FOOD FOR THOUGHT: ARE YOUR GROCERIES SAFE?

Serious food recalls are all too common, and this country doesn't have a good system to alert us

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WRITTEN BY:

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U.S. PIRG EDUCATION FUND

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INTRODUCTION

You remember last year's big onion recall because of an outbreak of Salmonella. Looking back, it's an infuriating example of how our country's food recall system often doesn't work well. Ultimately, more than 1,000 people got sick. One-fourth of them were hospitalized.

On Oct. 21, 2021, the Food and Drug Administration said it and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, along with state and local partners, were investigating an outbreak of Salmonella infections linked to whole, fresh onions and identified ProSource Produce LLC of Hailey, Idaho as a source of potentially contaminated onions imported from Chihuahua, Mexico. The day before, ProSource had announced it was voluntarily recalling red, yellow and white onions imported from Chihuahua, Mexico from July 1, 2021, through August 27, 2021. The onions had been distributed in 35 states, to retail stores, wholesalers and restaurants and other foodservice customers.

Healthy people infected with Salmonella often experience fever, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain. Salmonella can cause more serious and fatal infections in young children under 5, pregnant women, elderly people and those with weakened immune systems. Even among healthy folks, Salmonella can get into the bloodstream and cause issues such as infected aneurysms, endocarditis and arthritis.

The next day, Oct. 22, the FDA said its investigation identified Keeler Family Farms as an additional supplier of onions from Chihuahua, Mexico, for many of the restaurants where sick people reported eating. Keeler also agreed to a voluntary recall of onions imported during July and August 2021.

By Oct. 29, the CDC reported 808 illnesses across 37 states and Puerto Rico. The FDA posted a list of additional recalls being conducted by retailers that may have received recalled onions from ProSource and Keeler and used them as ingredients or repackaged them. By Nov. 12, 2021 the CDC reported 892 illnesses in 38 states and Puerto Rico.

On Feb. 2, 2022, the CDC said the outbreak was over. It tallied 1,040 illnesses in 39 states, plus Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico. Among those, 260 people were hospitalized. Fortunately, no one died. As it turns out, the first illness connected to the outbreak was reported May 31, 2021, nearly five months before the first recall. Investigators rely on genome sequencing technology to connect pathogens from sick patients and then trace them to a food.

The CDC said the last illness onset was Jan. 1, 2022, two months after the last recall. The incubation period for salmonellosis is generally 12 to 72 hours.

How many of those illnesses and hospitalizations could have been prevented through a more efficient food recall system that notifies consumers more quickly?
"I have no idea why it takes that long. It's a black box," Dr. Ben Chapman, a professor and food safety specialist in the Department of Agricultural and Human Sciences at North Carolina State University, said in an interview with U.S. PIRG Education Fund. "We have an inconsistent, fragmented system. No one really owns recalls."

Then there was the Dole lettuce recall right before Christmas. The first announcements from the FDA and Dole came on Dec. 22, 2021. The CDC

investigation later showed the first illness connected to this was actually reported *seven years earlier*, on Aug. 16, 2014. The last illness was reported on Jan. 15, 2022, more than three weeks after the initial recall was announced. Listeria symptoms usually start within 24 hours, but can start up to four weeks after eating contaminated food. Symptoms include diarrhea, high fever, abdominal pain and vomiting. As with Salmonella, Listeria can cause serious and sometimes fatal infections in young children, elderly people and others with weakened immune systems. Listeria infection can cause miscarriages and stillbirths in pregnant women.

The FDA said the recalled salad items from Bessemer City, N.C., and Yuma, Ariz., were distributed in nearly 30 states. At the time, the FDA said no products produced from Dole facilities in Springfield, Ohio, or Soledad, Calif., were included in the voluntary recalls. In addition, the FDA said no other Dole products, including "ready-to-eat" salad products were part of these voluntary recalls and "are safe to consume."

