



Extension FactSheet

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Who Should Be Involved in Food Recall Planning and Execution?

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Why is planning ahead important for a food product recall?

Food product recall is initiated to protect the consumers from hazardous products that may cause health problems or even death. The announcement of a recall can cause serious concerns for consumers. Therefore, a firm’s approach in initiating, conducting, and ending the recall effectively, truthfully, and in a timely manner is important for saving lives as well as the company’s reputation and liability by showing their commitment to consumer satisfaction and well-being. A smoothly progressing recall process can only be achieved if a well-prepared and tested product-recall system is in place.

Who is involved in recall planning?

Although the recall process is voluntary and can be initiated by a company, it can be triggered by one or more of the following entities involved in the food production, distribution, and consumption chain: primary processor, co-packer, secondary food processor, distributor, broker, importer, retailer, consumer, state or federal regulatory authorities, and special interest groups. It is crucial to be ready for a recall before it happens. Therefore, every food manufacturer, importer, distributor, and retailer should establish a Recall Committee and prepare a recall action plan describing in detail the actions to be taken and the responsibilities of individuals in the event of a recall. A firm first should designate a Recall Coordinator to prepare for and coordinate all activities related to a product recall. The first crucial task of the Recall Committee is to develop an effective recall plan to assure that recalls and withdrawals are handled professionally and efficiently without disruption to the business.

Which areas should be represented on the Recall Committee?

For successful planning and an effective recall action, the necessary knowledge and expertise from various departments should be brought in to the Recall Committee. Figure 1 is a diagram showing the various areas in a firm that need to be represented on the Recall Committee.

In small organizations, several areas designated in Figure 1 could be represented by one person. Each member of the Recall Committee should have a designated deputy to assume the responsibility in his or her absence. A document similar to Table 1 should be prepared as part of a recall action plan. The document should be updated frequently and should include all current contact information (office and home telephone numbers, fax number, mobile phone number, e-mail addresses) for members of the Recall Committee and their deputies.

It is important that the contact information include telephone numbers where members can be reached after business hours. The responsibilities of each individual for each area identified in Figure 1 should be clearly defined in the recall action plan prepared by the Recall Committee.

