

Mass food poisoning at Denver Rescue Mission sends 40 to hospital

By Yesenia Robles *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*
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Emergency responders are wrapping up their on-site evaluations at the Denver Rescue Mission after a total of about 40 people had to be transported to hospitals for food poisoning.

The 40 people were taken to various hospitals from the Denver Rescue Mission after a turkey dinner made them sick.

Lt. Phil Champagne, a spokesman for the Denver Fire Department, said people started becoming "violently ill" just over an hour after their 5 p.m. dinner.

First responders began arriving at about 7:30 p.m. and were wrapping up about 11 p.m.

About 14 ambulances transported at least two patients each. Lawrence Street has been closed between 22nd and 23rd streets while other people were evaluated outside the center. The street should reopen by 11:30 p.m.

"We eliminated other potential environmental causes," Champagne said.

About 350 people ate dinner at the Denver Rescue Mission Sunday afternoon, and it is believed at least 200 ate turkey that had been donated to the center.

Champagne said the concern is that many left the facility after dinner and may be sick on the streets or the alleys of the city.

"We've started getting calls already, about four or five — relatively nearby — about folks getting really sick," Champagne said. "They are starting to get dehydrated from all the loss of fluids."

Crews are now canvassing downtown Denver looking for any other potentially sick homeless people, and treating some on scene who refused to be transported or were less severely sick.

"These homeless are a hardy bunch," Champagne said.

Alexxa Tavlarides, a spokeswoman for the Denver Rescue Mission, said they are trying to figure out the source of the meat, but said it was immediately pulled off the serving line.

"It sounds like we may have had some donations today, which is fairly common, so we're looking into that," Tavlarides said.

Yesenia Robles: 303-954-1372, yrobles@denverpost.com or twitter.com/yeseniarobles