Two weeks later, on Jan. 7, 2022, the FDA said Dole was recalling all Dole-branded and private label packaged salads containing iceberg lettuce that were processed at its Springfield, Ohio, and Soledad, Calif., facilities – the ones whose products were "safe to consume" two weeks before. The recall affected dozens of additional products, with distribution in a total of 36 states. The outbreak ultimately infected 18 people; 16 were hospitalized. Three people died: one each in Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin.

These two major recalls from the last seven months showcase the weaknesses in our food recall system: It often takes too long for companies and regulators to notify grocers, consumers, restaurants and food packagers, particularly regarding Class I recalls. These recalls are ones where the FDA says there is a "reasonable probability" that exposure or use of the product could cause "serious adverse health consequences or death."

And once grocers find out, they aren't required to contact customers who may have already purchased contaminated products. While many stores do quickly notify customers one way or another, the practices aren't uniform and aren't always timely. Meanwhile, people continue to get sick.

The CDC estimates that one in six Americans become ill every year from foodborne diseases. Among those, 128,000 wind up in the hospital and 3,000 die. Those illnesses are just the ones that regulators find out about. The CDC says most people who get some type of mild stomach bug that could be food poisoning don't seek medical care or report their case for investigation.

Last year there were 270 food and beverage recalls from the FDA and U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA FSIS). For the last five years, the average has been 325 a year. For the last four years, the overwhelming majority have come from the FDA.

Clearly, a goal of our food production and distribution system must be reducing the need for recalls in the first place. That's the difficult part. This report looks at the easier part – the logjams once the need for a recall is identified and how grocers and other retailers notify customers who may have a contaminated product in their home.

We contacted 50 of the largest grocery and convenience store chains to learn how they get the word out to customers. Some take several steps. Some do very little.

WHO GETS THE WORD OUT ABOUT RECALLS

Under the FDA, only two notifications of a recall are currently required: One, a posting on the FDA's recall website. Two, a news release from the company that's actually initiating the recall.

No one has to contact grocery stores. No one has to notify consumers.
Despite that, many grocers and retailers have clauses in their contracts with suppliers that they must be notified in a timely manner by the supplier when a recall is initiated, Gale Prince, a certified food scientist and founder of SAGE Food Safety, LLC in Cincinnati, told U.S. PIRG Education Fund in an interview. Prince previously was corporate director of regulatory affairs for Kroger Co. and oversaw retail and food manufacturing, product recalls, food labeling, consumer complaints, corporate inspection programs for food safety and other issues.

In fact, grocers often learn of a recall from their supplier before the FDA even posts a public notice online or sends out emails to those who've signed up for real-time alerts.

"Retailers primarily receive product recall notification requests from their suppliers or manufacturers, usually before the information is provided by FDA or via the reportable food registry (RFR)," Dr. Hilary Thesmar, chief science officer and senior vice president of food safety for FMI, the Food Industry Association, told U.S. PIRG Education Fund.

As a result, she said, retailers often, within two hours, remove affected items from store shelves, halt sales and hold products in stores or warehouses. They also start trying to notify customers.

The FDA often takes a day or two or even a week after a company issues a notice to put out its own public announcement. In one recent example, Fresh Express on Dec. 20, 2021, announced a massive recall affecting 225 salad products in 18 states under the brand names Fresh Express, Bowl and Basket, Giant Eagle, Marketside and others. The concern was potential Listeria contamination, which can cause serious and sometimes fatal infections in children, frail or elderly people and others with weakened immune systems. It can also cause miscarriages and stillbirths among pregnant women.

One week after Fresh Express' recall announcement, the FDA posted the recall to its web site on Dec. 27. The investigation showed illnesses started as far back as July 26, 2016, through October 19, 2021.The contamination was discovered as part of routine sampling by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Fresh Express Announces Recall of Fresh Salad Products Due to Potential Health Risk

When a company announces a recall, market withdrawal, or safety alert, the FDA posts the company's announcement as a public service. FDA does not endorse either the product or the company.

