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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

No. 12-81

Dec. 6, 2012

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DEC Promotes Food Safety Guidelines for Illness-free Holidays

(JUNEAU, AK) – The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is encouraging safe food handling to prevent foodborne illness this holiday season. For healthy adults, a bout of foodborne illness can seem like the flu, but it is serious for the very young, the very old, or those with poor immune systems.

"This time of year we are preparing a lot of food and attending a lot of holiday parties. Foods left out for long periods are ideal breeding grounds for bacteria that can harm us unexpectedly," said Kim Stryker, DEC food safety and sanitation program manager. "Taking just a few small precautions can improve our chances of a safe, illness-free holiday."

The four most important steps to reduce the risk of foodborne illness are:

- **CLEAN** - Wash hands and surfaces often. Wash hands with hot, soapy water before and after handling food and keep the kitchen, dishes, surfaces and utensils clean. Serve food on clean plates and never put food on plates that previously held raw meat, poultry or seafood.
- **SEPARATE** - Don't cross-contaminate. Keep raw meat, poultry and seafood separate to ensure that juices will not cross-contaminate other foods.
- **COOK** - Cook food to proper temperatures and cook foods thoroughly (roast beef to 145 F for medium rare and 160 F for medium; whole poultry to 180 F, poultry breasts to 170 F and ground poultry to 165 F; all other meat, fish and ground red meats to 160 F).
- **CHILL** - Refrigerate promptly. Keep hot foods hot with crock-pots and warming trays at 140 F or warmer, and cold foods cold by placing dishes in bowls of ice at 40 F or colder.

These few simple tips can prevent food poisoning from spoiling your holiday celebration.

For more information on food safety, visit DEC's website at:
www.dec.state.ak.us/eh/fss

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