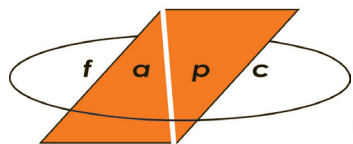


# Food & Agricultural Products Center



## FLASH!!

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY™

Dec. 2, 2004

---

## Meat Product Recall Disasters can be Avoided

STILLWATER, Okla. – A recall can spell potential disaster for companies, but with proper understanding of the United States Department of Agriculture guidelines, recall disasters can be avoided.

According to the Food Safety and Inspection Service, a food recall is a voluntary action by a manufacturer or distributor to protect the public from products that may cause health problems or possible death.

FSIS becomes aware of unsafe products when the company that manufactured or distributed the food informs FSIS or the discovery is made through test results received by FSIS as part of its sampling program.

Companies need to begin by analyzing the risk of contamination to its product, said Jason Young, quality management specialist for the Food & Agricultural Products Center. The second step is to determine the number of customers and how to communicate a recall fast and effectively.

Young said detailed planning with the FSIS and customers will greatly reduce anxiety and fears during the recall.

“Planning is only successful when executed effectively,” he said. “That is why having a recall team in place is critical. Each team member should have a clearly defined role with a leader or coordinator to oversee the recall process and serve as central information gatherer.”

Young said another important authority on recall procedures for meat and poultry companies is the FSIS

Directive 8080.1. This directive provides the terminology, responsibilities and public notification procedures regarding the voluntary recall of FSIS-inspected meat and poultry products.

“Written recall procedures can be evaluated by the use of a mock recall,” Young said. “A mock recall is a process that tests your recall program. Recall procedures should be reviewed and edited based on mock results.”

The directive also contains a product recall worksheet that companies are required to fill out and file with the agency at the onset of a product recall.

The information used in the recall worksheet can be used when communicating with the media, customers and consumers about the recalled products.

The directive also describes the three distinct classes of recall. Class I is a health hazard situation where there is a reasonable probability that the use of the product will cause serious, adverse health consequences or death.

Class II is a health hazard situation where there is a reasonable probability of adverse health consequences from the use of the product.

Class III is a situation where the use of the product will not cause adverse health consequences.

When the FSIS becomes aware of a situation, there is a preliminary inquiry to determine the need for a recall, Young said. Once a recall is required, FSIS outlines the actions it expects a firm to take to ensure

that the maximum amount of product is recovered in the shortest amount of time.

Potentially damaging disasters occur when companies cannot determine the location of contaminated product.

“Establishments should be able to locate all of the lot for any given scenario within two hours,” Young said.

Following the firms taking action, public notification occurs. Generally, in Class I and Class II recalls the FSIS will issue a press release. A Class III recall does not usually require a press release. Also, FSIS does not issue press releases if the company has effectively recalled all product voluntarily before the FSIS requested a recall.

FSIS also checks to make sure the company effectively notified customers about the product recall and the contaminated product has been controlled. Finally, the case will be closed once it has been determined the firm has made all reasonable efforts to recall the product.

“Effective planning and proper record keeping are important, but communication is key,” Young said. “Whether a company is communicating to the media, customers or the USDA, poor communication could ruin a company.”

###

Jason Young is a quality management specialist for the FAPC. He may be contacted at (405) 744-6071 or <a href="mailto:youngjd@okstate.edu">youngjd@okstate.edu</a> .
--

Oklahoma State University, in compliance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246 as amended, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices or procedures. This includes but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Ed Miller, Interim Dean and Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Dean of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of \$77.70 for 555 copies. 1204 MHG.

Food & Agricultural Products Center  
Oklahoma State University  
Room 148  
Stillwater, OK 74078-6055