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Summary

Company Announcement Date:	December 20, 2021
FDA Publish Date:	December 27, 2021
Product Type:	Food & Beverages
Reason for Announcement:	Possible Listeria monocytogenes.
Company Name:	Fresh Express
Brand Name:	Fresh Express, Bowl and Basket, Giant Eagle, Marketside and Others
Product Description:	Multiple Fresh Salad Products

Fortunately, many retailers already knew and were pulling products from their shelves and notifying customers in some cases.

"We do not wait for the FDA to post a notification," said Kristal Howard, spokeswoman for Kroger, one of the nation's largest grocers with more than 2,700 stores under various banners in 35 states. The recall policies also exist at subsidiaries Harris Teeter, King Soopers, Ralphs, Roundy's and Smith's Food and Drug. "Once we are informed by a firm that they have distributed a product subject to a Class I recall to us, we strive to initiate a recall and communicate to customers as soon as possible … to maintain consumer safety." The company places automated calls to loyalty card holders who actually bought the product, Howard told U.S. PIRG Education Fund.

Other large retailers say they too rely on their manufacturers, not regulators.

At CVS, one of the nation's largest retailers with nearly 10,000 stores in 49 states which also sells limited grocery products, it requires suppliers to notify their CVS category or product development manager of "a defect or issue which results in a product recall … within one business day of recall determination," the company says.

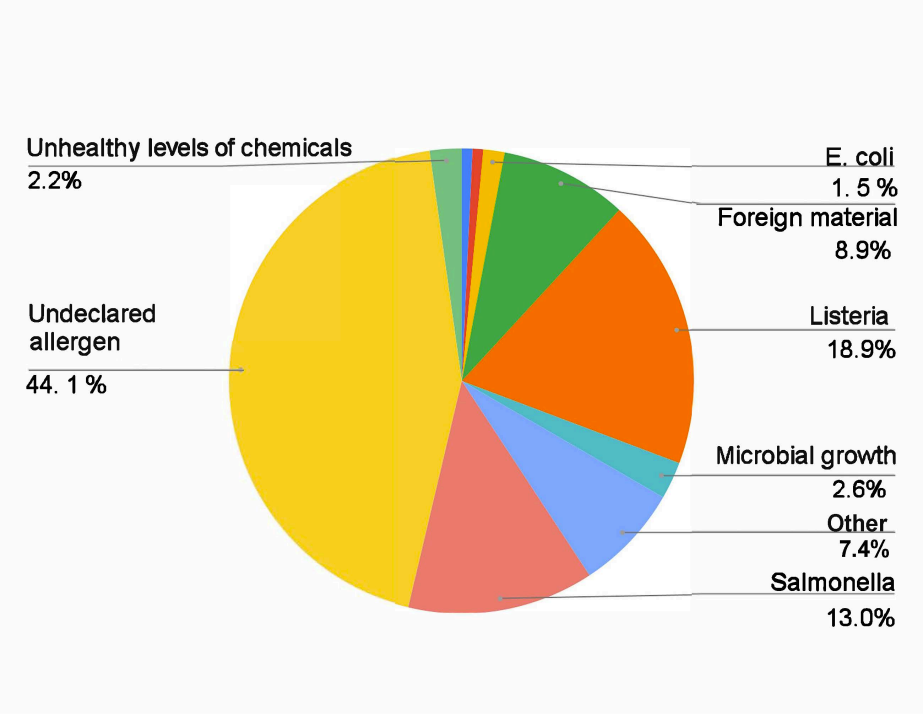
Details must include the risk level, UPC, lot numbers, etc.

Chapman said many retailers and food service providers subscribe to other services that crawl for online alerts ahead of any FDA announcements. In addition, he said that once one product is recalled, some large companies like Amazon do a good job of anticipating additional, related recalls, using software to comb databases. In these cases, Amazon may hold products and wait to sell them in case additional recalls are announced, he said.

However, policies and practices are inconsistent in how various companies nationwide are notified and how they contact their customers.

Why are foods recalled?

There were 270 food and beverage recalls last year. Undeclared allergens were the most common reason. Here's a breakdown by category.



RESULTS OF OUR SURVEY

Once retailers learn of a recall, they have myriad ways of sharing that information with customers. Some immediately send out automated phone calls, text messages or emails to customers who are loyalty card holders or who've opted in to learn that products they've purchased have been recalled. Other companies post notices in stores or post alerts on social media or their websites.