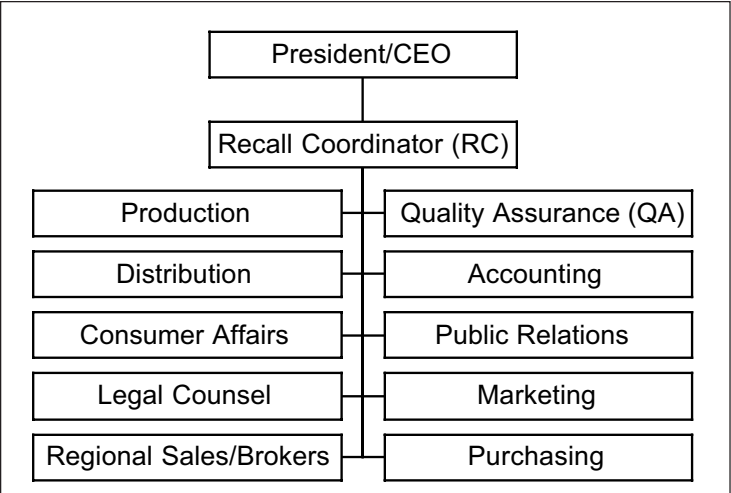


Figure 1. Recall Committee Organization Diagram

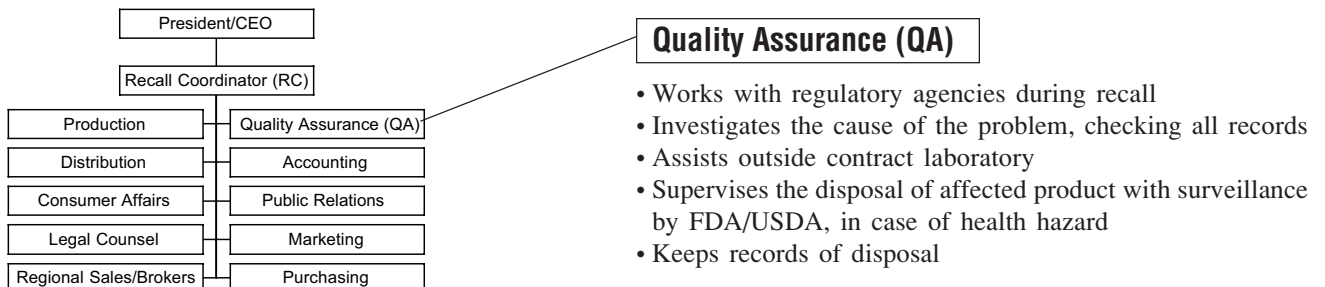
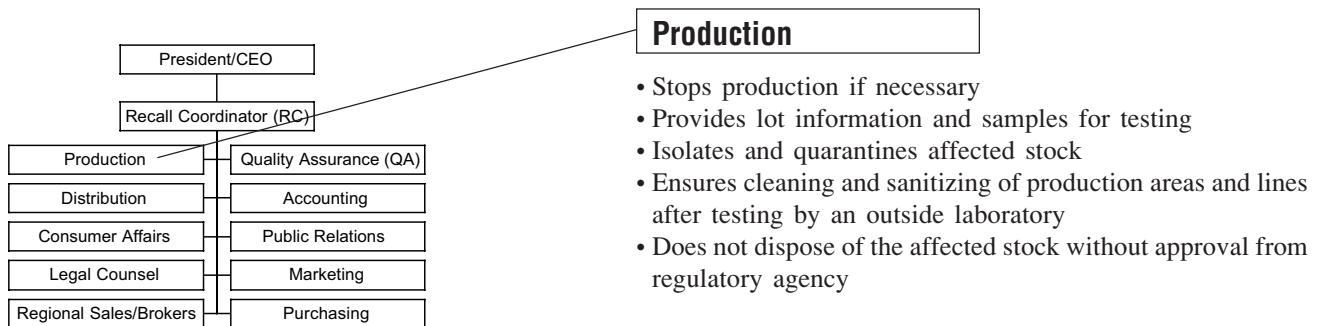
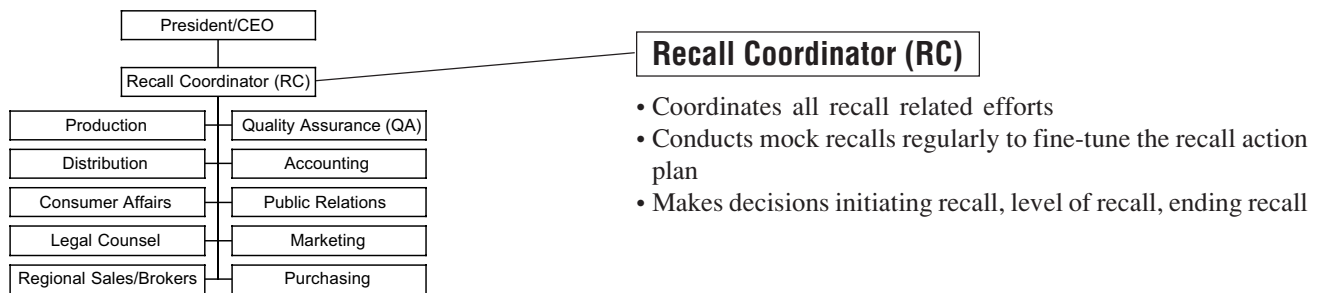
Table 1. Document of contact information and function for Recall Committee members

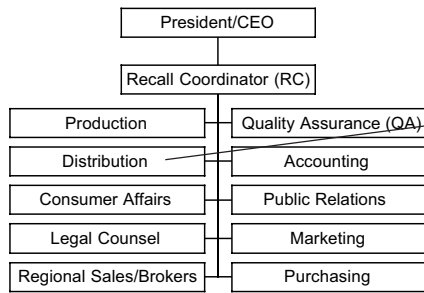
Recall Committee						
Primary Member			Alternate Member			Function during a recall
Name	Title	Contact Information	Name	Title	Contact Information	

What are the responsibilities of individuals in the Recall Committee?

The Recall Committee is headed by a Recall Coordinator. Typically, the Quality Assurance (QA) manager or the firm’s senior technical executive is designated as the Recall Coordinator. The Recall Coordinator should be familiar with the firm’s overall operation including purchasing, production, quality assurance, distribution, consumer affairs, and legal issues, in addition to state and federal regulations. The Recall Coordinator should have the authority to make critical decisions to initiate and conduct a recall. The Recall Coordinator ensures that all the recall procedures and plans are in place and the responsibilities are known to the individuals assigned to specific tasks in the event of a recall.

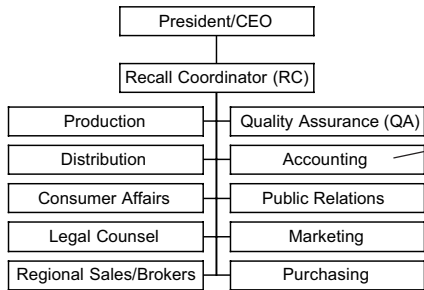
The following diagrams summarize the responsibilities of each Recall Committee member.





