



ULAB
**UNIVERSITY OF LIBERAL ARTS
BANGLADESH**

**Assignment Title: Public Health Emergency - Emergency and Risk
Communication During a Foodborne Illness Outbreak in Dhaka, Bangladesh**

Course code: MSJ3263

Course Title: Emergency Communication

Department: Media Studies and Journalism

Submitted by:

Name: **Borno Ray**

I'D: **221012020**

Sumiya Ahmed Chaiti

I'D: **222012035**

Sharananngkar Chakma

I'D: **213012034**

Submitted to: **Aminul Islam,**

Senior Lecturer,

University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh

Date of submission: **09.11.2025**

Introduction

Emergency and risk communication plays a vital role in managing crises that pose immediate threats to public health, safety, and welfare. It ensures that accurate and timely information reaches affected populations so they can make informed decisions to protect themselves and their communities. This report focuses on a real-life inspired scenario of a foodborne illness outbreak in a South Asian city and describes how emergency and risk communication strategies are applied during the crisis alert phase.

Background of the Incident

In early July 2025, the Public Health Department of Dhaka, Bangladesh, reported an unusual increase in patients suffering from severe food poisoning symptoms, including vomiting, diarrhea, and fever. Epidemiological investigation quickly identified several local restaurants as the likely source of contamination. Laboratory results confirmed the presence of Salmonella bacteria in food samples collected from these establishments. As the number of reported cases continued to rise, public health authorities declared a public health emergency and activated the Emergency Communication and Response Plan (ECRP) to contain the spread and inform the public.

Crisis Alert Phase

The Crisis Alert Phase focuses on immediate communication actions to warn the public, guide their behavior, and prevent further cases. Two key communication materials are required during this phase:

Draft Public Health Warning Messages

Message Title: Public Health Alert – Foodborne Illness Outbreak in Dhaka

Issued by: Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh

Date: July 14, 2025

Official Message: The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) has identified an outbreak of foodborne illness linked to several restaurants in the Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, and Gulshan areas of Dhaka. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, and abdominal pain. If you have recently eaten from local restaurants and experience any of these symptoms, please seek medical attention immediately.

Citizens are advised to:

- Avoid eating from street food vendors or restaurants until further notice.
- Drink boiled or bottled water only.
- Wash hands thoroughly before eating and after using the restroom.

- Report suspected cases to the nearest health center.

The DGHS is working closely with city authorities and the Food Safety Department to investigate and control the outbreak. Regular updates will be shared through official media channels and social media platforms.

Stay informed, stay safe, and follow all public health instructions.

Contact for information:

Public Health Emergency Hotline: **16263**

Email: info@dghs.gov.bd

Restaurant Closure Notices

Official Notice :

Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS)

Public Health and Food Safety Division

Notice of Immediate Closure

Date: July 14, 2025

Reference No: DGHS/FSD/2025/047

This is to inform the public that the following restaurants have been ordered to close immediately under the Food Safety Act 2013 due to confirmed links to the ongoing foodborne illness outbreak:

1. Spice Garden Restaurant – Dhanmondi 27
2. Royal Kitchen – Gulshan 2
3. TasteHub – Mohammadpur

These establishments will remain closed until further notice. The closure is a preventive measure to protect public health and allow for thorough inspection, sanitation, and corrective actions.

Citizens are requested not to consume any food from the above locations. Further information and updates will be provided through the official DGHS website and verified news sources.

Signed,

Dr. Nusrat Alam

Director, Public Health and Food Safety Division

Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS)

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Bangladesh
Pre-impact communication

Design an Evacuation Route Infographic

In order to keep the citizens safe in areas like Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, and Gulshan, where the reports of contamination had concentrated, the ECRP team developed a visually appealing evacuation route infographic. This infographic is developed by following clarity, accessibility, and inclusivity principles, considering both Bangla and English to ensure maximum understanding across all social groupings.

