Stay in compliance with FDA safety inspections: Computer peripheral-related violations, and guidance on how to avoid them.

Inspectors at the door? Make sure your computer peripherals aren't the main attraction.

Food production companies and drug manufacturers are regularly visited by public health inspectors to ensure product, worker, and public safety. These inspectors are trained to spot sanitation and contamination problems in a variety of 'clean' environments. In addition to production equipment and surfaces, inspectors evaluate the cleanliness of shared computer peripherals like keyboards, mice, and touch screens.

Here's what one FDA inspector wrote in a March 2023 cross-contamination report.

> "We observed operators routinely touching ancillary equipment, such as keyboards, computer mice, and printers, that contained apparent white powder while producing drug products. These pieces of ancillary equipment are not routinely cleaned."
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> - FDA Inspectional Observations Form, 03/02/2023, SNF Holdings, LLC, Livonia MI.

How serious is this problem? What are the costs related to food and drug safety compliance?

Let's turn our attention to a few recent stories in the news.

In 2015, Blue Bell, a popular ice cream manufacturer, faced a major listeria outbreak. There was a nationwide recall, a halt in production and ultimately prosecution costing the company over **$19 million in fines and forfeitures**.

Who can forget Chipotle Mexican Grill? In 2015 and 2016 Chipotle experienced several foodborne illness outbreaks including E. coli, norovirus, and salmonella, sickening over 1,100 people. Beyond the disruption to business, decline in sales, and negative publicity, the company was required to pay **$25 million in fines**.

When it comes to drug safety, particularly drugs used by the US Military, the feds don't play nice.   A March 2024 press release from the Department of Justice cites Pennsylvania generic drug manufacturer KVK Research Inc. in violation of compliance by "failing to exercise appropriate controls over computer and related systems as required by current good manufacturing practices." KVK agreed to pay **$2 million** to resolve its civil liability for selling adulterated pharmaceuticals and false claims.[i]

What's the connection between computer peripherals and food and drug safety?

Environmental hygiene is a primary concern in food and drug manufacturing due to the high prevalence of bacteria and viruses on surfaces. Not only can manufacturing and production equipment surfaces harbor dangerous pathogens; computer keyboards, mice, and touch screens are some of the dirtiest, high-touch areas, typically used by multiple workers. These surfaces represent an opportunity for cross-contamination and spreading disease. Some of the foodborne diseases typically spread by unsanitary surfaces include Norovirus, a highly contagious virus that causes gastroenteritis, contributing to 19 to 21 million illnesses each year[ii], Listeria, Hepatitis A, E. coli, and Salmonella.

HealthDay News reported that norovirus can be passed from one person to another "through contact with commonly shared items such as computer keyboards and computer mice" citing a CDC report that stated, "we have demonstrated that keyboards and computer mice can be a source of transmission of norovirus." [iii]

How can I stay in compliance and avoid food and drug safety violations?

Research supports using sealed keyboards and mice that can be washed and disinfected as a simple, yet effective first line of defense against cross-contamination and spreading food-born illness. In a February 2024 article *Washing Food: Does it Promote Food Safety?* the USDA reminds us to "wash your hands after touching surfaces that are frequently used, like doorknobs and handles, light switches, phones, and keyboards."[iv] Dr. Bruce Y. Lee, executive director at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health states it plainly, "Paying for and implementing proper infection control measures should be viewed as an investment to avoid these costs which can top a million dollars."[v]

Is it time for you to invest in proper infection control measures?

Contact us now at 301.341.4900 and mention this whitepaper or visit our website (www.man-machine.com) for more information about disinfectable keyboards and mice from Man & Machine.

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[i] https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/generic-pharmaceuticals-manufacturer-pleads-guilty-agrees-15-million-criminal-penalty

[ii] Gershman, J. (2016, November 28). 5 facts about norovirus. *Pharmacy Times*.

[iii] Reinberg, S. (2008, January 3). Stomach flu spread by contaminated computer keyboards. *HealthDay*.

[iv] USDA.gov <https://www.usda.gov/>

[v] A foodborne illness outbreak could cost a restaurant millions, study suggests. (2018, April 16). *Infection Control Today*.