



2007: The Year of the Food and Product Recall

Holiday shopping and eating has not even begun in earnest, but already 2007 has been a high water mark for recalls. Every month this year, consumers were warned about dangerous problems resulting in recalls of food, toys, cribs, and other products we all use every day. To date this year, over 20 million toys have been recalled due to lead and other hazards, and meat companies recalled over 30 million pounds of ground beef due to E. coli contamination. Fiscal Year 2007 alone brought 472 product recalls.

Consumers are wondering whether the food they will eat and the toys they will buy are going to be safe for their children and families. According to a recent *Consumer Reports* National Research Center poll, 89 percent of consumers are aware of recent Government recalls on toys containing lead. Among those aware of the recalls, 36 percent say they will be buying fewer toys this holiday season, and 70 percent say they will be checking product labels.

The problem is two-fold. First, while imports have ballooned in recent years, the regulatory capacity of the federal agencies that should be ensuring consumer safety has shrunk. Second, our current system for ensuring the safety of both domestic and imported food and products is not working – largely because federal regulators have relied so heavily on the industry to police itself.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) simply have not kept up with the challenges of today's global marketplace. In recent years, imports have skyrocketed, especially from China. The value of all imports increased by 67 percent between 2000 and 2006, and today 80 percent of all toys sold in the United States are imported from China. Of all of the food we consume, 13 percent is imported, and 83 percent of the seafood is imported.

The CPSC has half the number of employees it had about 30 years ago, and only 15 inspectors to police the millions of toys and products coming into the country at hundreds of entry points. The FDA is equally hamstrung, inspecting less than one percent of all food imports entering the country. This is simply not enough, and not an acceptable safety system.

Consumers Union urges Congress to make 2007 the year of safety reform, to fix our broken food and product safety agencies, and to restore consumer confidence in the marketplace.

The following is a list of the most alarming food and product recalls to date in 2007.

January 2007:

Product Recalls:

- Old Williamsburgh Candle Corp recalls **3.7 million** Mason Jar candles due to laceration and burn hazards. These candles were sold through dollar stores, discount stores, and grocery stores for between \$1 and \$1.50.

Food Recalls:

- Gold Star Sausage Co. recalls over 15,000 pounds of sausage products due to Listeria contamination.
- Ann House of Nuts, Inc. recalls over 21,000 packages of trail mix because they contain glass fragments.

February 2007:

Product Recalls:

- Maytag recalls **2.3 million** dishwashers due to a fire hazard to consumers.

Food Recalls:

- ConAgra Foods, Inc. recalls **326 million pounds** of peanut butter due to Salmonella contamination.
- Carolina Culinary Foods recalls **2.8 million pounds** of chicken due to Listeria contamination.
- ConAgra Foods, Inc. recalls over 400,000 pounds of pasta and meatballs because the boxed products were under-processed, which may cause the product to spoil before the "best-by" date.
- Dole Fresh Fruit Co. recalls almost 55,000 cantaloupes imported from Costa Rica due Salmonella contamination.

March 2007:

Product Recalls:

- Toys "R" Us recalls over 128,000 "Elite Operations" Toy Sets because of high levels of lead in the paint, and because the toys have sharp points, which pose a laceration hazard.

Food Recalls:

- Importers Direct Wholesale recalls over 376,000 bottles of mineral water imported from Armenia because they contain arsenic.
- Tyson Fresh Meats recalls almost 17,000 pounds of ground beef due to E. coli contamination.

April 2007:

Product Recalls:

- A&A Global industries recalls **4 million** "Groovy Grabber" bracelets because the paint on the metallic band beneath the decorative cover poses a lead hazard to children.
- Mega Brands America, Inc. recalls **more than 4 million** Magnetix Magnetic Building Sets because of magnets coming loose and causing intestinal and other problems in children who ingest the loose magnets.

Food Recalls:

- McNeill PPC, Inc. recalls **9.5 million bottles** of Listerine mouthwash due to microbial contamination.
- Richwood Meat Company recalls over 107,000 pounds of ground beef due to the presence of E. coli.
- HFX, Inc. recalls almost 260,000 pounds of ground beef due to the presence of E. coli.

May 2007:

Product Recalls:

- GE recalls **2.5 million** dishwashers because of a fire hazard to consumers.
- Tween brands recalls about 103,000 pieces of children's metal jewelry because they contain high levels of lead.
- Cardinal Distributing Co., Inc. recalls about 300,000 children's turquoise rings because they contain high levels of lead.
- Evenflo Company recalls about 450,000 Infant Car Seat/Carriers because the handle can unexpectedly release when the item is used as an infant carrier, potentially causing the infant to fall to the ground and suffer serious injuries.
- Oriental Trading Company Inc. recalls approximately 132,000 Children's Religious Fish Necklaces because they contain high levels of lead.

