA CAUSED ILLNESS AT  
WAIPAHU ELEMENTARY**

***Cafeteria staff already taking corrective action***

HONOLULU —The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) has determined the cause of an illness outbreak that occurred at Waipahu Elementary School on Dec. 10. State Laboratory test results and a health inspection report concluded that a portion of spaghetti served in the school cafeteria during lunch that day contained bacteria that resulted from improper food preparation. As a result, two adults and more than 30 students fell ill that afternoon.

A DOH inspection found cafeteria food prepared the previous day was not properly reheated in the morning and may not have been properly cooled the day before, creating an environment for bacteria growth.

“An inspection and interviews with cafeteria employees revealed food preparation violations that could be corrected with proper training and follow through,” said Peter Oshiro, DOH sanitation branch chief. “We understand the school closed the cafeteria to retrain their food service staff and ensure safe food practices.”

DOH’s Food Safety Program is conducting food safety training for Waipahu Elementary cafeteria staff and management.

Waipahu Elementary School Principal Gary Chun stated, “While this was an isolated incident, our staff has and continues to fully cooperate with health officials in ensuring best practices. We appreciate the patience and understanding of our school community and remain committed to proper meal preparation.”

During the health investigation, meals were brought in to Waipahu Elementary from a neighboring school. This will continue for the remainder of this week until the school's cafeteria crew completes health safety training.

The DOH food safety staff advises everyone to prevent bacteria growth during food preparation. Here are important tips to prevent food poisoning:

- Always prepare food with clean hands. Wash hands prior to handling food and between handling raw and cooked foods.
- Avoid preparing food when you are sick.
- When cooking large volumes of food in advance, rapidly cool the food to 45°F for refrigerated storage.
- Cool cooked foods from 140°F to 70°F within two hours and from 70°F to 45°F within 4 hours.
- Cool large quantities of hot foods by slicing large cuts of meat into smaller portions and frequently stirring (every 10 minutes) liquid food products in containers no deeper than 3 inches.
- Rapidly re-heat refrigerated cooked foods to 165°F within a few minutes before serving. (Failure to cool food properly or rapidly re-heat food may result in bacterial growth that can cause illness).

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