

Is your Establishment Ready for Linked-to-Food Recalls?

In an effort to deliver more information to consumers, the FDA is intending to publicly identify retail locations, (including food services), where recalled product was sold to the public. Class I recalls, (products that are likely to cause illness), are the primary focus of this effort.

FDA Commissioner, Scott Gottlieb, said in a statement that “in most cases, information publicized by the recalling company is sufficient to allow consumers to identify and avoid recalled product.” But it often is not, especially when the affected product does not have a name brand or label, the FDA said. “This might include deli cheese, nuts, rawhide chews, or pet treats sold in bulk and fresh fruits and vegetables sold individually,” Gottlieb said.

Both FMI and GMA are planning to submit comments in support of the policy change. If moved forward, this should go into effect in November at the earliest.

The FDA has traditionally resisted releasing this information. However, the USDA has long identified retailers for recalled meat and poultry products that pose a health hazard. In effect, all government recalls issued for food and drugs in the US are going to name the retail locations when those recalled products are likely to cause illness in consumers.

"Knowing where a recalled product was sold during the most dangerous food recalls can be the difference between a consumer going to the hospital or not," Gottlieb said. "While we can't prevent every illness, we can make sure we provide information to consumers to prevent more people from becoming sick from a recalled or hazardous food product."

How can you be ready?

- Know who your suppliers are. Make sure that they have a Recall Plan and have a way to quickly notify you in the event of a recall.
- You should also have a recall plan or procedure in place ahead of time to follow.
 - Who will coordinate activities in the establishment?
 - Who will identify, locate and remove product offered for sale? How will that be done?
 - Where will recalled product be stored away from other foods so that it can either be disposed of or returned to the vendor?
 - Finally, who is going to verify that all of the recalled product has been removed, stored correctly, notified the vendor and either disposed of or returned to the vendor?
- React quickly when you receive a recall notification. If the notification is not yet public, it soon will be.
- Be prepared to communicate.
 - What will the communication to customers be who have questions or are returning recalled product?
 - Where will the recall notification be posted or made available to customers?
 - It is also a good practice to have a shelf sign to post where the product is offered for sale to inform customers that the product was recalled. That way your customers know that you are proactive and that the product was removed for a reason and not just an out of stock item.