We contacted 50 of the largest retailers that sell groceries, based on the number of locations nationwide. Virtually all have some type of policy to alert customers, but the methods and timing often aren't as helpful as they could be.

Of the 50 companies we contacted:
Half of the retailers told us they notify affected customers by phone, text or email within one day.

One-third of the retailers put the onus on customers to check the store's website or social media accounts for recall notices.

For seven companies, we didn't get information from them after multiple emails and phone calls over a period of six months and we also couldn't find any information about recall notifications or recall policies on their websites.

The complete list is in the appendix.

One of the leaders in alerting customers is Pittsburgh-based Giant Eagle, which has nearly 500 grocery stores in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Indiana and Maryland. Its policy: Making automated phone calls to customers who have loyalty cards and a phone number on file.

The store will customize the calls to target only customers who purchased the product being recalled. For example, after Jif peanut butter announced a large recall late on May 20, Giant Eagle placed automated phone calls the next day to customers who bought affected items using loyalty cards. On Dec. 19, 2020, when the USDA and Nestle announced that 92,206 pounds of Lean Cuisine Baked Chicken meals were being recalled because they may be contaminated with extraneous materials, Giant Eagle placed automated phone calls to customers the same day the recall was announced by Nestle and the USDA.

It was the same with last December's recall of Fresh Express lettuce. The recall alert phone calls from Giant Eagle went out the same day to customers who'd purchased one of the 225 products being recalled.

Giant Eagle has been alerting customers through automated calls since at least 2010, often within a few hours after it learns of a recall, said spokesman Dan Donovan.

"We want to make sure we're notifying our guests of what we know," he said. Some recalls can affect more than 100,000 customers, he said. Donovan added that customers express appreciation. "With the busy lives we all have, this direct outreach is a key way we show our commitment to guest safety."

Albertsons Cos., which has more than 2,200 stores in 34 states and Washington D.C., also is dedicated to customer notification, said spokeswoman Amanda Cardosi.

Albertsons stores operate under a number of banners, including Acme Markets, Jewel-Osco, Safeway, Tom Thumb and Vons.

"At Albertsons Companies, the health and safety of our customers is of the highest priority, and a key component of that is ensuring that our customers are promptly notified of food recalls, often well before the FDA posts a notification on its website," Cardosi said.

"As such, Albertsons utilizes multiple methods for consumer notification: Posting in-store signage at the primary point of display for both national brand and private label brand Class I and Class II recalls within 24 hours of notice from supplier." Albertsons companies also send e-mail notifications about Class I recalls (the most serious) within one business day to loyalty card members, for both in-store and online purchases. And they post and send out news releases.

Others that aim to notify customers even before a federal announcement because they're notified by suppliers include:

Costco, with about 600 stores, contacts shoppers by phone and email if on record. "Notifications go out as soon as Costco is made aware of a problem," Costco Vice President Craig Wilson told U.S. PIRG Education Fund. "Oftentimes this happens before a recall is even announced by the FDA, USDA, or CPSC.

"We know what the right thing to do is and we do it," Wilson said.

Food Lion, with about 1,100 stores, contacts shoppers by email.

Amazon, online nationwide, contacts customers who bought the recalled product, as well as sellers that may have offered such products.

Whole Foods, with about 500 stores nationwide, notifies customers through email and store signage immediately, before a post by regulators.

Trader Joe's, with about 500 stores nationwide, allows shoppers to sign up for email alerts of any purchases that are recalled.

Winn-Dixie, with about 500 stores, notifies customers by email and text, based on purchase data.

Others take a different approach.

At Illinois-based Aldi, which has nearly 2,000 stores in 36 states, customers are advised to check the company's web site. "For your information In addition to visiting this page for recall announcements or updates, ALDI shoppers can access more information at http://www.recalls.gov."

