

May 23, 2012

CF 11-1531

City of Los Angeles  
City Council  
200 North Spring St  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

We hope that you will carefully read this material!

Thank you,



Joel Douglas

Enc: Letters and norovirus report



HARBOR LANDS CO.  
SEASCAPE • (360) 332-6960  
GRANDVIEW BUSINESS CENTER  
HARBOR BUSINESS CENTER  
THE MONTICETO AT FRIDAY HARBOR  
LAIRMONT MANOR • (360) 647-1444



P.O. Box 4082  
BELLINGHAM, WA 98227  
(360) 734-8191  
OR 734-2222  
FAX (360) 647-9223  
EMAIL: JODO@HARBORLANDS.COM

JOEL DOUGLAS

May 23, 2012

Washington State Department of Health  
PO Box 47890  
Olympia, WA 98504

### Banning of Plastic Bags Disease Concern

We wish to file a complaint relating to the banning or potential use of plastic bags and their obvious and likely exposure to the public to numerous diseases, noroviruses etc. These bacteria and virus exposures will be a hazard to employees and customers alike.

1. WE ask you to take immediate corrective and administrative action.
2. We ask you to review the documents attached and provided.
3. We ask you to research the potential exposure, the health risks and the probability that there will be injury or death from diseases caused by unclean re-usable bags contaminating grocery counters in the state of Washington. We recall the hundreds of Hep. C inoculates administered by Haggen food store in Bellingham a few years back.

Sincerely,



Joel Douglas

Enc: Letters

C/C: Mayor of Bellingham  
Washington State Dept. L & I



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 Coachman Inn

JOEL DOUGLAS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Occupational Safety and Health Administration  
300 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1280  
Seattle, Washington 98104-2397



May 21, 2012

Mr. Joel Douglas  
P.O. Box 4082  
Bellingham, WA 98227

Dear Mr. Douglas,

It has come to our attention that we may have misinterpreted your letter dated May 15, 2012, to our office in regard to your public health concern over norovirus contamination on plastic bags. During our initial screen of your concerns, we made an error and categorized it incorrectly as a discrimination complaint. This is obviously not the case. Therefore, please disregard our response to you dated May 17, 2012.

If your concern applies to public health in the state of Washington, you may wish to contact the Public Health Department. If you desire to file a safety and health complaint against your employer, you may submit your complaint to Washington Labor and Industries Department of Occupational Safety and Health.

To ensure your concerns are brought to the attention to the appropriate office in the state of Washington, we offer the following addresses:

Washington State Department of Health  
PO BOX 47890  
Olympia, Washington 98504-7890

Washington State Department of Labor & Industries  
PO Box 44000  
Olympia, WA 98504-4000

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience or any confusion in regards to the letter you have previously received.

Sincerely,

Steve Gossman, CIH  
Assistant Regional Administrator  
Office of Federal and State Operations

May 15, 2012

State of Washington Legislators,  
Representatives and Senators:

**Plastic Bag Ban Ordinances Need to be Questioned and  
Reviewed Carefully:**

We hope that you will propose a mandate that requires a full detailed environmental policy disclosure on the problem of disease transfer caused by re-usable bags at grocery counters, (see Oregon norovirus insert) also E. Coli, Hep C, and flesh eating virus transfer potential.

It may be important for grocers to sanitize a check out counter after each customer with a re-usable bag, and it may be necessary for human disease control.

We believe that the ban on plastic bag choices is a dangerous move and will lead to unnecessary loss of human life and very certainly a step backward in disease and health management.

Sincerely,



Joel Douglas

*cc: Steve Gossman US Dept. of Labor*



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 Coachman Inn

JOEL DOUGLAS

May 14, 2012

Whatcom County  
Council & Executive  
311 Grand Ave  
Bellingham, WA 98225

We wish to express some health concerns relating to the mandate of plastic bags in the city of Bellingham. Please see attached letter and report.