Food Recalls:

- nSpired Natural Foods recalls over 525,000 units of sesame tahini because they contain Salmonella.
- PM Beef Holdings recall over 117,000 pounds of ground beef due to the presence of E. coli.

June 2007:

Product Recalls:

- RC2 Corp. recalls **1.5 million** Thomas & Friends Wooden Railway toys because surface paints on the products contain lead. Lead is toxic if ingested by young children and can cause adverse health effects.
- Lasko Products Inc. recalls approximately **1.2 million** Lasko Ceramic Heaters because of a potential fire hazard due to the heater cord overheating.

June 2007 (contd.):

Food Recalls:

- United Food Group recalls **5.7 million pounds** of ground beef due to the presence of E. coli.
- Robert's American Gourmet Food, Inc. recalls over **1 million** packages of Veggie Booty due to Salmonella contamination.
- Tyson Fresh Meats recalls over 40,000 pounds of ground beef due to the presence of E. coli.

July 2007:

Product Recalls:

- **One million** Easy-Bake Ovens are recalled because young children can insert their hands into the oven's front opening and get their hands or fingers caught, posing entrapment and burn hazards.
- 20,000 Essentials for Kids Jewelry Sets are recalled because the metal jewelry sets contain high levels of lead.

Food Recalls:

- Phoenix Trading, Inc. recalls over **1.5 million units** of toothpaste because they contain Diethylene glycol (DEG), a chemical primarily used in floor polish, paint and industrial cleaners.
- Gerber Products Co. recalls over **3.1 million boxes** of Gerber organic baby cereal because of choking hazards.
- Dent Fresh USA, Inc. recalls 126,000 tubes of toothpaste imported from China because they contain DEG.
- Castleberry's Food Company recalls over **721,000** pounds of canned meat due to the presence of Clostridium botulinum, a bacteria that can cause botulism.
- Abbott's Meat, Inc. recalls over 26,000 pounds of ground beef due to the presence of E. coli.
- World Spice, Inc. recalls over 16,000 pounds of parsley powder due to Salmonella contamination.

August 2007:

Product Recalls:

- Mattel recalls **more than 7 million** Polly Pockets Play Sets because magnets inside the dolls and accessories can come loose, posing risk of injury or even death to children who swallow or inhale the small magnets.
- Approximately 250,000 SpongeBob SquarePants Address Books and Journals are recalled because the paint on the metal spiral bindings of the address books and journals contain excessive levels of lead, which violates the federal lead paint ban.

Food Recalls:

- Gilchrist & Soames recalls over 658,000 tubes of toothpaste imported from China because they contain DEG.
- Kedem Food Products recalls over 113,000 units of apple juice because they contain Clostridium butyricum, a bacteria that can cause botulism.

August 2007 (contd.):

Food Recalls:

- Talking Rain Beverage Co. recalls over 136,000 bottles of spring water because they contain Bromate.

September 2007:

Product Recalls:

- Simplicity Inc. recalls **1 million** cribs made in China due to design and construction defects that pose a strangulation hazard to babies. The cribs are believed to be responsible for the deaths of two infants.
- Mattel recalls 675,000 Barbie Accessory toys due to excessive lead levels in paint.
- 200,000 additional Thomas and Friends Wooden Railway toys are recalled for excessive lead levels in paint.
- Target recalls 350,000 Happy Giddy Gardening Tools and Children's Sunny Patch Chairs because of excessive lead levels in paint.
- 425,000 infant play yards are recalled by Kolcraft Enterprises Inc. because they pose a strangulation hazard

Food Recalls:

- Stone Meats, Inc. recalls over 11,000 pounds of ground beef because the products contain pieces of metal.

October 2007:

Product Recalls:

- Approximately **1.6 million** Cub Scouts Totem Badges are recalled by Kahoot Products, Inc. for excessive lead levels.
- 110,000 Magnetic Game Pieces sold with "Cars"-themed backpacks are recalled because the small magnets in the toy present a hazard to children.
- 142,000 Purple Halloween Pails with Witch Decorations are recalled by Family Dollar Stores because of excessive lead levels in the paint.
- **1 million** Bumbo "Baby Sitter" Seats by Bumbo International of South Africa are recalled because they pose a head injury hazard to children.

Food Recalls:

- Topps Meat Company recalls over **21 million pounds** of ground beef due to the presence of E. coli.
- Cargill Meat Solutions recalls 845,000 pounds of ground beef due to the presence of E. coli.
- Aliko Foods, Inc. recalls over 70,000 pounds of chicken and pasta due to the presence of Listeria.
- ConAgra Foods recalls an "undetermined amount" of frozen pot pies due to Salmonella contamination.
- J & B Meats Corporation recalls over 173,000 pounds of ground due to the presence of E. coli.

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