



## Regulations for Food Processing

# Food Product Recalls

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No farm or food processor ever wants to have a recall of one of their products. However, when an unsafe food product has left the control of the producer, it must be removed from the marketplace. The process of removing the product is called a *recall*. Therefore, it's helpful to know what you can do to avoid a recall altogether. And, in the unfortunate event that it does happen, it helps to have a "recall plan" in place and know what to do. The idea of a recall plan is to be able to identify the product(s) affected, how much is involved, how to locate it, and how to let your customers know quickly. It can be designed in a way that will work for you and your customers. Preparing for a food recall is part of effective crisis management and can protect your business. This fact sheet covers:

- Problems that lead to recalls;
- Recall planning for your business;
- Your responsibilities during the first 24 hours of a recall;
- WSDA and FDA Recall Coordinator Contacts.

### Problems that Lead to Recalls

Despite careful production and processing, there is a chance that someday one of your food products may need to be recalled. A faulty piece of equipment may prevent your food product from being processed safely. An ingredient you used in a food product might contain an undeclared allergen or pathogen. Unfortunately, there are many reasons that things go wrong. Many of these problems are found in routine inspections and in sampling from retail stores by WSDA's Food Safety Program or the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). However, problems are also found when a consumer gets sick.

### Recall Planning for Your Business

Your recall plan needs to be specific to the product in question and can be designed in a way that will work for you and your customers to remove a food product from the market quickly and effectively. Here are some general tips:

- Your recall plan should include contacting the WSDA Recall Coordinator who will assist you with protocol, standards and wording ensuring you have an efficient and effective recall.
- A good record-keeping system is important to help identify products, codes, lots and quantities. Lot coding or date coding is very important. Without it, you may not have a way to differentiate between problem product and good product. Without lot coding or date coding, much more product might have to be recalled leading to added expense.

- Choose a recall contact. This person can be the owner, a manager or someone who knows the operation well.
- Be able to organize a list of customers, distributors, and accounts quickly. This list can be based on invoices, phone orders, retail store receipts, etc.
- Be sure to test your recall plan and practice this plan regularly. These are sometimes referred to as “mock recalls.”

## Your Responsibilities during the First 24 Hours of a Recall

- 1) Notify the WSDA Food Safety Program (360) 902-1876 and/or FDA recall coordinator immediately upon the decision to recall.
- 2) Identify, isolate and stop selling the affected product(s).
  - Consider all products that could be involved in the problem. If a problem is found in a single lot of product, are you sure other lots are not affected?
- 3) Notify your customers.
  - Work with a WSDA or FDA Recall Coordinator to develop clear and accurate messaging.
  - Alert customers of the recall, the reason for the recall, and the specific product(s) affected.
  - Include instructions to isolate and stop selling the product.
  - Include instructions that your customers should contact the WSDA or FDA recall coordinator if they further manufacture, re-pack or re-label the recalled product.
  - Include a method for your accounts to contact you to confirm that the recall notice was received and that appropriate action was taken (effectiveness checks).
- 4) Prepare a Customer Distribution List.
  - Compile a list of customers who you shipped the recalled product to.
  - The list should identify the type of customer (CSA, distributor, manufacturer, wholesaler, retailer, retail distribution center, etc.).
  - Include name of customer, address, city, state, zip code, and customer contact telephone number and email address.
- 5) Press Release and Food Safety Notice (FSN).
  - For situations where the recalled product may pose a significant health hazard work with WSDA and/or FDA recall coordinator to develop messaging for the public and press.
- 6) Reportable Food Registry (RFR)
  - For situations where the recalled product may pose a significant health hazard, visit [www.fda.gov/Food/ComplianceEnforcement/RFR/default.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Food/ComplianceEnforcement/RFR/default.htm) and file a report.

Important: Destruction or reconditioning of any recalled product (mixing recalled product into non-recalled product) may require FDA or WSDA approval and supervision.

## WSDA and FDA Recall Coordinator Contacts

**To initiate a recall:**

WSDA Food Safety Program  
Olympia, WA  
Phone: 360-902-1876  
[foodsafety@agr.wa.gov](mailto:foodsafety@agr.wa.gov)

**To create a recall plan:**

WSDA Recall Coordinator  
Olympia, WA  
Phone: 360-902-1876  
[foodsafety@agr.wa.gov](mailto:foodsafety@agr.wa.gov)

**To contact FDA:**

FDA's Seattle District covers Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington.  
FDA Recall Coordinator  
Bothell, WA  
Phone: 425-302-0467  
Fax: 425-302-0403  
[orasearecalls@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:orasearecalls@fda.hhs.gov)

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## Recommended Fact Sheet

19. WSDA Food Processor License and Facilities

*For further information, to provide comments, or suggest a resource to add to this fact sheet, please email [smallfarms@agr.wa.gov](mailto:smallfarms@agr.wa.gov) or call (360) 902-2888.*