

USDA'S MEAT AND POULTRY HOTLINE — MORE THAN 1 MILLION SERVED

From U.S. Dept. of Agriculture

■(WASHINGTON) From novice cooks wondering how long to roast a chicken to more experienced bakers unsure about what kind of cutting board to use, the home economists on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Meat and Poultry Hotline have heard it all — one million times.

This month, the Hotline answered its one-millionth call, a milestone for the toll-free service providing food safety information to consumers.

"Since its beginning in 1985, the Hotline has provided cooks across the country with help providing meals — safely — for their families," said Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman. "The Hotline is a vital part of USDA's consumer food safety education efforts and this one-millionth call is a milestone that celebrates these efforts and honors the talented, dedicated staff."

Calls to Hotline have changed through the years, according to Susan Conley, Food Safety and Inspection Service's Education

and Communications Staff Director. Conley, one of the first home economists answering calls when the Hotline was established in 1985, said that in the mid-eighties, calls were more general in nature concerning safe handling of food. Today, kitchen sanitation is a frequent topic with callers more familiar with specific foodborne bacteria and technology.

"It is fitting that the millionth call was received by the Hotline in November," said Bessie Berry, manager of the Hotline. "Over the years, Thanksgiving holiday food preparation has sparked many food safety questions, with more than 20 percent of the year's calls coming in November."

The Meat and Poultry Hotline operates year-round, Mon.-Fri. from 10 am to 4 pm, Eastern Time. The Hotline staff also handle caller's last minute concerns on Thanksgiving Day from 8 am to 2 pm ET. Recorded messages on a wide variety of food safety topics are available 24 hours a day. The toll-free number is 1-800-535-4555 and is TDD-accessible.

McCORMICK NAMED CHAIR OF DIRECT LOAN TASK FORCE

From U.S. Dept. of Education

■(WASHINGTON) U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley has selected Joe L. McCormick to serve as chairperson of the Education Department's Direct Loan Task Force.

"Joe's experience in directing a broad range of student aid programs, coupled with his success in launching a student loan guaranty agency that emphasized customer service, will be tremendous assets to the department and the direct lending team," Riley said.

In his new duties, McCormick will oversee the activities of the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program, under which the federal government issues loans directly to students through schools rather than through private lenders. More than 1,600 postsecondary institutions are now signed up to issue direct loans for nearly two million students. In the program's first two years, more than \$10 billion in direct loans were issued, and another \$12 billion will be made in this, its third year.

The task force selects schools for the direct loan program, provides technical assistance and training, and coordinates the administrative aspects to keep the program running smoothly.

McCormick brings more than 29 years of experience in student financial aid management to his new post. He will replace the current chair, Diane Sedicum Voigt, who retires in December. The task force is under the Office of Student Financial Assistance in the Office of Postsecondary Education.

Currently, he serves as direct loan liaison officer, supervising direct loan account managers in the department's 10 regional offices, which provide technical assistance to participating schools.

Prior to joining the department, McCormick served as executive director of the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, was president and CEO of the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation (TGSLOC), served as president of the National Council of Higher Education Loan Programs and was a member of the Texas Legislature's Select Committee on Higher Education.

Previously, McCormick was director of financial aid at three universities: University of Houston, Mississippi State University and Oklahoma State University Okmulgee, and also served as president of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

BRINKMANN CORP. TO PAY \$175,000 TO SETTLE CIVIL PENALTY CASE

From U.S. Consumer Product
Safety Commission

■(WASHINGTON) The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission announced Wednesday that the Brinkmann Corp. (TBC) of Dallas, Texas, has agreed to pay a civil penalty of \$175,000 to settle allegations that it violated the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Act by failing to report defects associated with its charcoal smoker, electric smoker, and cooker/fryer.

CPSC alleges that TBC failed to report information indicating that its cooker/fryer, distributed under the name "Country Cooker," was susceptible to spillage of hot liquids and foods. The base lacked a protective lip around the burner grate allowing the cooking pan to become dislodged during use. Also, the basket of the cooker/fryer could be hung on the outside of the appliance, which could result in the pan and basket tipping and spilling its hot contents. TBC received reports of consumers receiving burns when the pan tipped off the base.

CPSC also alleges that TBC failed to report information indicating that its electric smoker, sold under the name "Smoke 'N Grill Electric," had loose brackets allowing the water pan to become dislodged and spill hot water. TBC received at least seven re-

ports of consumers who received burns when the pan slipped from the brackets.

Finally, CPSC alleges that TBC failed to report information indicating that its charcoal smoker, distributed under the "Brinkmann" and "COOK'N CAJUN" labels, had brackets and other parts with sharp edges. TBC received at least 13 reports of consumers receiving lacerations while setting up or using the grill. Also, CPSC alleges that TBC failed to report information indicating that the charcoal smoker had a hole in the bottom of the charcoal pan that allowed hot ash to fall through creating a fire hazard. TBC received at least 25 reports of fire or charring allegedly caused by ashes falling through the hole. In September 1994, TBC voluntarily provided a kit to owners of the charcoal smoker to close the hole and replace the sharp brackets.

TBC sold approximately 100,000 cooker/fryers, 100,000 electric smokers, and more than 1,000,000 charcoal water smokers between 1979 and 1993.

In agreeing to settle this matter, TBC denies that its products were defective or unreasonably dangerous. TBC also denies that it knowingly violated the reporting requirements of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Act.