



## Food Safety Law Firm Investigates Major Outbreak of E. coli Linked To Lettuce

*Richard J. Arsenault of Neblett, Beard & Arsenault in Alexandria, Louisiana, says the latest cases of food poisoning undermine public confidence in our nation's food supply.*

Alexandria, La. ([PRWEB](#)) May 10, 2010 -- As another outbreak of E. coli spreads across the nation, prompting a multistate recall of lettuce products, a nationally known law firm involved in food safety litigation has called for stricter enforcement of food processing rules and regulations.

"E. coli in any food product is unacceptable, and once again we're seeing an outbreak in a popular and widely distributed food item," said food safety lawyer Richard J. Arsenault, founding partner at [Neblett, Beard & Arsenault](#) in Alexandria, Louisiana.

"This type of recall undermines the public's confidence in our food supply," Arsenault said. "It's imperative that the safety of our food become a top priority."

On May 6, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced a [multistate recall](#) of shredded romaine lettuce sold by Freshway Foods of Sidney, Ohio. Tests run by the New York State Public Health Laboratory in Albany discovered the presence of the E. coli 0145 in a package of romaine lettuce.

The recalled romaine lettuce was sold to wholesalers, restaurants, delis and institutions under the brand names Freshway and Imperial Sysco in the following states: Alabama, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

Consumers who purchased romaine lettuce from in-store salad bars and delis including those at Kroger, Giant Eagle, Ingles Markets and Marsh stores in the states previously listed should throw the product away, according to a [recall notice](#) on the FDA site. Bulk, prepackaged romaine or bagged salad mixes containing romaine that were purchased in supermarkets are not included in the recall; Freshway Foods does not produce those products, according to the FDA.

So far, victims of the illnesses are mostly college students in Ohio, Michigan and New York, but the outbreak may expand as the recall spreads public awareness of the hazard. As of May 7, there are 19 individuals that have become ill from E. coli O145 with as many as 10 other illnesses the CDC suspects are linked. Many of the victims have been [hospitalized](#) and three of the victims have developed [hemolytic uremic syndrome](#) (HUS), a life threatening complication. The food safety attorneys at the law offices of Neblett, Beard & Arsenault are currently investigating claims on behalf of E. coli victims who believe their illnesses are part of this multistate outbreak.

Fruits and vegetables, like romaine lettuce, can carry pathogens from the soil or water, or become contaminated during processing. Leafy greens are the produce most often associated with foodborne illness. It is not yet known how the lettuce may have become contaminated with E. coli 0145, but the FDA is investigating a lettuce farm in



Yuma, Arizona.

“E. coli” is part of a diverse group of bacteria, many of which are harmless or even beneficial; however, shiga toxin-producing strains like E. coli 0145 and E. coli 0157 can be dangerous. These serotypes produce a poison that can cause the blood to improperly clot, resulting in organ failure.

“While studies show that outbreaks of E. coli 0157:H7 are on the decline, it is troubling to think that outbreaks linked to other E. coli strains could be taking O157’s place,” concluded Arsenault.

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### **Contact Information**

**Nicole Cerullo**

Neblett, Beard & Arsenault

<http://www.neblettbeardandarsenault.com/>

800.256.1050

**Mike Dayton**

Consultwebs.com

<http://www.consultwebs.com/>

919.880.1748

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