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Prevent Foodborne Illnesses This Summer

(Clearfield, Utah) – Davis County Health Department officials offer tips to help prevent foodborne illnesses this summer.

According to Lewis Garrett, director of the county health department, the hot summer sun can easily raise a parked vehicle's inside temperature well beyond 100° F. "The high temperature quickly allows bacteria to reproduce on any foods stored inside which increases your risk of foodborne illness," he said.

"Insulated bags or coolers will help maintain correct temperatures when transporting potentially hazardous foods such as meats and dairy items back to your home." All refrigerated or frozen food items should be placed in the refrigerator or freezer immediately, Garrett said.

Linda Ebert, Food Service and Facilities Bureau manager with Davis County's health department said, "Raw meats that need to be defrosted prior to preparation and cooking can be done in several ways. These methods are slow, but provide a safe way to defrost foods. Never thaw meats on the counter or at room temperature."

- Frozen foods can be placed in a refrigerator and packaged foods can be placed in cold running water.
- If less time is available, a microwave can be used to defrost frozen meats as long as the meat is immediately cooked.

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Garrett said, "Hand washing is essential for the safe handling of foods. Always wash your hands prior to handling food, after using the restroom, after smoking or eating, or after handling raw meats."

Cross contamination is a significant concern, said Ebert. "Raw meat and the juices from these meats should not come in contact with other food items."

- Use separate plates for raw and cooked meats to and from the grill.
- Use tongs or spatulas to reduce the risk of cross contamination from bare hands.
- Don't re-use marinades that have been used for flavoring raw meats as a dipping sauce.

"Also, quickly refrigerate any leftover cooked meats, cooked beans, rice, salads, or pasta dishes," said Ebert.

Cooking raw meats to the appropriate temperatures is another important step in food safety, Ebert said. A chart listing of the proper temperatures to which different meats must be cooked can be found online at http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/mintemp.html.

"Don't let foodborne illness spoil your summer fun," Ebert said. For more safety tips on outdoor grilling, visit http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Factsheets/Barbecue_Food_Safety/ or http://www.foodsafety.gov/blog/bbq.html.

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