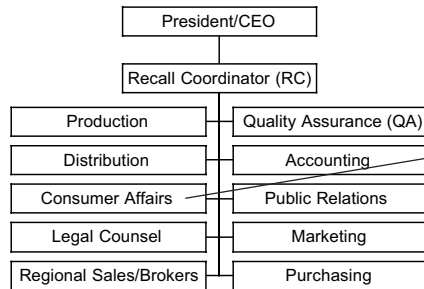
Distribution

- Stops all in-transit shipments of questionable material and arrange for return of product to collection points
- Prepares inventory and distribution status of product report showing where, when, to whom, and the quantity shipped.



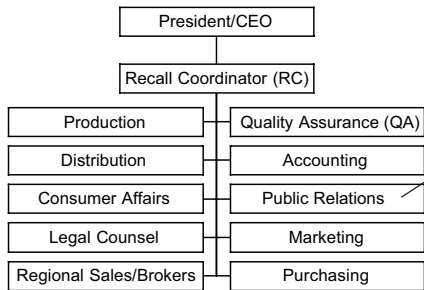
Accounting

- Handles account credits for customers
- Determines the cost of recall



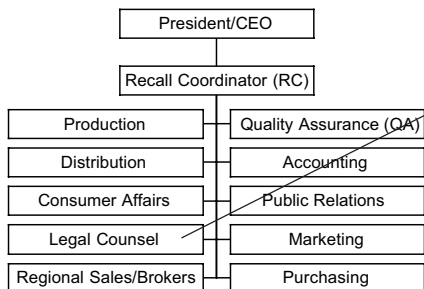
Consumer Affairs

- Prepares response for consumers and customers
- Answers all consumer inquiries after consulting with RC
- Prepares instructions for consumers for disposal or return of the recalled product



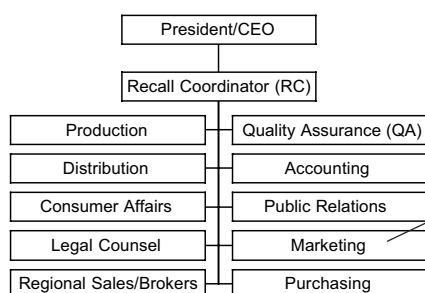
Public Relations

- Coordinates all actions through RC
- Handles all press releases
- Prepares “Recall Notice” with RC
- Handles media access



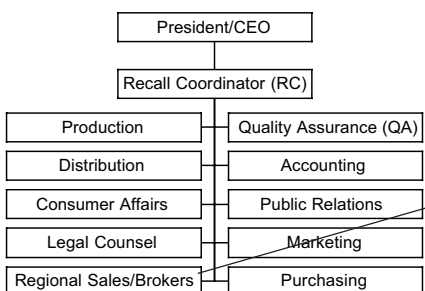
Legal Counsel

- Handles legal implications
- Advises RC and the committee about the legal consequences of the company’s actions
- Assesses the insurance coverage and works with firm’s insurance provider for claims
- Checks statements before issued to media and public



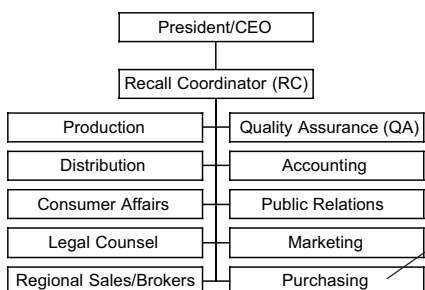
Marketing

- Notifies sales managers and brokers
- Arranges for pick-up at retail level
- Formulates a reimbursement plan for customers and consumers



Regional Sales/Brokers

- Aids marketing in contacting customers
- Assists in product pick-up and issuance of credit



Purchasing

- Contacts suppliers if problem is due to raw materials
- Works with QA to arrange for replacement raw materials, if relevant
- Assists production with services for cleaning

Conclusions

Recall planning and execution require involvement of multiple internal personnel who have access to specific information within a firm, and external people (brokers, regional sales managers, distributors, customers) and entities (regulatory agencies, contract laboratories). The necessary coordination of individuals and information can only be achieved by planning ahead. After identifying individuals and their responsibilities, a recall action plan is prepared to define the recall protocols. The selection of the Recall Coordinator and careful implementation of a well-designed recall action plan are critical for a successful recall, for protecting consumers, and for maintaining the company's reputation.

For more information on food product recalls refer to the other fact sheets in this series on "Food Product Recall" and the references listed below.

References

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6. National Food Processors Association (NFPA) 1988. Manual on Pre-Emergency Planning and Disaster Recovery. Washington, D.C.

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