Infographic Features:

- Color-coded routes to the nearest hospitals, community clinics, and temporary medical camps.
- The green icons here show safe food and water zones, indicating the distribution points that were verified by the DGHS.
- Emergency contact icons, namely 16263 hotline, ambulance number 999, and local ward commissioner offices.
- Landmarks comprising schools, mosques, and community centers serve as orientation for citizens who are unfamiliar with detailed maps.
- QR code linking to the interactive version of the map hosted on the DGHS website for real-time location tracking and updates.
- The digital version was shared on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp groups, and the physical copies were put up at bus stands, rickshaw garages, local markets, and schools to ensure it reached people with minimal access to the internet.

The tagline at the bottom read:

“আপনার সুস্থতা আপনার হাতেই – নিয়ম মেনে চলুন, সচেতন থাকুন।”

Your wellness is in your hands – follow the right path, stay aware.

Draft Multi-Lingual Emergency Alerts

Given the linguistic diversity of Dhaka, including Bangla, English, and Urdu-speaking communities, DGHS issued multi-lingual emergency alerts to make critical information inclusive and effective. These have been conveyed via SMS, over local radio, and TV tickers using voice messages broadcast through mosque speakers and community volunteers.

Sample Alerts:

Bangla Version:

⚠️ জরুরি সতর্কতা:

ঢাকার কিছু রেস্টুরেন্টে খাদ্যে সালমোনেলা ব্যাকটেরিয়া শনাক্ত হয়েছে।

কাঁচা বা বাইরের খাবার পরিহার করুন।

কোনো উপসর্গ দেখা দিলে ১৬২৬৩-এ যোগাযোগ করুন।

তথ্যের জন্য ভিজিট করুন: www.dghs.gov.bd

English Version:

⚠️ **Emergency Alert:**

A foodborne outbreak has been confirmed in parts of Dhaka.

Avoid eating outside food until further notice.

Report symptoms to the DGHS Hotline: 16263.

Visit www.dghs.gov.bd

for official updates.

During-Impact Response**Create Shelter Location Updates**

As panic and food shortages started in the affected zones, the Dhaka North and South City Corporations arranged temporary community shelters with clean water, basic food supplies, and medical supervision in collaboration with DGHS and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society.

To avoid misinformation and chaos, real-time updates on shelters were provided every 4 hours through digital and traditional channels.

Communication Strategy:

Live Google Map Integration: DGHS has shown an interactive map displaying available shelters in the area, along with current capacity-availability, green meaning space available and red meaning full-and facilities offered.

SMS & Radio Announcements: People received text messages like:

Nearby Safe Shelter: Mohammadpur Govt. High School (Capacity: 120), free food & medical check-ups available.

Local Ward Announcements: Volunteers used microphones to let residents know where shelters were opened, especially in areas without smartphones.

Visual Posters: The updated shelter lists were put up outside local pharmacies, mosques, and grocery stores.

Example Shelter Update Bulletin (DGHS, July 15, 2025):

Shelter Location Updates – Dhaka Foodborne Outbreak

- Mohammadpur Govt. High School – Open (Capacity 120)
- Dhanmondi Boys’ School Field Camp – Open (Capacity 200)
- Gulshan Youth Club Hall – Full (Admission paused)
- Lalmatia Community Centre – Open (Capacity 90, includes child care support)

Updates are available every 4 hours on www.dghs.gov.bd/shelterupdate

These timely updates ensured orderly evacuation and accommodation, and simultaneously enhanced public trust in the crisis management carried out by the government, showing the value of transparent and people-centered communication.

Draft Prevention Guidance

General Public Guidelines:

1. **Consume Safe Food and Water Only** – Eat home-cooked meals and avoid any uncooked or leftover food.
2. **Practice Hand Hygiene** – Wash hands with soap before preparing or eating food and after using the toilet.
3. **Boil Drinking Water** – Always drink boiled or bottled water to eliminate harmful bacteria.
4. **Food Storage Safety** – Keep perishable foods refrigerated and discard items that smell or look spoiled.
5. **Stay Informed** – Follow only official updates from DGHS, city authorities, and verified media channels.

