

# Peanut company in salmonella probe shuts 2nd plant

*February 10, 2009*

*By KATE BRUMBACK, Associated Press Writer Kate Brumback, Associated Press Writer*

ATLANTA – The peanut company at the center of an investigation into a deadly national salmonella outbreak said Tuesday it has suspended operations at a second processing plant.

Peanut Corporation of America said in a statement it was voluntarily suspending operations at its Plainview, Texas, plant while state and federal health officials complete an investigation into procedures and food safety records there. The plant is operated by a subsidiary, Plainview Peanut Co.

The company is working with Texas health officials, who allowed Peanut Corp. to voluntarily shut the plant Tuesday, said Doug McBride, spokesman for the Department of State Health Services. As a matter of protocol, the state allows a company to act voluntarily before it takes action, which is what happened in this case, McBride said.

Peanut Corp. closed its plant in Blakely, Ga., last month after federal investigators identified that facility as the source of the salmonella outbreak.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Tuesday that the number of cases linked to the current outbreak has reached 600, with one case in Florida bringing the number of affected states to 44. It may also have contributed to eight deaths.

An Associated Press investigation last week revealed that the Plainview plant, which opened in March 2005, operated uninspected and unlicensed by state health officials until after the company came under investigation last month by the Food and Drug Administration. Once inspectors learned about the Texas plant, they found no sign of salmonella there.

Peanut Corp., headquartered in Lynchburg, Va., also operates a small plant under the name Tidewater Blanching in Suffolk, Va.

On Monday, the FBI raided the plant in Georgia, hauling off boxes and other material. Agents executed search warrants at both the plant and at Peanut Corp.'s Lynchburg headquarters, according to a senior congressional aide with knowledge of the raids. The official spoke only on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly on the matter.