

CFS' Food Recall Guidelines

**Trade Consultation Forum
30.7.2014**

Background

- A recall is defined as an action to remove from sale, distribution and consumption, foods which may pose a safety hazard to consumers.
- Recall of food product is in the common interest of the industry, the government and in particular, the consumer.

Legislation

- ❑ Under the Public Health & Municipal Services Ordinance, food on sale for human consumption must be wholesome, unadulterated, uncontaminated, properly labelled and fit for human consumption. Violations of the provisions may lead to prosecution against the manufacturer, the importer or the distributor of the food.
- ❑ Specifically, under Section 59 of the Ordinance an authorised officer may examine or seize any food which he considers to be unfit for human consumption.

Legislation

- The Food Safety Ordinance (Cap. 612) empowers the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene to make a food safety order in relation to food for the protection of public health under section 30. The order may -
 - a) prohibit the import of any food;
 - b) prohibit the supply of any food;
 - c) direct that any food supplied be recalled;
 - d) directed that any food be impounded, isolated, destroyed or otherwise disposed of; or
 - e) prohibit the carrying on of an activity in relation to any food or permit the carrying on of such activity in accordance with conditions.

Role of the Government

- ❑ To monitor the progress of the recall and assess the adequacy of actions taken by the food trader concerned. After a recall is completed, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will make sure that the product is destroyed or suitably improved.
- ❑ The FEHD will make publicity about a recall when it considers that the public need to be alerted about a health hazard or that clarification of the situation needs to be made to allay public worries.

Role of the Government

- ❑ In cases of public health emergencies, the FEHD may, depending on the available evidence, alert the public before a decision on recall has been reached.
- ❑ If necessary, the Authority may make a food safety order under the above mentioned Food Safety Ordinance (Cap. 612).

