

Guidelines – Food Recalls



June 2018

Environmental Health Services

The purpose of this guideline is to assist you with meeting the food recall plan requirements in the Food Standards Code. A food recall is action taken to remove unsafe food from distribution, sale and consumption.

Which food businesses need a food recall plan?

The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code) requires manufacturers, wholesalers and importers of food to have a system in place to manage the recall of unsafe food. The requirement is specified in clause 12 of Standard 3.2.2 which states that the recall plan must be set out in a written document. An Environmental Health Officer may request a copy of your recall plan.

When is a recall needed?

A food business may become aware of a problem with any of its food products by in-house testing, customer complaints or notification from a supplier of raw material or government agency that there may be a problem with an ingredient.

Problems include:

- The presence of pathogenic bacteria (e.g. Salmonella);
- Chemical contamination (e.g. chemical sanitiser);
- Foreign matter contamination (e.g. pieces of glass, metal or plastic);
- Labelling errors;
- Undeclared allergens (e.g. allergens such as peanut, milk or soy products not being declared on the label);
- Packaging defects;
- Under-processing resulting in potentially unsafe food;

If you are unsure if a food product needs to be recalled, you should talk to the Food Unit at the WA Department of Health in the first instance. The Department of Health may instruct you to contact Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) and the Shire's Environmental Health Services. Contact details are below.

What information must be included in a written recall plan?

A recall plan should detail the procedures, arrangements, staff responsibilities and records required as part of the food business's recall system. Because each industry is different, there are no standard templates for a written recall plan.

GUIDELINES – FOOD RECALLS

ANZFA publishes guides to assist in food recalls at:

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/foodrecalls/Pages/default.aspx> and

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/publications/Documents/FSANZFoodRecallProtocol2014.pdf>

The following table highlights the essential items that are to be included in a written recall document:

Key elements of a written food recall plan	
Staff responsibilities during a recall	
Contact details of agencies for notification	
Distribution and other records that will help identify and retrieve the recalled food	
Procedures for food retrieval, including:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify which batches of food products are affected
<input type="checkbox"/>	Isolate stock that is still with the food producer (to minimise further distribution)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact the FSANZ recall coordinator to assist with coordinating the food recall
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify where the recalled food product has been distributed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Compile a distribution list containing all your direct customer contact details
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify the types of premises at which the food product is likely to be sold
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact distributors
<input type="checkbox"/>	Inform the public (if a consumer level recall is required)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Implement a course of action to prevent a recurrence of the problem
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange for the isolation, storage and disposal of affected stock
<input type="checkbox"/>	Monitor the effectiveness of the food recall
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prepare an interim and final post recall report if requested by FSANZ

Traceability

Traceability is the ability to track any food or ingredient through all stages of production, processing and distribution. Traceability means that food can be traced one step forward and one step backward at any point in the supply chain. In the context of a food recall, having a good traceability system will allow a food business to uniquely identify a lot/batch of food and enable corrective action including isolating contaminated products.

A food business which has accurate labelling which clearly identifies a lot or batch (a best before date may suffice) and maintains records of ingredients/products, suppliers, customers and distributors are well placed to ensure an effective food recall.

Contacts

Key contacts in the event of a recall		
WA Department of Health Food Unit P 08 9388 4999 E foodunit@health.wa.gov.au www.public.health.wa.gov.au	Food Standards Australia New Zealand Food Recall Coordinator P 02 6271 2610 E food.recalls@foodstandards.gov.au www.foodstandards.gov.au	Shire of Augusta Margaret River Environmental Health Coordinator P 08 9780 5255 E amrshire@amrshire.wa.gov.au www.amrshire.wa.gov.au

For more information, contact Shire's Environmental Health Services on 9780 5255