



United States Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service

Food Safety Information



FSIS Food Recalls

Who regulates food products? The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) within the U.S. Department of Agriculture inspects and regulates meat, poultry and processed egg products produced in federally inspected plants. FSIS is responsible for ensuring that these products are safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled. All other food products are regulated by the Department of Health and Human Services' Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

What is a food recall?

A food recall is a voluntary action by a manufacturer or distributor to protect the public from products that may cause health problems or possible death. A recall is intended to remove food products from commerce when there is reason to believe the products may be adulterated or misbranded.

Who decides when a recall is necessary?

Recalls are initiated by the manufacturer or distributor of the meat or poultry, sometimes at the request of FSIS. All recalls are voluntary. However, if a company refuses to recall its products, then FSIS has the legal authority to detain and seize those products in commerce.

How are unsafe products discovered?

There are four primary means by which unsafe or improperly labeled meat and poultry products come to the attention of FSIS:

- The company that manufactured or distributed the food informs FSIS of the potential hazard;
- Test results received by FSIS as part of its sampling program indicate that the products are adulterated, or, in some situations, misbranded;
- FSIS field inspectors and program investigators, in the course of their routine duties, discover unsafe or improperly labeled foods; and
- Epidemiological data submitted by State or local public health departments, or other Federal agencies, such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [<http://www.fda.gov>] or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [<http://www.cdc.gov>] reveal unsafe, unwholesome or inaccurately labeled food.

As soon as FSIS learns that a potentially unsafe or mislabeled meat or poultry product is in commerce, the Agency conducts a preliminary investigation to determine whether there is a need for a recall.

What occurs during a preliminary investigation?

The preliminary investigation may include some or all of the following steps:

- Contacting the manufacturer of the food for more information;
- Interviewing any consumers who allegedly became ill or injured from eating the suspect food;
- Collecting and analyzing food samples;
- Collecting and verifying information about the suspected food;
- Discussions with FSIS field inspection and compliance personnel;
- Contacting State and local health departments; and
- Documenting a chronology of events.

How does FSIS notify the public when a product is recalled?

FSIS notifies the public through a Recall Release for Class I and Class II recalls, and issues a Recall Notification Report (RNR) for Class III recall issues. (The RNR provides substantially the same information as the Recall Release; however, it is not distributed to media wire services or media outlets.) The Recall Release is issued to media outlets in the areas where the product was distributed. Both Recall Releases and RNRs are posted on the FSIS Website and distributed to FSIS email subscribers. When possible, FSIS also includes pictures of the recalled product labels as part of the FSIS online Recall Release posting.

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is the public health agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture responsible for ensuring that the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged.

USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline
1-888-MPHotline
(1-888-674-6854)

For every Class I recall, FSIS develops a list of retail consignees that have, or have had, the recalled products in their possession. The list of retail consignees includes the name, street address, city and state of each retail consignee and is posted within approximately 3 to 10 days of the date of the recall. The retail consignee list is updated periodically as additional retail consignee information becomes available.

When available, recall press releases and RNRs are posted on the FSIS Recalls area of the Web site, at www.fsis.usda.gov/Fsis_Recalls/Open_Federal_Cases/index.asp.

The public can request to receive FSIS press releases and recall announcements by subscribing to the Agency's email subscription service. For more information or to subscribe, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Email_Subscription/index.asp. FSIS' newsletters, including the Constituent Update, are also available via email subscription at www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Newsletters/index.asp.

If the recalled product was purchased by USDA and distributed through a food distribution program, such as the National School Lunch Program, FSIS notifies the Federal agency responsible for the food program, and that agency will hold the product.

What is FSIS' role during a recall?

When there is reason to believe that adulterated or misbranded product has entered commerce, the FSIS Recall Management Division convenes the Recall Committee, a standing committee within FSIS. The Committee, consisting of FSIS scientists, technical experts, field inspection managers, enforcement personnel and communications specialists, evaluates all available information and then makes recommendations to the company about the need for a recall.

If the Recall Committee recommends a recall, the Committee classifies the recall based on the relative health risk, as follows:

- **Class I** - A Class I recall involves a health hazard situation in which there is a *reasonable* probability that eating the food will cause health problems or death.
- **Class II** - A Class II recall involves a potential health hazard situation in which there is a *remote* probability of adverse health consequences from eating the food.
- **Class III** - A Class III recall involves a situation in which eating the food will not cause adverse health consequences.