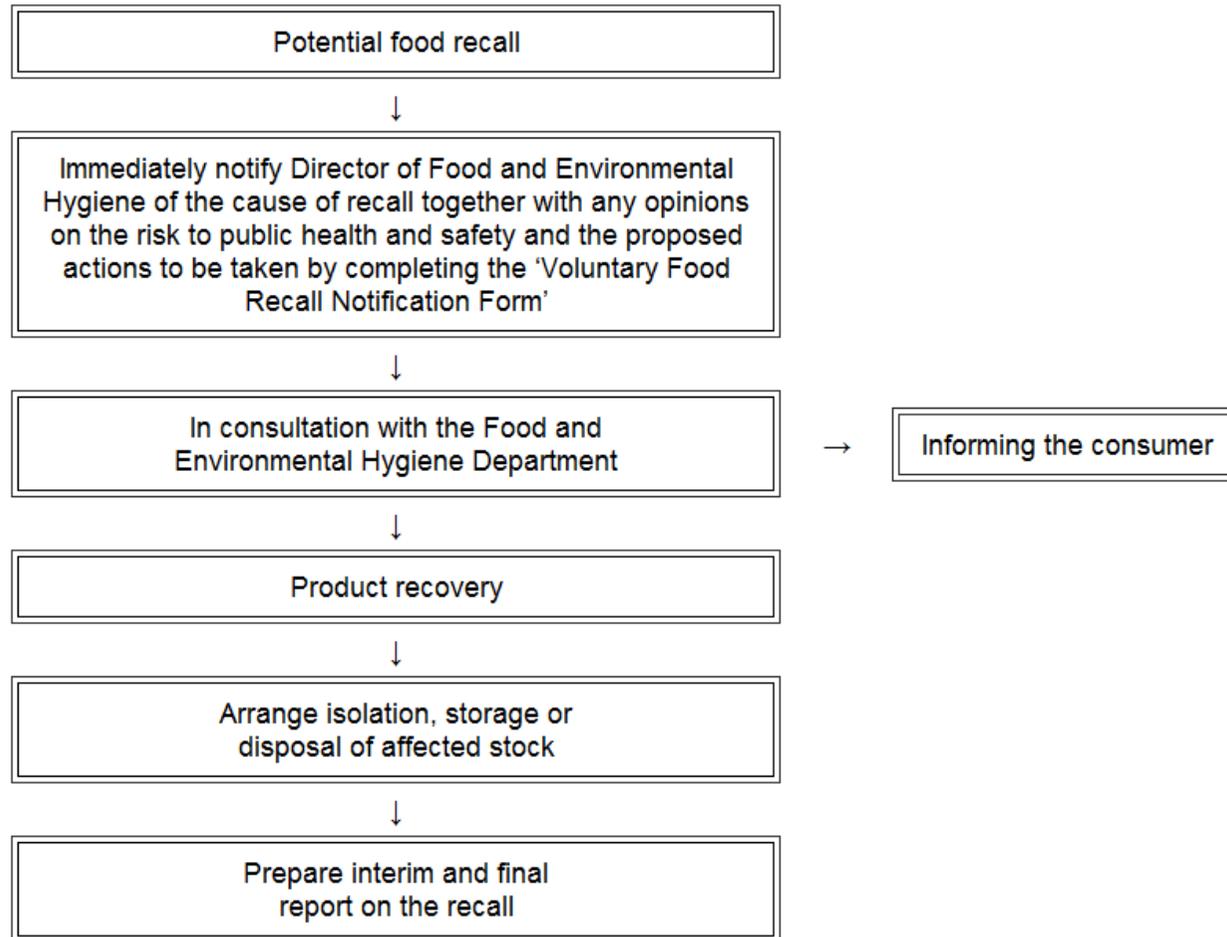
Role of the Food Industry

- ❑ Companies supplying products to Hong Kong carry the prime responsibility of implementing the recall.
- ❑ And for ensuring compliance with the recall procedure at its various stages including follow-up checks to ensure that recalls are successful and that subsequent batches of the food products are safe for human consumption.

Role of the Food Industry

- ❑ A recall should be undertaken in consultation with the FEHD and preferably with prior agreement on the recall strategy. During the recall process, company personnel should keep all relevant parties informed of the latest developments.
- ❑ If the recall involves products exported overseas, the company concerned should notify, as soon as practicable, overseas recipients of recalled stocks.

Voluntary Food Recall Procedures



Initiation of a Recall

- A recall may be initiated as a result of reports/complaints referred to the food trader from a variety of sources. The reports may be referred by manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, medical practitioners, government agencies and consumers.
- A recall of foods manufactured overseas may also be initiated by reports appearing in overseas bulletins and similar publications of health authorities, or from information received directly from such authorities.

Initiation of a Recall

- ❑ To minimize the risk that may arise, recalls are usually carried out in the shortest time practicable.
- ❑ Traders are encouraged to develop its own recall procedure so that it can respond promptly to any emerging situation.
- ❑ The procedure should be able to achieve the purposes of,
 - ❑ stopping distribution and sale of an affected item;
 - ❑ notifying the public and the FEHD of the problem;
 - ❑ and effectively and efficiently retrieve from the market any product which is potentially unsafe.

Notification to the FEHD

- ❑ For transparency and best protection of public health, food traders should immediately notify the FEHD of the cause of recall together with any opinions on the risk to public health and safety and the proposed actions to be taken by completing the 'Food Recall Notification Form'
- ❑ Such information should be provided to the FEHD by,
 - fax: fax no. 2521 4784; or
 - email: Food_Recall_Notification@fehd.gov.hk
- ❑ Any enquiries about recall procedures or actual cases of recall should be directed to the Superintendent (Food Surveillance)¹ of the FEHD at tel. no. 2867 5567 or staff of this department at tel. no. 9867 8401 during non office hours for enquiry.

Notification to the FEHD

Food Recall Notification

To:	Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Attn: Superintendent (Food Surveillance)1) 43/F, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong. (Facsimile: 2521 4784) (Email: Food_Recall_Notification@fehd.gov.hk)
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General

Name & Address of Recalling Company :

- 'Food Recall Notification Form' could be downloaded from the CFS' webpage by http://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/import/import_icfsg_08_recallform.html

Notification to the FEHD

- The information of the company/ registered business and the food concerned in the 'Food Recall Notification Form' would be uploaded to the website of the Centre for Food Safety for information of the public.