I urge that you contact our Whatcom County Health Director for a response and a policy of insisting that grocery counters are kept clean and sanitary at all times (and well disinfected). We also urge that reused dirty bags be prohibited from being placed on grocery checkout counters.

Many may recall that there was a Hep C outbreak at Haggens on Meridian a few years ago and there are flesh eating bacteria and other dangerous viral infections that can be spread by "reusable bags". Recall the Finkbonner child getting infected at school.

It makes absolutely no sense to eliminate the choice of safe and clean plastic bags! Please consult the prosecutor about the potential tort liabilities for injury traced to infected grocery counters and our failure to protect the safety and health of our citizens.

Sincerely,



Joel Douglas

May 10, 2012

Senatorial & Congressional Candidates  
1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> District  
US Senate

**NOTE:**

Our concerns center around cross contamination at grocery stores by reusable bags placed on the counters. Each grocery item can carry contamination and there is no provision for grocery stores to practically clean them.

Please issue a hold on plastic bag bans until further investigations and studies are made.

Thank you,



Joel Douglas

C/C: US Dept of Agriculture  
Director  
City of Santa Barbara  
City Council



OregonLive.com

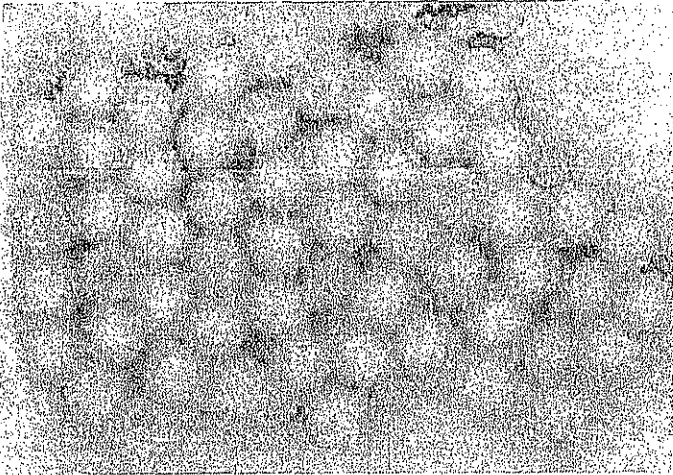
Everything Oregon

## In a first, Oregon scientific sleuths trace norovirus outbreak to reusable grocery bag

Published: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 12:01 AM Updated: Wednesday, May 09, 2012, 5:49 AM



By Lynne Terry, The Oregonian



Public Health Image Library

This is what norovirus particles look like using an electron micrograph.

The sturdy reusable grocery bag traveled with the girls' soccer team from Beaverton to Seattle for a weekend tournament, where it picked up something much less sweet than the cookies inside.

But the team members didn't know highly contagious viruses were on the bag as they passed it around during Sunday lunch, plucking out the chocolate goodies.

The next day six of the girls fell violently ill in a mysterious outbreak of norovirus, the leading cause of severe gastroenteritis in the United States.

It took Oregon scientists about five days of intensive sleuthing to pinpoint the bag as the likely culprit and lab tests to confirm its role.

That confirmation marked a breakthrough: Scientists have long known that this hardy virus is transmitted from person to person but never before have they been able to prove that transmission from an inanimate object caused an outbreak.

"In other outbreaks, we have been able to isolate the virus from door handles or keyboards, but we have never been able to show it was the keyboard or door handle that made people sick," said Kimberly Repp, epidemiologist with the Washington County Department of Health and Human Services.

The investigation also highlighted how hardy the noroviruses are -- and the challenge public health officials have combating them.

The outbreak occurred in October 2010, but the investigative report was just published today in *The*

The authors -- Repp and William Keene, senior epidemiologist with Oregon Public Health -- detail how they tracked the outbreak to the contaminated bag.

