

# Crisis Control Newsletter



Crisis Control Newsletter from RQA, Inc.—A Catlin Preferred Provider to Foodservice, Food Processing and Consumer Products Industries

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## Crisis Management

“There cannot be a crisis today; my schedule is already full.” (Henry Kissinger) How true; but the fact of the matter is that when a crisis happens, the schedule is no longer relevant. Quick decisions are necessary and time is of the essence.

So what constitutes a crisis? A crisis is an unexpected incident that contains some element of surprise that poses a threat to the organization and must be addressed immediately. A crisis is an emotionally stressful event that causes significant business interruption.

Crisis management tools can help to alleviate some of this stress and mitigate the negative effects of the situation by preparing an organization for the unexpected. By implementing a crisis management program, an organization identifies the type of crises that would pose a threat to their organization and develops efficient and effective response plans for each. Successful recovery from a crisis requires an understanding of the actions necessary to reduce or eliminate the resulting impact before it happens.

Each organization should have a crisis management plan in place to prepare for the unfortunate and unpredictable event of a crisis. The purpose of a crisis management plan is to outline potential business risks and crisis incidents, identify the crisis management team, provide tools to aid decision making, guide actions essential for varying types of incidents, and provide a communication framework for reporting incidents internally and externally.

The main objective of a crisis management plan is to protect employees, consumers and customers, as well as, company assets, brands and corporate image. By having a crisis management plan in place, a company is better equipped to take actions that minimize potential liabilities and disruption to business. The plan should include reference to applicable laws and regulations to ensure compliance and protect relationships with government and regulatory agencies. In order for the plan to be effective, it is important to train and educate employees so they are prepared and know what to do at the time of a crisis. Conducting crisis simulations is a useful way to test the preparedness of the company to appropriately manage a crisis and determine gaps in the process that need improvement.

The first hours after a crisis hits are the most crucial. The crisis management plan helps to prepare the team to react quickly and efficiently. It is important to consider that the reputation and the longevity of a company depends on how it reacts during a crisis. Be prepared for the unexpected!

By: Carol Kozlowski, Manager of Crisis Management for Insurance Services, RQA, Inc.

## Types of Crisis to Consider

While it is unlikely to anticipate every type of crisis or catastrophic event that could take place, determining those that are most probable to occur at your business or your physical location is the first step in preparing a response plan.

Understanding the different types of crisis is essential in preparing the proper response strategy for each. There are several categories of crisis that have been identified by Coombs, Lerbinger and others that can be grouped as follows:

### **Natural Disasters:**

Tornadoes, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, droughts, severe storms, etc.

### **Malevolence:**

Product tampering, sabotage, kidnapping, terrorism, malicious rumors, etc.

### **Product Recall:**

Misbranded, adulterated, or violative product in the market

### **Confrontation:**

Boycotts, picketing, protests, ultimatums, etc.

### **Hazardous Materials:**

Spills, leaks, build up of toxic materials, etc.

### **Technological Breakdowns:**

Software failures, hardware failures, infrastructure collapse, computer viruses, etc.

### **Utilities Failure:**

Power outages, gas, water, sewer, garbage, etc.

### **Human Error:**

Mistakes that cause significant damage or loss to the company.

### **Workplace Violence:**

Violent actions against other in the workplace.

### **Medical Emergencies:**

Heart attacks, broken bones, lacerations, etc.

### **Organizational Misdeeds:**

Deception, management misconduct, misrepresentation, illegal actions, etc.



## Food and Drug Administration Recalls ([www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov))

**Product:** White Hard Cheese  
**Incident:** Pathogen – *Salmonella*

A Lake Worth, FL firm is recalling 16 ounce packages of white hard cheese because they may be contaminated with *Salmonella*. The recalled product was distributed in the state of Florida in local retail stores. The contamination was discovered after routine testing by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services revealed the presence of *Salmonella*. Production has been suspended while the company continues their investigation as to the source of the problem. There have been no reported illnesses associated with this problem. *Salmonella* is an organism which can cause serious and sometimes fatal infections in young children, frail or elderly people, and others with weakened immune systems. Healthy persons infected with *Salmonella* often experience fever, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain. In rare circumstances, infection with *Salmonella* can result in more severe illnesses. Consumers should return affected product to the place of purchase for a full refund.

