

## **FOOD RECALLS**

In case of a food recall, are you and your staff able to trace products back to the manufacturer? Food product recalls are on the rise. Food recalls may be initiated by the manufacturer, or by a government agency as a result of testing that has identified any of the following conditions: an ingredient not listed on the label that could result in an allergic reaction, contamination of a product with either a biological, chemical or physical contaminant or report of illness with a link to a specific food. As the end user of the product at the time of the recall it is your responsibility to identify if you carry the product, if it is currently in inventory and to ensure measures are in place to prevent its use. It is also vital that you report if you suspect that the food may have been served before or after you were notified of the recall.

In an effort to reduce work load and waste, many establishments from restaurants to institutional food service operators remove food from its original wrapper or container and portion it into individual servings that can be prepared as needed. While this practice may improve efficiencies in the kitchen, it can pose a food safety risk, as it may be very difficult to identify where the food came from. Once packaging has been removed, the name of the manufacturer and identifying codes as to lot number, best before date, date of manufacturer, plant identification number are no longer available for that product. If your receipts at the time of purchase are not clear, or do not contain some of this information, you have no way of knowing for sure if the product in your refrigerator, freezer or storage room is affected by a particular recall. Many operators have to dispose of food on a precautionary basis, because they cannot verify with any level of certainty that the food they have in stock is not involved in the recall.

Where ever possible, it is recommended that foods be stored in their original wrapper until prepared. If you must portion pack, create a system where you can maintain traceability. This may include wrapping individual portions, and returning them into the box that has the identifying labels. If a product such as a large slab of ready to eat meat is involved, record the information from the label in a record book, and use a system of coding the packages with a particular lot of product. The important thing to consider in whatever type of system you choose is to ensure it is accurate and will identify the products that have been recalled so they can be promptly removed from use, while allowing other non-affected products to be available for use.

Feel free to discuss your food safety strategies with your public health inspector so you can be confident that only the safest foods are served to your clients.

## **FOOD SAFETY IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY**

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**For more information, call**

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**HealthACTION Line  
at 1-800-660-5853**

**visit our website at  
[www.healthunit.org/foodsafety](http://www.healthunit.org/foodsafety)**