

Food Recall



A food recall is the intentional removal of a product from the market when there are reasons to believe it may be a potential hazard for the consumer. Some potential hazards are:

- biological, such as the presence of pathogens (e.g., *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat meat)
- chemical, such as undeclared allergens (e.g., nuts in a nut-free granola bar)
- physical, (e.g., metal fragments in ground meat)

Recall Classification

Recalls fall into three classes:

Class I: a situation where serious adverse health consequences or death may result if the product is consumed (e.g., presence of undeclared allergens).

Class II: a situation where a health hazard possibly exists but the probability is remote (e.g., presence of pathogenic bacteria such as *Listeria monocytogenes* in a ready-to-eat product).

Class III: a situation where the consumption of the product is not likely to cause any health problems (e.g., severe quality issues of a product).

Triggers for a Recall

Recalls are triggered by different factors including:

- microbial, chemical or physical analysis of the product (e.g., *E. coli* 0157:H7 presence in beef burgers)
- consumer or customer complaints
- international or other government agency referrals

- critical process deficiencies found during inspections (e.g., milk pasteurization performed under inadequate time or temperature)
- deficiencies in Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) found during inspections (e.g., a serious sanitation problem, excessive use of nitrates on meat products)
- faulty information from an ingredient and/or packaging supplier

Be Prepared for a Recall

Despite the best efforts of processors to produce safe food, a product recall may occur.

Companies must be prepared to handle a recall efficiently so they can protect consumers' health and prevent outbreaks of illness. The best preparation for a recall is to develop and implement a recall program in your facility. A properly designed program can reduce the effects of a recall on the market and protect your company and your brands.

Develop and Implement your Recall Program

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has developed the Food Recalls- Manufacturers' Guide to help food processors develop a recall program. For more information, go to the CFIA website at inspection.canada.ca.

A hard copy of this guide and more information on recalls is also available at the CFIA Office (Manitoba) at 204-797-4501.

Ten basic elements for an effective recall program:

- a recall management team
- a complaint file
- a recall contact list
- a tracing system of raw ingredients, packaging materials, and finished products
- records of the amount of each lot code of each product produced
- distribution records and a distribution record system
- recalled product records (e.g., description and amount of the product recalled, date and corrective actions taken)
- a step-by-step description of what to do when you have to recall a product (recall procedures)
- regular updating and testing of the recall plan

- a plan to assess the effectiveness of the recall

Managing a Recall

If your company has produced and sold unsafe products you must recall the products. Notify the local Canadian Food Inspection Agency Office at (204) 797-4501 in Manitoba and provide specific information about the product. This will be used by the CFIA to classify the recall and develop a risk management strategy to remove all hazardous products from store shelves.

Company information required for a recall:

- a detailed description of the problem
- the name, brand, size, lot code(s) of affected products
- details of complaints received and any reported illnesses
- distribution information of the products, local and national
- specific dates the products were distributed
- label(s) of the product(s) being recalled
- the total quantity of products manufactured and distributed
- the name of the person responsible for contacting the CFIA
- the name and telephone number(s) for the company's after-hours contact

For more information on food safety please contact the Food Safety and Inspection Branch at foodsafety@gov.mb.ca.