Seventeen girls, ages 13 and 14, and their chaperones traveled to Seattle on a Friday afternoon in five cars to play in a weekend soccer competition pitting 120 teams from Oregon and Washington. On Saturday, one of the teens started to feel sick so she went to a chaperone, asking if she could stay in her room. The girl ended up spending six hours in the chaperone's bathroom, throwing up and suffering from diarrhea. The woman whisked her out of the hotel and drove her back to Oregon. The team played on Saturday and enjoyed Sunday lunch together in a room at the hotel before returning home that afternoon.

On Monday, six more girls came down with acute gastroenteritis. One of the mothers called public health authorities in Washington state who alerted Oregon Public Health.

Repp spent the next several days interviewing and re-interviewing the girls who got sick, trying to figure out how the virus had spread.

Clearly, the outbreak started with the first girl. But Repp and Keene couldn't figure out how she infected the others. She stayed in a room by herself on Friday, and once she felt ill had no contact with anyone besides the chaperone.

Norovirus -- which caused 139 of 213 outbreaks of gastroenteritis in Oregon in 2010 -- is often transmitted through direct contact with an ill person, though contaminated water or food can cause an outbreak as well. That makes it difficult to track transmission.

"In outbreaks, it can be difficult to discern what exposure causes disease because norovirus can spread through many means," said Aron Hall, an epidemiologist with the Division of Viral Diseases at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Repp and Keene questioned the girls about what car they traveled in, what they ate in Seattle, what rooms they stayed in and with whom.

"Every single thing we could think of," Repp said.

All of the six girls had eaten at the Sunday lunch. They kept mentioning the cookies, which had been passed around in the bag. The cookies were bought at a store and hadn't been opened. The only common denominator was the bag.

#### Norovirus

The highly contagious virus is the top cause of U.S. foodborne disease outbreaks and the most common cause of acute gastroenteritis in the U.S., causing about 21 million illnesses each year and contributing to roughly 70,000 hospitalizations and 800 deaths. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea and stomach cramps.

Most outbreaks happen when infected people



The first sick girl never touched the bag, but it was in the chaperone's bathroom when the girl got sick. Another team member saw it and took it to the Sunday lunch.

"It was a perfect vehicle for transmission," Repp said.

But suspicion is not proof. The Oregon scientists needed the bag to test for the virus. Two weeks later, the owner, who traveled a lot, turned the bag over at a soccer practice. Repp showed up, the bleachers packed with parents, wearing blue latex gloves and carrying a plastic bag.

"I didn't want to get sick," Repp said.

The owner of the reusable grocery bag -- until then unaware it could be contaminated -- ran to the restroom to wash her hands.

Repp and Keene sent the bag -- made out of laminated woven polypropylene -- to the state's public health laboratory in Hillsboro for testing. Three days later, the results came back. Two samples from the sides of the bag below the handle tested positive for the same norovirus strain that caused the outbreak.

The tests solved their mystery and illustrated how robust these viruses are. They can live on surfaces for weeks and survive in water up to two months, Hall said.

"Norovirus is in a group that tends to be more resistant, more environmentally stable" than other viruses, he said. "It's challenging to evaluate because we can't actually grow norovirus outside their human hosts."

The investigation also demonstrates why noroviruses are so difficult to combat, Hall said.

"What this report does is it helps raise awareness of the complex and indirect way that norovirus can spread," Hall said. "It highlights the challenge we face in trying to control this problem."

Repp does not recommend that consumers ditch reusable grocery bags. But she says they should be cleaned with sanitizing wipes or in the washing machine after traveling to a store.

"You wash your clothes after you wear them," she said. "Wash your bag after you use it."

-- Lynne Terry

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spread the virus to others through close contact. But it can also spread by consuming contaminated food or water and touching surfaces or objects that have the virus on them.

Leafy greens, fresh fruits and shellfish are most commonly involved in foodborne outbreaks.

The best prevention: thorough hand washing and cleaning contaminated surfaces with a bleach-based solution.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

P.O. Box 4082  
Bellingham, WA 98227  
Fairhaven Station



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City Council  
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Los Angeles, CA 90012

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