

# Taking Action to Build Food-Safe Schools

## Action Sheet

## Responding to Food Recalls

A food recall occurs when there is reason to believe that a food may cause illness or injury. A food manufacturer or distributor initiates the recall to take foods off the market. In some situations, government agencies request a recall based on information they receive following a complaint or an investigation of illness.

Some reasons for recalling food include:

- Discovery of a pathogen in a product, which may result in illness.
- Discovery of a physical hazard in a food, such as plastic, metal, or glass.
- Mislabeling or misbranding food. For example, a food may contain an allergen, such as nuts or eggs, but those ingredients do not appear on the label.

When a recall occurs, school nutrition operations must respond rapidly to make sure the recalled food is not served and to identify recalled food that may have been served already. Having procedures in place to respond to a food recall will assure a quick response and will protect children.

### Food-Safe Schools Action Steps and Resources

1. Contact your State agency, processors, suppliers, and distributors to learn how your school district will be alerted to food recalls. Recall procedures may differ for USDA Foods and commercial foods. USDA Foods are foods purchased by the USDA for child nutrition programs. Commercial foods are foods purchased directly from a commercial source such as a processor, supplier, distributor, or other vendor.
2. Develop and implement a recall alert system within your school district to ensure that each school learns about food recalls rapidly and understands how to respond to a food recall alert.
  - *Responding to a Food Recall* is a manual offered through the USDA FNS and NFSMI that provides an overview of the recall process for USDA Foods with a focus on school meals programs. Particular attention is given to the roles of various entities in communicating information to ensure that recalls are handled in a timely and effective manner. <http://nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=444>
  - Template standard operating procedures to address preparing for and responding to food recalls are offered through the USDA FNS and NFSMI. [http://sop.nfsmi.org/sop\\_list.php](http://sop.nfsmi.org/sop_list.php)
3. Establish an inventory management system that tracks what food is in inventory, when it was received, where it is stored, and when and where it was distributed.
  - The *Inventory Management and Tracking Reference Guide*, developed by the USDA FNS and NFSMI, presents information that may be new to school nutrition operators and updates information about traditional inventory management in light of new traceability expectations. This resource includes language for bids and processing agreements that requires suppliers and distributors to address recalls and product traceability. [www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=431](http://www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=431) ■

To find the latest information about commercial food recalls and to sign up for free email notification of all USDA FSIS and FDA food recalls, visit [www.foodsafety.gov/recalls](http://www.foodsafety.gov/recalls) .