

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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Food Inspection Challenges

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that due to foodborne illness, each year 48 million (1 in 6) Americans are sickened, 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 people are killed by the foods they consume. Furthermore, Elizabeth Weise in an USA Today article stated that "Foodborne illness cost the United States $152 billion a year". This data came from a report by a former Food and Drug Administration (FDA) economist. The costs include medical services, deaths, lost work and disability. Health Canada reports that there are approximately 11-13 million foodborne illnesses each year in Canada and about 30 deaths.

During the past two decades, the food industry has taken over much of the FDA's role in ensuring that what Americans eat is safe. The agency can't come close to vetting its jurisdiction of $1.2 trillion in annual food sales.

In 2011, the FDA inspected 6 percent of domestic food producers and just 0.4 percent of importers. The FDA has had no rules for how often food producers must be inspected.

The U.S. will import half of its food by 2030, up from 20 percent today, says Michael Doyle, director of the University of Georgia's Center for Food Safety. This increases the inspection problems with imported foods, especially from countries with lower sanitary and safety standards. In some emerging markets, farms growing food for export to the U.S. aren't inspected at all. For instance, Bloomberg Markets visited growers in China, Mexico and Vietnam and found unsanitary conditions for produce, fruit and fish exported to the U.S.

Former food safety chief, David Acheson, said that the FDA is grossly underfunded to conduct inspections on imported and domestic foods given the magnitude of the task. For this reason, the food industry lobbied for and won enactment of a law in January 2011 that expanded the role of auditors and foreign governments in inspecting producers and distributors of foods exported to the U.S. The Food Safety Modernization Act will allow the FDA to certify private companies to audit producers of imported food on its behalf. The law mandates that these auditors submit their reports to the agency. These rules don't apply to domestic inspection companies, which still won't be approved by the FDA and don't report their findings. According to the FDA's website, starting in 2016, inspections of all high-risk producers will be required every 5 years.

The problem with many of the inspections and audits is that pathogen testing is not done. This means even facilities scoring highly may have dangerous pathogens in their products. "We need regulations saying you can't ship your product until you have a microbial testing program in place," says Craig Wilson, vice president of food safety at Costco.

Many strides have been made to ensure the safety of the food supply; but it appears we still have a long way to go.

Sources: USA Today 3/4/10, Bloomberg Markets, 10/10/12, FDA, CDC

Food Safety & Quality Systems Audit

Third party audits are an unbiased and impartial review of a manufacturer's operations. It is beneficial to have a fresh perspective when reviewing the operations where routine internal checks and balances may otherwise overlook some of the nonconformance issues. Third party audits also help an organization to fine tune their own internal audit procedures and criteria.

The RQA Food Safety & Quality Systems (FSQS) Audit is designed to provide a thorough evaluation of facilities that manufacture, process, package, or hold food products. Facilities are evaluated in key areas: Food Safety, Quality Systems, Food Security/Defense, and Supplemental Programs. The RQA FSQS audit is primarily based upon U.S. FDA Good Manufacturing Practices (21 CFR 110), HACCP System Guidelines (NACMCF, Codex), and Food Industry Best Practices. It also includes content from BRC, IFS, FPA-SAFE Audits and the ISO 9000:2000 standards, as well as RQA customer-specific requirements.

This audit contains numerous sections that are further broken into related audit items. Each audit item is evaluated and scored using a 4 point scale. A rating of 4 means that the criteria conforms and is fully documented and functional, 3 is for items where there is a minor finding, 2 for major findings and 0 for no system or a critical food safety issue is observed . Facilities are required to provide objective evidence to demonstrate their level of compliance to the audit items. It is important to note that even a high audit score can result in an automatic failure if one of the crucial elements of the audit results in a critical food safety issue observed.

As with any audit, the intended purpose is to provide the facility with an assessment of their operations regarding the requirements and criteria set forth in the audit, at the time of the audit, and reflects the findings of the auditor subject to the availability of information on-hand and made available.

Audits cannot guarantee the safety of the products produced, but they can help to identify areas that are in need of improvement or immediate attention. It is the responsibility of the manufacturer to take corrective actions and implement safeguards where warranted to ensure the safety of all products manufactured for human and/or animal consumption.

It is recommended that third party food safety audits be conducted at least yearly to ensure compliance with best practices and regulatory requirements.