Informing the Consumer

- Depending on the extent of the recall, the trader concerned should inform the consumer of the recall at the earliest possible moment.
- Information dissemination may take the form of a press release, letter to the concerned parties, paid advertisement in the media, making public announcement and putting up posters in stores for receiving the food concerned from customers.
- Sufficient telephone hotline service should be made available to deal with enquiries.

Assessment of the Recall

- The FEHD may assess the adequacy of the traders action, including the following:
 - a) prompt announcement of recall/ prohibition of supply or import through the media;
 - b) setting up of customer enquiry service;
 - c) agreement amongst the importers, distributors and retailers on recall/ prohibition of supply or import arrangement, such as convenient and adequate locations for return of the food concerned;
 - d) the promptness in withdrawing the food concerned from shelves at retail end and proper storage of food in locations which are inaccessible by the customers pending return to warehouse of importers or distributors;
 - e) the promptness in returning the food withdrawn to the warehouse of importers or distributors and the appropriate way of disposal;
 - f) whether proper record of the recalled food is kept by traders concerned; and
 - g) the investigation into the cause of defect and the remedial action taken (investigation report with improvement measures to be submitted to the FEHD).

Removal from shelves

- ❑ Retailers should remove the relevant food from the shelves immediately and store them in a place which is inaccessible by the customers while pending return to the importer or distributor concerned.
- ❑ Retailers should keep a proper record of the quantity of the withdrawn food for returning to the distributor. The recalled food, with proper identification, should be stored in a separate area away from other foods and with proper labelling or marking to prevent accidental delivery.
- ❑ Manufacturers should store the food separately and should not make them available for use in any other processes.

Product Recovery

- ❑ Products may be recovered by return to supermarkets, return via distribution chains or direct return from consumers.
- ❑ The product is to be recovered to a central site, or in the case of widely distributed product, to major recovery sites. The recovered product must be stored in an area which is separated from any other food product. Accurate records are to be kept of the amount of recovered product and the batch codes of the product recovered.
- ❑ After recovery, products may be corrected or reprocessed before release to the market if it is fit for human consumption. Otherwise the product is to be destroyed.

Follow-up Action

- ❑ The trader concerned should provide a progress report at regular interval at the request of the FEHD. After the food recall exercise, the trader should submit a final report within a specified time frame as determined by the FEHD taking into account complexity of the case.
- ❑ The report helps to assess the effectiveness of the recall. Unless satisfactory reports are received, the FEHD may consider taking further action, e.g. stepped-up inspection, extension of recall action or making a food safety order.

Follow-up Action

- The reports should contain essential information such as:
 - a) the circumstances leading to the recall;
 - b) the action taken by the trader including details of any publicity;
 - c) the extent of distribution of the relevant batch in Hong Kong and overseas;
 - d) the result of the recall (quantity of stock returned, outstanding, etc.);
 - e) the method of disposal or otherwise record of destruction for returned food; and
 - f) the investigation report on cause of defects and the action proposed to be implemented in future to prevent a recurrence of the problem.

Follow-up Action

- To be effective, recall notification must reach as far as the product has been distributed. The effectiveness of the recall is assessed upon the amount of product returned as a percentage of the amount of product which left the manufacturer while taking into account the retail turnover of that product.

Conclusion

- ❑ Worldwide, cooperation between the food traders and the regulatory authority has proven over the years to be the quickest and most reliable method to remove potentially dangerous products from the market.
- ❑ These guidelines outline the procedures which would enhance efficiency and transparency in the recall of food products. The implementation of such guidelines will hopefully minimize the loss inflicted on the traders and the community at large.
- ❑ The Food Recall Guidelines could be accessed at:
http://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/import/import_icfsg_08.html

Thank you

