

Report: Re-cooked meat caused salmonella outbreak

By Diane Turbyfill

Published: Friday, February 27, 2015 at 05:27 PM.

Pulled pork served at a church convention is most likely to blame for a salmonella outbreak that sickened nearly 70 people last fall.

The investigation began after multiple people sought treatment for a stomach illness in early October.

The local health department collected information and found that many of the patients had attended a conference between Oct. 1 and 5 at Living Word Tabernacle Church in Bessemer City.

The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services partnered with the local health department to investigate the outbreak.

A report released this week found that Boston butts prepared by a church member were the likely culprits.

The pork was cooked overnight in a smoker a day before it was served. Then it was returned to the smoker the day of the meals.

Some of the pork hadn't cooked all the way through in time for lunch so it was cooked longer then taken to the church for dinner.

The church member who cooked the meat said it was cooked at 350 degrees the first night, but no cooking temperature was given for when the pork was put back on the grill the next day.

About 400 people attended the church conference, and salmonella was confirmed in 69 patients.

Meals were served each day of the conference and ranged from fried chicken to nachos.

Some of the food was already prepared when purchased while other meals were prepared by church members.

It's probable that more people were affected, but those cases can't be confirmed because not everyone sought treatment or was tested.

People who were infected suffered symptoms ranging from diarrhea and fever to stomach cramps.

Three people were hospitalized.

The purpose of the health department study isn't to cast blame. It's to educate, according to health officials.

The church was not required to have a permit to serve the food because the meals were free, but proper food preparation and storage should always be observed, said Samantha Dye with Gaston County Health and Human Services.

Dye also stressed the importance of going to the doctor if you suspect you've been exposed to salmonella.

Getting checked out by a doctor can help health officials identify such outbreaks.

North Carolina typically sees about four salmonella outbreaks a year. The October case was the first in Gaston County in recent years.

You can reach Diane Turbyfill at 704-869-1817 and [Twitter.com/GazetteDiane](https://twitter.com/GazetteDiane).

SOURCE: <http://www.gastongazette.com/spotlight/report-re-cooked-meat-caused-salmonella-outbreak-1.444077>