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NEWS FROM THE PORTLAND AREA AND THE NORTHWEST

FDA ramps up pepper warning

Salmonella | Federal and state agencies face a hurdle: Not all Asian restaurant owners are fluent in English

By **LYNNE TERRY**
THE OREGONIAN

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration was scrambling Thursday, taking the unusual step of warning restaurant

and food industry professionals directly about a salmonella outbreak linked to white pepper in Oregon and three other Western states.

Normally, the FDA relies on news releases, local agencies and the industry to get tainted food off the market.

But FDA officials are making a direct appeal about tainted ground white pepper sold by Union International Food Co. in the San Francisco Bay Area over fears that many of the Asian customers

who bought the product do not speak English.

"We believe that many of the people who might have purchased this spice might not be aware of the message," said Dr. David Acheson, associate commissioner for foods at the Food and Drug Administration.

This outbreak highlights another loophole in the food safety network in the U.S., which has been hit by a spate of cases of food poisoning, drawing

widespread criticism that the FDA and industry do not do enough to protect consumers.

Tests of ground white pepper from an Asian restaurant on the east side of Portland turned up positive for salmonella. William Keene, senior epidemiologist for the state Public Health Division, would not name the restaurant, saying he did not want to single out any one establishment among

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