

# CONDUCTING BETTER PRODUCT RECALLS



Removing products from shelves is often not the first thing a company thinks of. However, product recalls are a reality and unfortunately all too often a lack of planning leaves businesses open to financial ruin and reputational brand damage.

When a recall is on the cards, procedures to deal with the highly stressful situation are usually not deeply ingrained within a company and its people. "Knowledge about what to do, and when, is limited at best among many suppliers and smaller retailers," says Mark Blitenthall, Manager - Service Engagement at global standards and solutions organisation, GS1 Australia; adding that procedure manuals are often either out of date or non-existent.

Hefty costs can be incurred should an organisation fail to effectively comply with recall regulations. The ACCC can issue fines of up to \$500,000 for individuals. For a body corporate, companies can cop \$10,000,000, three times the value of the benefit received, or 10% of annual turnover in the preceding 12 months, if a court cannot determine the benefit obtained from the offence.

GS1 Australia helps companies small and large to be better prepared for recalls and withdrawals with the easy-to-use electronic platform, GS1 Recall. The online tool is endorsed by

major Australian retailers, regulators, industry bodies and suppliers including AFGC, Fonterra, George Weston Foods, Metcash, Unilever, Coles and Woolworths. The platform significantly streamlines and improves the recall process and communications for faster and more effective removal of products across the supply chain.

Andrea Currie, Head of Quality and Technical Standards at Coles Supermarkets says, "The GS1 Recall platform has been designed to capture all the information relating to a product recall to ensure that it is effectively communicated to all the recipients who need to process the recall."

"At GS1 we constantly work with organisations to improve their product and consumer safety by helping them to be better prepared to execute product recalls. We have our easy-to-use Recall platform and we collaborate with industry leaders to provide advice, insights and management tools," commented Andrew Brown, Business Development Manager for Service Engagement at GS1 Australia.

Supported by bodies such as AIFST, PMA and HACCP, GS1 Australia's Recall platform enables manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers and importers to efficiently share notifications regarding a recall with FSANZ, state-based food safety regulators and trading partners, in accordance with FSANZ Food

Industry Recall Protocol.

Brown continues, "Many food safety professionals find it hard to transition from a food hazard prevention mindset to being prepared to deal with the fallout of an unforeseen situation. They are simply and understandably, focussed on delivering the best product they can. At GS1 Australia we help to raise awareness of the impact a recall can have through regular training sessions, recall bootcamps and collaborating with industry experts. The bootcamps have been extremely popular with participants from across many varying sectors including infant products, seafood, dairy, meat and agriculture."

In addition to regularly evaluating their preparedness for managing recalls, suppliers should also consider the impact of changed supply chains to their brand reputation. In light of recent supply chain interruptions attributed to the COVID-19 lockdowns, a recent article in Food Safety Tech1 highlighted increased opportunities for food fraud and the impact of unfamiliar supply arrangements on the authenticity of supply. In addition, a recent GS1 Recall Bootcamp highlighted this very issue in the examination of an actual incident and the resulting recall actions that followed.

For more information visit <https://www.gs1au.org/recall>



## References

1. Food Authenticity: 2020 in Review <https://foodsafetytech.com/column/food-authenticity-2020-in-review/>