Food and Drug Administration Recalls (www.fda.gov)

Product: Dog Formula
Incident: Possible Health Risk– *Salmonella*

An Irwindale, CA firm has issued a voluntary recall of one batch of lamb meal & brown rice adult dog food sold in 26 lb. packages. The firm has issued the voluntary recall because a sample of the manufacturing batch tested positive for *Salmonella* contamination. Pets with *Salmonella* infections may have decreased appetite, fever, and abdominal pain. Infected but otherwise healthy pets can be carriers and infect other animals or humans. Individuals handling the dry pet food can become infected with *Salmonella*, especially if they have not thoroughly washed their hands. The product was originally manufactured on Aug. 29 and distributed on Aug. 30 and 31 in CA, GA, IL, NV, VA and WA. No human or pet illnesses have been reported. The firm is taking immediate action to remove the product and is investigating the cause of contamination. Consumers that have questions or have purchased the affected products should call the firm directly.

Product: Fresh-Cut Mango Products
Incident: Possible Health Risk–*Salmonella*

A Rosenhayn, NJ firm has announced a voluntarily recall of a limited quantity of expired products that contain fresh-cut mangoes. This recall is a result of the FDA announcing a recall of a Burlingame, CA firm recalling their mangoes on Aug. 29, 2012 due to possible *Salmonella* contamination. These mangoes were packed in Mexico and distributed in the United States between July 12—August 29, 2012. Products containing these fresh-cut mango products were distributed to grocery and convenience stores in the Northeast. Products were processed between Aug. 9—19, 2012. *Salmonella* can cause serious and sometimes fatal infections in young children, frail or elderly people, and others with weakened immune systems. So far, there have been no reported illnesses attributed to the items in this recall. Consumers who have purchased any of these fresh-cut mango products should not consume the mangoes and discard them. Consumers with further questions should contact the company for more details.

United States Department of Agriculture Recalls (www.usda.gov)

Product: Chicken Strip Products
Incident: Possible Health Risk–*Foreign Materials*

A Milford, IN establishment has recalled approximately 2,250 pounds of crunchy chicken strip products because they may contain foreign material, fragments of plastic. The recall includes 7.5 lb. cases containing 30-oz. cartons of crunchy chicken strips. The products were packaged on January 17, 2012 and shipped to a distributor in Lakeland, FL for further distribution. The company alerted FSIS of the problem after receiving two consumer complaints. So far, FSIS has not received any reports of injury or illness associated with consumption of these products. Anyone concerned about an injury should contact a healthcare provider. Consumers and media with questions should contact the company directly.

Product: Bratwurst Products
Incident: Possible Health Risk–*Undeclared Allergen*

A Chicago, IL establishment is recalling approximately 1,305 pounds of cooked bratwurst sausage products because of misbranding and the undeclared allergen, milk, that is not declared on the label. The 10 lb. packages of bratwurst were produced on June 25, July 5, Sept. 6, 12, 20, 2012 and were shipped to foodservice distributors for hotel, restaurant and other institutional use throughout Illinois. The problem was discovered by FSIS during a routine label review and may have occurred due to a misprinting of the product's label. There have not been any reports of adverse reactions due to consumption of these products. Individuals concerned about an allergic reaction should contact a physician. Please contact the company with any further questions.

Consumer Product Safety Commission Recalls (www.cpsc.gov)

Product: Power Strips
Incident: Hazard– *Electric Shock*

A West Hartford, CT importer is recalling about 14,200 of their four-outlet undercabinet power and lighting strips. The power strips, manufactured in China, come in a red package and were manufactured between January 2011 through June 2012. The products were sold at various hardware stores nationwide and online between February 2011 and August 2012. The electrical wires are reversed on the receptacles on the power strips, posing a risk of electrical shock. One incident was reported, however no injuries were sustained during usage. Consumers should immediately unplug and stop using the recalled power strips and return them to the company for a replacement or refund. For additional information, consumers are asked to contact the company or visit the company's website.

Product: Ride-on Toy Cars
Incident: Hazard-*Burn and Fire*

An Eden Prairie, MN importer in cooperation with the CPSC is recalling approximately 4,700 battery-powered ride-on toy cars sold nationwide in catalogs and online from September 2010 - May 2012. The toy cars have an off-road vehicle body style and plastic tires. The specific recalled models were manufactured in China and sold in both pink and tan colors. The battery on these toy cars can overheat, smoke, melt and catch on fire, posing fire and burn hazards to consumers. The company has received nine reports of incidents in which batteries smoked or caught on fire and melted the battery's connections or scorched the plastic in the ride-on car. No injuries have been reported. Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled ride-on toy cars and remove the battery. They should contact the company for a full refund plus reimbursement for shipping and handling. For more details, contact the company directly.

Crisis Control is a newsletter jointly published by RQA, Inc. & Catlin Group.

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