



FOOD RECALL PLAN FOR SMALL BUSINESS

The Issue

The Food Safety Standards require all food manufacturers, wholesalers or importers to have a documented system to ensure the recall of unsafe food they have distributed. It is not a requirement for businesses that only retail their products.

FSANZ Food Industry Recall Protocol

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has prepared a comprehensive Food Industry Recall Protocol that includes a guide to writing a food recall plan. The Protocol can be viewed and downloaded (54 pages) from

www.foodstandards.gov.au

or requested (free) direct from FSANZ by email

info@foodstandards.gov.au

or phone 1300 652 166.

The FSANZ guide to writing a recall plan provides detailed advice for, particularly, companies that have a number of specialist staff and a significant customer base.

Some small businesses, especially family businesses, may have a limited number of customers that would make contact in the event of a recall very manageable. For such businesses a simpler approach to documenting a recall plan may be appropriate.

Requirements for a Recall Plan

The law requires you to have an effective written recall plan which must be followed in the event of a recall and must be made available to an officer authorised under the Food Act (usually a local council officer) on request.

The law doesn't specify what must be in a recall plan, only that it must "ensure the recall of unsafe food".

A copy does not need to be lodged with any authority for information or approval.

For small businesses the following is a guide for what you could include in your plan to ensure its effectiveness:

1. Contact phone number for the Food Section of the Department of Health

If food is to be recalled for any reason other than a minor quality issue –eg, a problem with the print colour on the packaging – it is essential to contact the relevant authorities. The recall plan should therefore **highlight the phone number of the Food Section of the Department of Health: 8226-7107**. This number is also accessible out-of-hours. Food Section staff will advise on the necessity for a recall and how to make contact with the necessary Commonwealth authorities.

2. Customer contact details

Your plan should provide contact details for your customers. This could be a list of business names, phone and fax numbers and addresses or it could be a reference to a working list that is kept on the premises. The important point is that **customer contact details must be up to date and readily accessible**.

3. Recall management

The person who will be in charge of the recall should be listed. It may be necessary to record out of hours contact details and list a back up in the event the principal person listed is not available.

The method of making contact, by phone, fax, email or direct visit would be needed. **Speed, clarity and reliability are the keys to effectively advising customers of a recalled food** so you may consider phone contact followed by confirmation in writing or a direct visit.



Department
of Health

4. Recall advice

Your recall plan may need to mention the importance of your recall advice describing:

- which products(s) are being recalled with no possible confusion over matters such as pack size, flavour or best-before dates,
- what should happen to the product (eg, remove any recalled products from sale and isolate for later collection) and any arrangements for reimbursement or replacement,
- if your customer is a wholesaler highlight the need for their recall plan to be put into effect,
- contact details for any queries.

5. Other matters you may want to include in your Plan

You **may** want to prepare draft advice for your customers and, should a full public recall be necessary, a draft notice to place in newspapers. Hopefully you will never have occasion to use them but should a recall prove necessary it will be a stressful time and having the right words available to use for your customers and the public would be very helpful.

The FSANZ Recall Protocol describes the form of a notice for the newspapers and gives examples.

FINALLY

The effectiveness of your recall plan is your responsibility!

If your business has some characteristics that introduce issues with food recall that aren't covered in this advice you will need to take them into account.

If you recognise that smooth operation of a recall will speak favourably to your customers, the public and regulators, you may want to give more detailed consideration to your recall plan and read the FSANZ Recall Protocol.

For further information on producing a recall plan contact your local council Environmental Health Officer or the Food Section of the Department of Health on food@health.sa.gov.au or 8226-7100.

COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION