

National Environmental Assessment Reporting System

Calling all food safety programs: Participate in NEARS,* a surveillance system that captures environmental assessment data from foodborne illness outbreak investigations.

Participating in NEARS Helps Your Program

Participating in NEARS can help prevent foodborne illness outbreaks associated with restaurants, banquet facilities, schools, and other institutions. Your program can access and use your NEARS data at any time to

- Identify environmental causes of outbreaks in your jurisdiction.
- Take follow-up action to reduce or prevent future foodborne illness outbreaks.
- Evaluate your food safety program and make improvements based on established guidelines.
- Develop or modify program policies or regulations.
- Focus limited program resources on actions with the highest impact.



Participating in NEARS Helps the National Food Safety System

NEARS is designed for use by health departments throughout the United States. This surveillance system serves as a companion to CDC's National Outbreak Reporting System (NORS) for reporting of environmental assessments.

CDC and national food safety partners recommend that all food safety programs use NEARS to improve food safety in the United States. Environmental assessments help identify the underlying environmental causes of foodborne illness outbreaks. By participating in NEARS, your program is providing critical data from these assessments to prevent and reduce future outbreaks. CDC and its national food safety partners will use NEARS to

- Analyze standardized data to understand how and why outbreaks occur.
- Share findings or recommend actions to better respond to outbreaks and prevent future ones.

**Note: NEARS was formerly known as National Voluntary Environmental Assessment Information System (NVEAIS).*

Regulatory agencies such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration can use information from NEARS to develop food safety intervention strategies and guidelines such as those found in the Food Code. Food safety programs can use this information during outbreak investigations and on a daily basis for issuing permits and inspecting restaurants and other facilities.



How to Participate in NEARS

NEARS* is targeted to government, local, state, tribal, and territorial food safety programs. To participate, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/nears/registration.htm>.

E-Learning on Environmental Assessment of Foodborne Illness Outbreaks: A Helpful Tool for NEARS Users

CDC created a free course titled e-Learning on Environmental Assessment of Foodborne Illness Outbreaks. CDC highly recommends completing this course before participating in NEARS; however, the course can be taken independently of NEARS. This interactive course will help users better understand terminology, agency roles and responsibilities, and the connection of the environment to foodborne illness. In turn, course graduates will be able to collect and report high quality data to NEARS.

Quick Links

National Environmental Assessment Reporting System:
<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/nears/>

E-Learning on Environmental Assessment of Foodborne Illness Outbreaks:
http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/eLearn/EA_FIO

Environmental Health Specialists Network:
<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/EHSNet>

Other Food Safety Resources for Environmental Health Practitioners:
<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/activities/food.html>

Questions? Email NEARS@cdc.gov



Refrigerator contents seen in the training's simulated environmental assessment of a restaurant facility.