

## **An Open Letter to the Food Industry on Industry Standardization for Recalls**

Are you as ready as you need to be when a product recall happens to protect your customers, your brand, and your company? Do you have the systems and processes in place to quickly inform the impacted community so they can act on directions to remove product from the supply chain?

Recalls impacting the food retail segment have numbered more than a thousand per year for going on a decade. Rising regulatory and liability concerns have heightened the need for more robust systems to manage these events.

Your industry Associations; The Grocery Manufacturers Association, the Food Marketing Institute, the National Grocers Association and GS1, and the Service Provider community have been collaborating on a solution. Our goal has been simple: (1) Build the capability so that any brand owner needing to implement a product recall can enter the needed information once, and have that information flow to whoever needs it; (2) Build the food safety culture so that impacted retailers, wholesalers, distributors get all the information they need about a recall, simultaneously or within 30 minutes of a public release.

Last year, we transitioned a single industry tool, Rapid Recall Exchange™, to a more agile capability called Rapid Recall Express™. Faster, easier and more integrated recalls are possible using this foundational, industry-approved standard.

Rapid Recall Express™ is a simple, fillable form created by a broad group of retailers, manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors and industry service providers. It contains all the required information this group identified to conduct a recall, along with other voluntary attributes the recalling brand might want to share to facilitate clear communication. This form can be imbedded in your existing recall processes. Service Providers like Recallinfolink.com and others have integrated it into their systems to ensure seamless, accurate information flow between the brand and the impacted supply chain members.

Naturally, retailers and wholesalers have been processing recalls out of necessity, each to their own satisfaction depending on their position in the supply chain, the type of products they carry, their regulatory environment, and ultimately the consumer base whom they are protecting. With the complexity of the supply chain, a growing number of recalls, and a variety of systems and requirements, the time for a consistent, standard-based approach has been created.

Successfully completing a recall is no small matter, whether for a manufacturer or a retailer/wholesaler. Both internal and external business requirements are high, and the work is unlike normal job processes. The many different functions involved in moving product out of supply require coordination:

- Communication: Preparing and vetting notification and supporting documents;
- Accounting: Compiling the affected products and labor required;
- Logistics: Removing product and ensuring proper disposition;
- Operations: Re-filling the pipeline with wholesome product
- Customer Support: Answering customer and media questions;
- QA/Food Safety: Satisfying regulatory requests and insuring wholesome product;
- Legal: Managing any liability concerns, etc.

Rapid Recall Express™ is the foundation to support accurate and complete information to start the complex process of removing product from the supply chain. Building on that foundation requires a robust system to manage the business and regulatory components of recall events.

A fast and accurate recall offers the best protection for the public and the brand. The days of mailed or faxed notices are gone. Technology to facilitate the seamless flow of information internally across company functions, and externally for a closed-loop notification and response protocol is vital for speed and accuracy. Today's complex, integrated supply chain means that successful companies proactively protect their brand making sure they are prepared for a product crisis when it's least expected.

Our message is pretty simple. If you (brand owners) are not using the Rapid Recall Express™ form to *communicate* recall information or (for retailers and wholesalers/distributors) if you cannot *receive* recall information in this standard-organized way, you might be putting your consumers or brand reputation at risk. We need you to help build the industry-common practice. Once in place, Rapid Recall Express™ enables the recall initiator to enter the needed information once. Your supporting processes and food safety culture should ensure the information is sent to impacted retailers, wholesalers/distributors with or within 30 minutes of a public release.

To access GMA's Product Recall Tools and Resources, please visit:

<http://www.gmaonline.org/resources/product-recall/>



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