Case Study 1:

What would YOU do?

Read the following case study to see what was done incorrectly, and how changes can make the garden a safer place.

Allison woke up with a sore throat on Tuesday morning. Not feeling very well, she decided to go to work and harvest fruits and vegetables. Once arriving at the field, Allison stepped into the garden with close-toed shoes, and started picking produce. Right as she entered the field, Allison heard her pet dog, Heidi, barking for attention. Allison decided to open the gate to the field and let Heidi walk around with her as she continued to pick the produce. By the time she got to the middle of the field, Allison was extremely thirsty due to her sore throat. Not bringing any water into the field, she glanced down at the gardening hose and took a quick drink out of it. While she was placing the produce items in the harvesting bins, Allison was receiving a phone call on her cell phone. Excited for the concert she was attending tonight, she decided to pick up her phone and plan the rest of the night's events. As Allison was walking out of the field with her dog, she spotted a broken glass bottle by one of the crops. Since she still had to take her produce items to postharvest production, she walked past it with her harvesting bin. Allison had been picking room temperature produce items. Once it was ready for storage, she put it in a pest-free, well ventilated location on the ground by the pesticides and sanitizers. The last thing Allison did before finishing for the day was sanitize the post-harvest production facility. She made stronger concentrations than recommended on the back of the container because this will help kill more potential hazards than what was suggested on the bottle. Allison then left the sanitizers to air dry and went home to plan the rest of her evening.

1. What did Allison do wrong?

--- Allison had a sore throat before even going to work. When showing signs of diarrhea, vomiting, or sore throat, do not go to work.

---She let her dog, Heidi enter the field. Both domestic and wild animals should be kept out of the field as much as possible.

---Allison drank out of the hose. NEVER drink out of hoses. This can spread illness to from her mouth to the water, and then to the produce.

---She answered her cell phone while working in the field. Cell phones can be a potential fomite, which can allow the transfer of harmful microorganisms from Allison's hands and make safe produce items unsafe.

--- Allison saw broken glass in the field and decided to leave it for someone else to take care of. When physical hazards are seen, they should be taken care of immediately, in a safe manner.

---Allison stored the room temperature produce by pesticides and sanitizers. To reduce the chances of chemical hazards from occurring, never store chemicals by produce items.

---She used stronger concentrations of sanitizer than recommended on the label. By not following the directions on a label, a chemical hazard can result from excess chemical usage.

2. What can YOU do to avoid these problems?

--- DO NOT go to work if you have symptoms of diarrhea, vomiting, or sore throat. Call in to your supervisor and tell them you are unable to work.

---Never let domestic or wild animals into the field. This will reduce the likelihood of spreading disease or fecal contamination to the produce items.

---Never drink out of hoses. Drinking from hoses will aid in spreading potentially harmful microorganisms from your mouth to the soil, crops, or produce items.

---Do not bring cell phones or other potential fomites into the field with you. If contact is made with anything other than the fruits or vegetables, make sure to properly wash hands before AND after contact is made with the object.

---Dispose of any physical hazards in a safe, appropriate manner. The physical hazards should be moved to a proper waste receptacle and removed from the garden in a timely manner.

---Keep chemicals in a distant location from where all produce will be stored. Chemicals should be kept in a locked, secure location to avoid and tampering or inappropriate application. Only certified individuals should use the chemicals.

---Only use the recommended amount of sanitizer as stated on the label. A lack of sanitizer may not eliminate all the potential microorganisms present, while too much chemical could result in a chemical hazard itself.