

Center for Foodborne Illness Research and Prevention *
Center for Science in the Public Interest *
Consumer Federation of America * Consumers Union *
Food and Water Watch * Government Accountability Project *
Safe Tables Our Priority

April 1, 2008

Susan E. Dudley
Administrator
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
The Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Re: Food Recall Notices - What Consumers Want to Know

Dear Ms. Dudley:

At a meeting on March 11, 2008 between the Safe Food Coalition and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regarding the release of retailer information in food recall notices, OMB expressed a desire to know how retail information should be presented in recall notices, the timing of when that information should be released, the format of same, etc. To that end, we have developed some suggestions on providing retail consignee information in food recall notices so that consumers can more easily and effectively protect themselves and their families from unsafe food. This information should be *in addition to* any information that is already provided by USDA/FSIS in the course of a recall.

- 1) **What:** USDA/FSIS should provide to the public lists of retail consignees of meat and poultry products that have been voluntarily recalled by a federally inspected meat or poultry plant. For meat and poultry products purchased by USDA through a commodity purchase program, all entities to which the products were sent should also be listed (e.g., schools, juvenile justice programs, food banks, etc.).
- 2) **Who:** Each recall notice should list the names and precise locations of all retail consignees (whether they be grocery stores, restaurants, schools, health institutions, or others) where the recalled food product was sold.
- 3) **When:** A list of retail consignees should be provided to the public as soon as the information becomes available. FSIS should specifically indicate that the list will be updated as more information becomes available and then should provide updates to the retail consignee list regularly.
- 4) **Where:** Notices of food recalls should be distributed as widely as possible and through a variety of channels, including USDA's website, press releases, public service announcements, local and state authorities, and local, state and/or national media outlets.

- 5) **Why:** Clear, timely, accurate, and easy to understand recall notice information is critical to safeguarding public safety and health, and to ensuring efficient and effective recalls. Providing consumers with information about the retail consignees of recalled products will help consumers properly identify whether recalled products may be in their possession so they can protect themselves and their families.

- 6) **How:** Information about the retail consignees of recalled products should be presented in a consumer-friendly manner, both in a press release and in a more prominent fashion on the USDA website (preferably in a searchable database so that consumers can easily determine where recalled products have been sold).

Our groups hope that OMB and USDA will release a strong retail consignee rule very soon, and that you will take our suggestions into consideration when finalizing the rule. Public health and safety, as well as the ease of food recalls, will be improved by such a rule. We would be happy to provide any further detail as needed.

Sincerely,

Pat Buck
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cc:

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Lisa Branch, OMB

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Richard Raymond, Under Secretary for Food Safety, USDA/FSIS