



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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**NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Kalamazoo Cracker Barrel Closure

KALAMAZOO, MI— Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department (HCS), along with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD), has been investigating an outbreak of *Salmonella* Mbandaka linked to a Kalamazoo County restaurant, Cracker Barrel.

Salmonella is a strain of bacteria that can make people sick. A person can get *Salmonella* infection from a variety of sources, including eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water, or from contact with infected animals or people and not washing hands afterwards.

Most persons infected with *Salmonella* develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps 12 to 72 hours after infection, however it can take up to 16 days after the initial exposure to present symptoms. The illness usually lasts 4-7 days and most individuals recover without treatment. However, in some persons, symptoms may be so severe that the patient needs to be hospitalized.

“HCS is focused on protecting and improving health for all residents in Kalamazoo County and has worked closely with Cracker Barrel management and our state partners throughout this investigation. Our staff will continue to work with Cracker Barrel staff as they focus their efforts on permanently closing down the facility,” said Jim Rutherford, Health Officer of HCS.

HCS is providing oversight to ensure the following actions are in place as Cracker Barrel vacates their facility:

- Food items including grocery items and single service items located at this facility will be properly discarded.
- Equipment will be transported to a storage facility and will not be used in any food service establishment until clean, sanitized, and tested safe to utilize.
- Equipment not considered safe to utilize will be sent to scrap.
- In consultation with HCS, Cracker Barrel, who owns the building, will make a determination in the near future of what will be done with the property.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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In June 2018, Cracker Barrel was cited with health code violations and upon HCS discussing those violations and data surveillance reports of food-borne illness, Cracker Barrel decided to close their restaurant voluntarily to address the findings and start renovations to their facility. HCS worked with Cracker Barrel through those renovations and Cracker Barrel remained closed until they met all the Michigan Food Law requirements to reopen. HCS inspected the restaurant before they reopened. Environmental and employee health monitoring protocols were implemented in cooperation with Cracker Barrel.

A recently diagnosed *Salmonella* Mbandaka patron case prompted an expedited environmental testing assessment by MDARD and Cracker Barrel's private testing firm on Tuesday, November 27. On Wednesday, November 28, HCS received a letter from Cracker Barrel Corporate indicating they would close their Kalamazoo location permanently. Final voluntary closure was in response to environmental preliminary test results from Cracker Barrel's private testing firm indicating that significant *Salmonella* contamination was found. The environmental test results from MDARD are expected next week.

"Cracker Barrel has been responsive and cooperative throughout the outbreak investigation. We continue to work with Cracker Barrel and their employees to ensure there are no health risks," said Rutherford.

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