

Food recalls and withdrawals

Food businesses must have in place procedures for the recall and withdrawal of unsafe or unsuitable food. Retailers must remove recalled food from sale.

What is a food recall?

A food recall occurs when food poses an immediate threat to public health and safety and is removed from sale. Food recalls are usually initiated by the manufacturer or importer and must be reported to state and commonwealth government authorities.

What is a withdrawal?

A withdrawal is action taken to remove a food product from sale even if there is no public health and safety issue. This may be done for two reasons:

- The food product has a quality defect, is under weight or has a labelling irregularity that is not a public health risk.
- As a precaution, pending further investigation of a potential public health risk. If a public health risk is established then the food must be recalled.

Withdrawals do not need to be notified to authorities.

Initiating a food recall

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) coordinates all food recalls on a national level. The NSW Food Authority is responsible for monitoring food recalls and liaising with manufacturers in NSW. The Authority also has the power to mandate a food recall if required.

The majority of food recalls are voluntarily and are initiated by businesses when food production monitoring has identified a fault in response to public complaints or as a result of government testing.

If a concern is serious enough to warrant a food recall, the Authority's Recall Coordinator will work with the manufacturer to ensure the recall is conducted effectively and will coordinate the recall with other state and local authorities to prevent the food being distributed and sold.

Types of food recalls

Trade level – involves recovery of the product from distribution centres and wholesalers and may also involve hospitals, restaurants and other major catering establishments, and outlets that sell food manufactured for immediate consumption or food that is prepared on the premises.

Consumer level – involves recovery of the product from all points in the production, distribution and retail networks/chains including any affected product in the possession of consumers.

Voluntary recall – where the manufacturer or importer initiates a food recall.

Mandatory recall – where the Director-General of the NSW Food Authority directs the manufacturer/importer to recall a food product.

Conducting food recalls

Under Standard 3.2.2, Clause 12, of the Food Safety Standards, a manufacturer, wholesaler or importer must:

- develop a system to ensure the recall of unsafe food,
- set out this system in a written document which can be shown to an authorised officer upon request, and
- comply with this system when recalling unsafe food.

To assist businesses in developing a food recall plan, FSANZ has produced a booklet titled *Food Industry Recall Protocol - A guide to writing a food recall plan conducting a food recall (6th ed)*.

A printed copy of this booklet is available from FSANZ by phoning 1300 652 166, sending an email to advice@foodstandards.gov.au, or visiting the FSANZ website at www.foodstandards.gov.au/foodmatters/foodrecalls/

The FSANZ recall page also provides contact information for all state and territory recall coordinators.

Current list of food recalls

Details of recent national consumer food recalls can be found at www.foodstandards.gov.au/foodmatters/foodrecalls/currentconsumerlevelrecalls/index.cfm

Food retailers

It is the responsibility of all food retailers to remove all recalled product from sale. This includes both voluntary and mandatory recalls. The use of the word 'voluntary' refers to the manufacturer choosing to initiate the recall and does not mean the retailers can choose whether or not to remove the product from sale.

About the NSW Food Authority

The NSW Food Authority is the government organisation that helps ensure NSW food is safe and correctly labelled.

It works with consumers, industry and other government organisations to minimise food poisoning by providing information about regulating the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

More information

If you are considering a possible recall of food produced or distributed by your business please:

- phone the Investigation and Recall Coordinator, NSW Food Authority, 1300 552 406
- visit the NSW Food Authority's website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/food-standards-and-requirements/recalls/recalls/

Note

This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW).