



Recognizing **RECALLED** Foods

You just heard about a recall of several brands of peanut butter. And now you are wondering: What was that brand you bought recently? You know it had a blue lid and a picture of a big peanut on the front. If you saw it, you'd recognize it.

Aware that consumers may identify a product more easily by seeing a picture of it, FDA is conducting a 6-month pilot program to post photos of certain recalled food products and their labels. The goal is to help consumers identify and avoid recalled food products that may pose a significant health risk.

WHAT IS A RECALL?

A recall is an action taken by a firm to remove a product from the market because the product violates the laws enforced by FDA and may present some risk of harm to consumers.

WHAT ARE TYPICAL FOOD RISKS THAT FDA ALERTS THE PUBLIC TO?

Typical significant food risks include foods contaminated with dangerous bacteria, such as *Salmonella*, *E. coli* O157:H7, and *Listeria monocytogenes*. Foods containing substances that may cause an allergic reaction (allergens) that are not listed on the label also are considered significant food risks.

THE MAJOR FOOD ALLERGENS ARE:

Milk

Eggs

Fish (such as bass, flounder, and cod)

Crustacean shellfish (such as crab, lobster, and shrimp)

Tree nuts, such as almonds, pecans, or walnuts

Wheat

Peanuts

Soybeans

Source: Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004

WHICH RECALLED PRODUCTS ARE PART OF THE PILOT PROGRAM?

The pilot program covers recalled food products that pose a significant health risk, which generally involves potential Class I food recalls. A Class I recall is one in which there is a reasonable probability that a product will cause serious adverse health consequences or death. Over 100 Class I recall events involving food products took place in the United States from Oct. 1, 2005, through Sept. 30, 2006.

Some recalled food products covered by the pilot may not have photos posted if FDA determines that posting photos would not provide a benefit to the consumer or would likely cause consumer confusion or undue alarm.

WHAT DO THE PHOTOS SHOW?

The photos will show a sample of the main display panel, which consumers generally see when the product is on a retailer's shelf. It's important for consumers to read the text of the



Frito-Lay



Continental Mills



FDA

FDA alerts the public to food risks by posting photos of recalled products. Specific lots or types of each of these products were recalled in 2007 due to undeclared allergens (in corn chips and pancake mix) and risk of exposure to a toxic substance (in bottled water).

press release that will be posted along with the photo for specific identifying information, such as lot numbers or manufacturers' names.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE 6-MONTH PILOT PROGRAM?

FDA will evaluate the pilot program's effectiveness during the program and after it ends. "The pilot ends in mid-August, but we will continue collecting comments and will continue with the program while evaluating it," says Fred Richman, an FDA compliance and enforcement official.

Consumer feedback as well as industry feedback sent by e-mail will weigh heavily in FDA's evaluation. In addition to collecting comments by e-mail, Richman says, "For all practical purposes, we are, in a sense, assessing industry response every time we approach a company and ask for a product photo."

The future of the program will depend on the evaluation results and FDA resources. "The benefits that

consumers express to us will have to be weighed against the resources we have," says Richman. "If it's beneficial, we'd like to adopt it permanently and consider expanding it to other FDA-regulated products."

HOW DID THE PILOT PROGRAM COME ABOUT?

The idea of posting photos of recalled products was first suggested by several congressional committees and advocated by the Safe Food Coalition, a food safety group representing consumer, public health, senior citizen, and labor organizations. FDA agreed with these groups, and responded by implementing the pilot program. The program is a collaboration of FDA's Office of Enforcement, Office of Public Affairs, and Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition.

HOW CAN I COMMENT ON THE PILOT PROGRAM?

FDA wants your feedback on the pilot program, which began in mid-Febru-

ary 2007 and extends to mid-August 2007. E-mail your comments to FDA at pilotphotofoods@fda.hhs.gov

For more information on recalls, market withdrawals, and safety alerts, visit www.fda.gov/opacom/7alerts.html

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