Teams are used every day to accomplish tasks that cannot be effectively completed by an individual. Teams combine multiple backgrounds, ideas, and visions to strengthen the approach to a specific subject. A team broadens expectations and capabilities by bringing multiple viewpoints and ideas to the table. After all, more minds truly are better than one.

In any given food facility you will find a number of teams, including HACCP, food safety, occupational safety, and quality. Food defense is no exception. The team should be used to assess, implement, and manage various security components at the facility. The development of a food defense program is too important to assign to one individual with one background. If an individual develops such a rigid food defense program that it hinders or stops production, employees will disregard it to ensure that production continues to run efficiently. If this occurs, the facility will not have a successful food defense program. Using several team members ensures that the day-to-day operations of the facility are not hindered. The team approach is vital in all phases, but especially in the development of food defense programs.

A team approach also allows the team to delegate responsibilities to various employees once programs are developed. In most cases, the food defense coordinator already may be overloaded with normal duties and extra assignments. With the team approach, the food defense coordinator can designate various tasks to other team members and direct the team when security events occur, meetings are necessary, or programs and policies should be reviewed.

BUILDING THE TEAM

Many companies have successfully developed HACCP teams, food safety teams, occupational safety and health teams, and quality teams that operate effectively and work together to accomplish their missions. When building a team, you should look for employees that have enough time to participate and are able to benefit the team.

If people are selected because of their positions and are too busy to participate, you should either adjust their priorities and responsibilities, or find other employees to fill these spots.

It typically takes six months to effectively teach a person to understand, complete, and be effective at a certain task or skill. After six months, individuals are typically very motivated to effectively complete their tasks. This motivated mindset usually continues for about two years. During this time period, the individual will search for better solutions and methods to meet those tasks. Unless individuals are presented with new challenges, they most likely will become complacent in their positions after two years.

Therefore, some companies ask for a two-year commitment from team members. During this time period, the team members’ responsibilities may change.
Food Defense

TRAINING THE TEAM
Training team members is vital when establishing a program. Every member needs to have a basic understanding of food defense and the specific methods and approaches used. Defense training tends to be overlooked at many food facilities. A common assumption is that individuals from the facility will understand the subject well enough to develop an effective program. While supervisors and managers may have some basic security knowledge, most individuals without a security background will not be able to assess, develop, and manage a successful food defense program without proper training. Food defense and food safety are similar in some regards, but overall, food defense is a discipline separate from food safety. Do not assume that a person trained in food safety, quality, or occupational safety can develop and manage an effective food defense program without further training.

TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES
The food defense team is responsible for minimizing risks identified in the vulnerability assessment. They also will manage and enforce the program steps and tools. Other duties include:
- Ensuring that an effective food defense plan is developed and followed.
- Determining a level of physical security based on the facility’s threat level.
- Ensuring that company standards are followed.
- Ensuring that disciplines for the food defense program are carried out.

There are also several issues to address, including:
- Policies and procedures for employee background checks.
- Supervision of guard operations.
- Fencing and landscape inspections.
- Scheduled lighting surveys and lighting maintenance.
- Policies and procedures for transport control and parking.
- Policies and procedures for visitor entry and control.
- Design, maintenance, and procedures for closed-circuit television systems.
- Employee uniforms and identification.
- Employee building entry and access.
- Employee defense training and awareness.
- Security effectiveness of exterior doors.
- Management of electronic access control systems.
- Design, maintenance, and procedures for alarm systems.
- Key management and control.
- Physical and procedural security for sensitive areas.
- Security issues associated with subcontractors and delivery persons.
- Liaison with local law enforcement.

All of these issues are obviously impossible for one person to handle. It will be necessary to delegate or assign tasks to other people on the food defense team. The key is to be sure the person who is assigned to the task has the appropriate training, knowledge, and skills required to carry out the mission.

SELECTING TEAM MEMBERS
A well-developed food defense team will include members who represent all departments at the facility. Consider including the positions on the following list. This list is not all-inclusive and will vary with different types of facilities, locations, or products. Depending on the size of the facility and the company, there may be other employees who can add value to the team. The size of the team usually depends on the size of the facility and the amount of available resources. However, generally the team should be between five and eight members. The most important element to remember is that the team should be multi-functional. Team members can include:

Food Defense Coordinator. Each facility should appoint a food defense coordinator (FDC) to manage the program. The FDC can be an employee whose sole responsibility is to manage the food defense program or an employee with additional responsibilities.

Facility Manager. The facility manager has to be part of the team. No other employee knows the operation, the product, the product flow, and the facility vulnerabilities better than the manager. Also, the facility manager will have to approve any changes the team recommends to management or the security measures will not work.

Human Resources Manager. The human resources manager will be instrumental in developing and enforcing employee security policies and procedures in the facility. The food defense team should review the employee handbook with the HR manager. Security concerns should be addressed in the handbook and in other relevant company policies. These issues may include, but not be limited to weapons on company property, drug policy (illegal and prescription drugs), verbal harassment of fellow employees or supervisors, disciplinary policy for disorderly behavior, reporting suspicious activity or security situations, sexual harassment policies, all policies developed as part of the food defense program that may affect employee actions, and background checks or other pre-employment screening programs.

Food Defense Coordinator
Facility Manager
Human Resources Manager
Production Manager
Employees
Union Representative

Illustration: Thinkstock.com
**Production Manager.** It is best to include the production manager to help guide the team in ways to ensure that production is not greatly affected, but is still secure. Without the production manager's participation, the team will not fully understand what may slow production. Production managers typically oversee the greatest number of employees in the operation. They must understand and enforce the facility’s defense policies with the employees they manage. As mentioned earlier, the production manager also must be trained to handle conflict consistently to ensure that anger levels and/or employee violence does not escalate.

**Employees.** At least one or two trusted, long-term employees should be included to ensure that the team makes decisions that are in the best interest of the entire operation. There are many benefits to including employees on a food defense team. Since they work with day-to-day operations, they can provide feedback on which security measures will be most effective and beneficial. Also, other employees will be confident that their rights are addressed by any security measures the team selects.

**Union Representative.** If a union is present at your facility, a member of the union should be included as part of the food defense team. If you do not include a union representative, employees may assume that management is trying to act behind their backs. They may feel their only option is to work around or neglect security measures.

**WORKING AS A TEAM**

After the team has been established and roles have been defined, the food defense team is ready to move forward. The first step as a team is to complete a vulnerability assessment to identify hazards or risks associated with intentional contamination. Suggestions or recommendations for corrective action and countermeasures will be implemented to minimize the risks. The food defense team will develop a food defense manual that includes policies and procedures to address and minimize the hazards identified during the vulnerability assessment.

The team should periodically review the manual to ensure that the information provided is current. Corrective actions or solutions to defense problems should be monitored to make sure they are providing the necessary level of security. If current corrective actions are not adequate, new recommendations from the team must be reviewed and implemented. The team also should conduct regular self-inspections to find ways to better secure the facility and determine if current security policies are properly implemented. All self-inspections should be clearly documented and the results provided to the entire team.

In the event of a security crisis, the food defense team should assemble immediately to discuss the crisis and determine if the team can handle it or if the crisis management team should take over. The food defense team should be available to assist the crisis management team if needed. The team also can use the assistance of outside contractor security services, law enforcement, consultants, etc. to resolve security issues.

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