

Food Defense Strategy Exchange

Article By:

Food Regulation at Varnum Law

I attended, and was privileged to be asked to speak at, the 4th Annual Food Defense Strategy Exchange hosted by Tyco Integrated Security recently in Chicago. It was really a great event, with meaningful participation by attendees and a great sharing of experiences, perspectives and approaches to food defense by several of the "champions of industry" in food processing.

It was a particularly timely discussion, given the tragedies that had occurred earlier in the week at the Boston Marathon. After all, food defense planning is about preventing an intentional contamination event from occurring at your food facility or to your food product, including, as is described in the Food Safety Modernization Act, "acts of terrorism." FSMA contemplates that food facilities undertake measures to prevent the "biological bomber" – a person who intentionally infects himself with a disease in order to spread the disease and effect a bioterrorism event – from contaminating their food products.

I urge you to consider food defense measures – at the very least a vulnerability assessment – as a priority for your facility; such protocols are already required under certain GFSI standards, including as Module 2.7 under the SQF Code. It won't be long before food defense plans are a legal requirement under FSMA; FDA could issue proposed food defense regulations at any time (although it's my understanding that such proposed rules are unlikely to be published before 2014).

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