In addition to determining the class of the recall, the Recall Committee verifies that the company has identified production and distribution information to facilitate the recall.

The Recall Committee advises the company of its recommendation and also provides an opportunity for the firm to offer any information it wishes FSIS to consider regarding the recall after completing its investigation.

How does FSIS ensure that a recall is effective?

FSIS field personnel conduct "effectiveness checks" to ensure that the recalling firm makes all reasonable efforts to notify the consignees of the recalled product that there is a need to remove the product from commerce. FSIS conducts a sufficient number of effectiveness checks throughout the distribution chain to verify that the recalling firm has been diligent in notifying the consignees of the need to retrieve and control recalled product, and that the consignees responded accordingly.

If FSIS determines that the recalling firm has been successful in contacting its consignees, and has made all reasonable efforts to retrieve and control products, the Agency notifies the firm that the recall is complete and no further action is expected.

Does FSIS keep documentation on recalls?

The Recall Management Division maintains comprehensive case files for all recalls coordinated by FSIS. Information on open and closed Federal cases can be found on the FSIS Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov/Fsis_Recalls/index.asp.

How can consumers identify recalled products?

All containers of meat, poultry, and egg products must be labeled with a USDA mark of inspection and establishment (EST) number, which is assigned to the plant where the product was produced.

The establishment number may appear on the package within the USDA mark of inspection such as pictured on page 3. It may also appear elsewhere on the exterior of the package container or package labeling (for example, on the lid of a can) if shown in a prominent and legible manner and in a size sufficient to insure easy visibility and recognition.

MEAT Product "EST" Number

Besides appearing on meat product packaging, the Est. Number is also permitted to appear off the exterior of the container (for example, on a metal clip to close casings) or on aluminum trays placed within containers. If so, a statement of its location must be printed near or connected to the official inspection legend, such as "EST. No. on Metal Clip" or "EST. No. on Pan." The number may not be applied over any required labeling information.



POULTRY Product "EST" Number

Establishment numbers for poultry plants can be identified with the prefix "P" -- for "Plant" -- prior to the number. The plant number is also permitted to appear off the exterior of the container (for example, on a metal clip to close casings) or on aluminum trays placed within containers. If so, a statement of its location must be printed near or connected to the official inspection legend, such as "P. No. on Metal Clip" or "P No. on Pan." The number may not be applied over any required labeling information.



EGG PRODUCTS "EST" Number

Establishment numbers for processed egg products are found within the egg products shield or on the principal display panel prefaced with the term "Plant" or the prefix "P."



Where can consumers find information on recalls?

For additional information on recalls of food and other products, consumers may receive information from the following:

- The USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) weekdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET (English or Spanish).
- AskKaren.gov (knowledge base, live chat during Hotline hours, and submit a question).
- Via email subscription on the FSIS homepage, or from http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fsis_Recalls/index.asp and click on "Receive email notification when recalls or public health alerts are issued."
- For information on all government recalls, go to www.recalls.gov.

Related Item

FSIS Directive 8080.1, "Recall of Meat and Poultry Products" (PDF Only)
[\[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/8080.1Rev5.pdf\]](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OPPDE/rdad/FSISDirectives/8080.1Rev5.pdf)

Call the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline

If you have a question about meat, poultry, or egg products, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline toll free at



1-888-MPHotline
(1-888-674-6854).

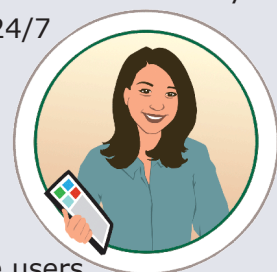
The hotline is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET (English or Spanish). Recorded food safety messages are available 24 hours a day. Check out the FSIS Web site at

www.fsis.usda.gov

Send E-mail questions to **MPHotline.fsis@usda.gov**.

AskKaren.gov

FSIS' automated response system can provide food safety information 24/7 and a live chat during Hotline hours.



Mobile phone users can access **m.askkaren.gov**

Pregunteleakaren.gov