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East Topeka Mexican restaurant still closed, 22 ill

Pork, green tomato salsa found contaminated

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As of Friday afternoon, an East Topeka Mexican restaurant that closed earlier this week remained so while state inspectors worked with the staff to avoid future instances of food-borne illness.

Kansas Department of Agriculture employees on Friday were on site at Carniceria Camecuaro, 1016 S.E. 6th, to conduct a “hazard analysis and critical control points,” or HACCP, inspection. The inspection involves observing particular foods being prepared from start to finish, said Charlie Hunt, epidemiologist with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

The suspension order prohibiting the restaurant from re-opening still was in place as of 1 p.m. Friday, said Nicole Hamm, KDA inspection manager.

Carniceria Camecuaro has been closed since Sunday when a local hospital notified KDHE of a potential outbreak of food-borne illness.

Since then, KDHE and the Shawnee County Health Agency have identified 22 people who became ill from the restaurant’s food.

KDHE also confirmed the cause of the outbreak: Both samples of pork and of green tomato salsa tested positive for staphylococcus aureus, Hunt said.

Staphylococcus aureus produces a toxin in protein-high foods that are left out of temperature — between about 40 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit — for more than four hours. Even if the meat is reheated, Hunt said, the toxin won’t go away.

Hunt encouraged people to call the agency's hotline, (877) 427-7317, whenever they think they have food poisoning.

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