**Product:** Caramel Corn and Puff Products  
**Incident:** Allergen – Undeclared Milk

A Topeka, IN company is recalling caramel corn and caramel puff products because they contain milk allergens that are not listed on the label. These recalled products were distributed nationwide to retail stores. People who have an allergy or severe sensitivity to milk run the risk of serious or life-threatening allergic reaction if they consume this product. This recall was initiated after it was discovered that the labels on these particular products did not reveal that there is milk in the product. Further investigation has revealed the problem was caused by a temporary breakdown in the company's packaging process. Production of these products has been suspended until the firm is certain that the problem has been corrected. No illnesses have been reported to date in connection with this problem. Consumers with questions may contact the firm.



## United States Department of Agriculture Recalls ([www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov))

**Product:** Ham Products  
**Incident:** Pathogen – *Listeria*

A Gardiner, ME importer is recalling approximately 312 pounds of ham products that may be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*. The products were produced on 11/25/09 and distributed to retail establishments in New Hampshire and Maine. The problem was discovered by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) who notified the FSIS. FSIS has not received any reports of illness, at this time, associated with the consumption of this product. Consumption of food contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* can cause listeriosis, an uncommon but potentially fatal disease. Listeriosis can cause high fevers, severe headache, neck stiffness and nausea, stillbirths and miscarriages, as well as, serious and sometimes fatal infections in those with weakened immune systems. Individuals concerned about an illness should contact a physician. Consumers and media with questions should contact the company vice president.

**Product:** Ground Beef  
**Incident:** Pathogen—*E.coli O157:H7*

A Williston, VT establishment is recalling approximately 68 pounds of fresh ground beef products that may be contaminated with *E.coli O157:H7*. The recalled products were produced on 12/15/09 and distributed to restaurants and a retail establishment in Vermont. This recall is a consequence of the establishment not properly defining the production lot. The problem was discovered by FSIS microbiological testing. FSIS has not received any reports of illness or adverse reactions due to the consumption of these products. *E.coli O157:H7* is a potentially deadly bacterium that can cause bloody diarrhea, dehydration, and in most severe cases kidney failure. The very young, elderly and persons with weakened immune systems are the most susceptible to foodborne illness. Media and consumer questions regarding the recall should be directed to the company's spokesperson.



## Consumer Product Safety Commission Recalls ([www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov))

**Product:** Christmas Tree Toppers  
**Incident:** Hazard – Fire

A Carthage, MO distributor is recalling approximately 4,300 angel tree toppers. Undersized wiring can cause the tree topper's switch assembly to overheat and melt posing a fire hazard. The recalled tree toppers are 10 inch tall vinyl angels with LED lighted wings. The angels are white, gold and yellow and they are holding either a star or a set of bells. The company has received two reported incident involving the tree topper overheating. No injuries have been reported. The recalled angel tree toppers were sold at certain major stores nationwide from August 2009 to December 2009. Consumers should immediately stop using the tree toppers and return them to the place of purchase for a full refund. For additional information, consumers are asked to contact the company or visit the company's website.

**Product:** Scuba Regulators  
**Incident:** Hazard – Drowning

A Westwood, NJ distributor is recalling approximately 200 scuba regulators. Partial obstruction of the High Pressure (HP) port can produce an inaccurate reading on the pressure gauge, resulting in a slow descent of the needle in the pressure gauge. The inaccurate reading on the gauge poses a drowning hazard to divers. The firm has received three reports of inaccurate pressure readings while the scuba regulators were in use. No injuries have been reported. The recalled product was sold at authorized dive shops nationwide and on the Internet from March 2009 through August 2009. Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled regulators and return them to an authorized dive shop for a free repair. For additional information, consumers are asked to contact the corporation or visit the company's website.

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