

FOOD RECALLS AND WITHDRAWALS

Food suppliers, including manufacturers and importers must have procedures in place 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 is used to remove from sale a food that poses an immediate risk to public health and safety. Food recalls are usually initiated by the manufacturer, distributor 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 is usually done for two reasons:

1. the product has a quality defect or has a labelling irregularity that is not a public health risk.
2. 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.

Types of food recalls

A food recall is action taken to remove a food product from sale to minimise or prevent a risk to public

health and safety. There are three types of recalls:

Trade level – involves removing the product from distribution centres, wholesalers and retail outlets. This type of recall may involve hospitals, restaurants and catering establishments that sell food manufactured for immediate consumption or food that is prepared on the premises. This type of recall is limited to foods that are sold wholesale or, if sold at retail, sold for immediate consumption.

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.

Mandatory recall – where the CEO of the Food Authority issues an order requiring the supplier to recall a food product.

Conducting food recalls

Under Standard 3.2.2, Clause 12, Food Safety Practices and General Requirements of the Food Standards Code, a manufacturer, wholesaler or importer of food must:

- have in place 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 a booklet titled Food Industry Recall Protocol – Information on recalling food in Australia and writing a food recall plan.

A copy of this booklet is available from the FSANZ website at www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/foodrecalls/firp/pages/default.aspx

To further assist businesses the Food Authority has created a food recall action plan available to download from http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/Documents/industry/food_recall_action_plan.docx

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, wholesalers and importers in NSW.

The majority of food recalls 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 food recall is required the FSANZ and NSW Food Authority's Recall Coordinators will work with the manufacturer, importer or distributor to ensure the recall is conducted effectively.

Current list of food recalls

Details of recent national consumer food recalls can be found at www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/foodrecalls/recalls/Pages/default.aspx

Food retailers

It is the responsibility of all food retailers to remove all recalled product from sale. Retailers who continue to sell a recalled product are in breach of regulations.

More information

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

- phone the Recall Coordinator, NSW Food Authority, on 1300 552 406
- visit the FSANZ website at www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/foodrecalls/Pages/default.aspx
- *Standard 3.2.2 Food Safety Practices and General Requirements at:* www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2012C00767

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 and regulating the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

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).