

E. coli cases tied to food truck jump to 9

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Three more people have been sickened with E. coli infections tied to a food truck, bringing the total to nine, health officials said. Los Chilangos was allowed to reopen Wednesday.

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King County health officials have identified three more people sickened by E. coli infections linked to a food truck that serves farmers markets in King and Snohomish counties, bringing the total to nine.

The two new confirmed cases and one probable case likely occurred in mid-August, the same time frame as the onset of other cases of E. coli O157: H7 tied to the mobile vendor, Los Chilangos, which serves seven farmers markets and caters events, according to Hilary Karasz, a spokeswoman for Public Health — Seattle & King County. Three people were hospitalized.

All in the outbreak were infected with bacteria with closely related genetic fingerprints, likely indicating a common source, Karasz said. Health officials have not identified a source of the outbreak, though the victims ate foods with common ingredients including cilantro, tomatoes, onions, lime, radishes and tortillas.

Los Chilangos resumed operations Wednesday after meeting mandated food-safety standards, including disposing of food that could have been a source for the outbreak, testing food workers for illness, reviewing protocols and signing a contract with a new commercial kitchen, officials said.

Health officials Aug. 27 shuttered Eastside Commercial Kitchen in Bellevue, citing imminent health hazards. It remains closed.

“We believe our swift actions to close the vendor and the commissary have addressed the problem and removed the risk,” Karasz said in an email.

The kitchen was used by Los Chilangos and other vendors, including Mo’ Pockets, Chewyea, La Riviera, Buns, Panchitos, Kalinka and Jai Balaji. The business Kukai Ramen also used the kitchen, but runs a separate stand-alone restaurant. Another business, Simply Delicious, had used the kitchen but was operating without a required permit from the state Department of Agriculture, health officials reported.

E. coli O157 bacteria are commonly associated with outbreaks in ground beef, but can contaminate a wide range of foods, including raw milk and produce. The germs can cause serious illness, including potentially deadly kidney problems, particularly in children younger than five.

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