For Food Businesses and Restaurants:

1. **Mandatory Sanitation Check:** All food establishments must undergo inspection and receive clearance before reopening.
2. **Food Handler Training:** Employees must complete DGHS-approved hygiene and safety training.
3. **Water Source Verification:** Ensure that all cooking and cleaning water comes from verified safe sources.
4. **Supplier Safety:** Purchase raw materials only from DGHS-verified suppliers and maintain procurement records.
5. **Customer Transparency:** Display a DGHS “Food Safety Clearance” certificate at entrances once approved.

Community Role:

- Local volunteers and NGOs are encouraged to support hygiene awareness campaigns.
- Schools, mosques, and community centers can host quick training sessions on safe food handling practices.

Tagline:

“Safe food, safe family – খাদ্যে নিরাপত্তাই সুস্থ জীবনের ভিত্তি।”

Business Impact Communications

Business Continuity & Support Measures:

1. **Temporary Tax Relief:** Affected restaurants will receive a 3-month deferment of VAT and utility bill payments.
2. **Emergency Business Recovery Loans:** Low-interest loans through Sonali Bank and SME Foundation to assist with sanitation upgrades and operational recovery.

3. **Technical Assistance:** DGHS and the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA) will provide free sanitation audits and training for all affected businesses.
4. **Public Confidence Campaign:** A joint “Safe to Eat” campaign will highlight re-certified restaurants, restoring public trust once safety standards are met.
5. **Insurance Coordination:** The Ministry of Commerce will facilitate claims under food contamination insurance for eligible businesses.

Communication Strategy:

- **Press Briefing:** Scheduled for July 19, 2025, to announce recovery measures publicly.
- **Business Hotline:** DGHS-BFSA Business Support Desk (Call 09612-222-555) for registration and inquiries.
- **Media Outreach:** Coordination with print and digital media to share verified reopening lists and hygiene improvements.

Quote:

“Our priority is to protect public health while ensuring that affected businesses recover swiftly and sustainably.”

— Dr. Nusrat Alam, Director, Public Health and Food Safety Division, DGHS

Recovery Phase Announcements

Key Announcements:

1. Reopening of Cleared Restaurants:

The following restaurants have passed health inspections and are approved for operation:

- Spice Garden Restaurant, Dhanmondi – Reopened July 25
- Royal Kitchen, Gulshan – Reopened July 26
- TasteHub, Mohammadpur – Reopened July 27
(Full list available on www.dghs.gov.bd/reopening2025)

2. Ongoing Monitoring:

DGHS field teams will continue weekly random sampling for food and water quality testing for the next 60 days.

3. Public Awareness Campaign:

A citywide “Eat Safe, Stay Healthy” awareness drive will continue across schools, marketplaces, and social media platforms, emphasizing hygiene and preventive care.

4. Evaluation and Lessons Learned:

The Ministry of Health will publish a detailed outbreak review report in August 2025, highlighting key takeaways for improved future crisis preparedness.

Message to the Public:

“Your cooperation has been the key to controlling this outbreak. By staying informed and following safety guidelines, we have protected our city together.”

Tagline:

“Together for a Safer Dhaka – একসাথে গড়ি নিরাপদ খাদ্য সংস্কৃতি।”

Conclusion

The foodborne illness outbreak in Dhaka highlights the vital importance of effective emergency and risk communication in protecting public health. Through timely alerts, clear guidance, and coordinated efforts between DGHS, city authorities, and community partners, the crisis was managed efficiently. Public cooperation, accurate information sharing, and transparent actions helped control the outbreak and rebuild trust. This case shows that strong communication saves lives and supports a faster, safer recovery for everyone.

Reference

Directorate General of Health Services. (2025, July 14). *Notice of immediate closure: Foodborne illness outbreak restaurants*. Public Health and Food Safety Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Bangladesh. <https://www.dghs.gov.bd>

Directorate General of Health Services. (2025, July 15). *Shelter location updates – Dhaka foodborne outbreak*. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Bangladesh. <https://www.dghs.gov.bd/shelterupdate>

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. (2025, August). *Outbreak review report: Lessons learned from the 2025 Dhaka foodborne illness outbreak*. Government of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Food Safety Authority. (2025, July 19). *Safe to eat: Business recovery and food safety campaign*. Ministry of Commerce, Government of Bangladesh.