Shoppers are also directed online at Florida-based Publix, which has nearly 1,300 stores in Florida and six other Southern states. The company says on its website:

"We take our responsibility … for our customers' safety very seriously. We vigilantly monitor regulatory agencies, so we're among the first to know when a product recall or food safety warning is issued. If a recall or warning occurs, we immediately alert store locations to remove the product from the shelves (if sold there). We post details here on Publix.com to keep you informed."

WHAT ARE RETAILERS REQUIRED TO DO

As mentioned, there are currently only two recall notifications required by federal law: a posting on the FDA's recall website, and a news release issued by the company that's conducting the recall. Players in all corners realize that's not enough.

Let's look at the Food Safety Modernization Act, which became law in 2011. It says stores that have 15 or more locations must "prominently display" a recall notice within 24 hours after it's provided by the FDA. The notice must be posted inside their stores for 14 days in a "conspicuous location," as defined by the FDA. The choices:

- At or near the check-out register.
- The location where the food was sold.
- Targeted recall information provided to customers who bought the food.
- Another location or method "considered appropriate" by the FDA.

The FDA, however, has yet to issue final guidelines on that provision. So stores aren't actually required to post the notices. And many don't.

The nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) is among those calling on the FDA to do more. "The Food and Drug Administration has unduly delayed issuing guidance to implement a recall notification system beyond the statutory deadlines in Section 211 of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)," the CSPI wrote to the FDA in 2015. "Recent recalls highlight the high cost for public health when consumers lack information, and demonstrate why (the) FDA must act quickly to improve food safety by issuing a list of conspicuous locations and manners for posting notices in grocery stores and revising guidance on the Reportable Food Registry as required by Section 211.

"Further delay harms consumers, leaving them exposed to recalled products because of inadequate notification," the CPSI said.

Just last month, the nonprofit Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) released a 22-page advocacy paper that made the same point. The association is made up of professionals representing government, industry, public health, university research departments and consumer advocacy organizations.

"Consumers continue to become ill from recalled products that are consumed after the issuance of a recall announcement," AFDO wrote, "and the issuance of a recall and communication around it is typically done too late in the outbreak investigation to prevent additional illnesses."
Prince, the food safety consultant, sums it up this way: 'There are a number of glitches in the system."

TYPES OF NOTIFICATIONS

You could argue that any kind of direct notification to consumers would be better than what's currently required – nothing. Yes, news media generally do a good job alerting consumers to major recalls once they're announced. But people don't watch TV, listen to radio news or read newspapers as regularly as they used to. Clearly, many consumers miss important recall stories at the top of a TV newscast or on the front page of a newspaper.

The different notification methods have pros and cons:

Notices posted in the store, near where the food was sold.
These can reach people who are regular shoppers who are buying related products. Shoppers can take their time to read them and write down information.
But the notices take time to print and post. And they do no good for someone who doesn't go back to that store for days or a week or more after the purchase, or isn't shopping in that particular section or aisle the next time they visit.

In-store notices also do no good for shoppers who order their groceries online and have them delivered or pick them up curbside, which became increasingly popular during the pandemic.

Thesmar of FMI, the Food Industry Association, said "flexibility is key" to get information to customers as quickly and effectively as possible. Contacting customers electronically works best for those who've shopped online because the store knows exactly what they bought and knows how to reach them, she said.

She added that loyalty card programs provide retailers with a "highly effective tool" to track specific purchases and use customers' contact information to reach them quickly.

Mid-Atlantic powerhouse Giant Food Stores, which has about 190 stores spanning Maryland, Virginia, Delaware and Washington, D.C., has the same policy for online shoppers as in-store ones. All customers who shop online and are members of the store's loyalty program will get an automated phone call if they bought an item that falls under a Class I recall.

Food Lion, which has 1,100 stores in 10 states, also contacts online shoppers just like in-store ones. It uses email messages.

Notices posted at or near the checkout register.
These notices would potentially be noticed by all shoppers checking out, regardless of what they bought.

But Prince, the former Kroger executive and food safety expert, said if you kept each notice up for a couple of weeks, you might have 20 or 30 notices at each register at any given time. How would you fit them all? And if you did, what shopper, who might be wrangling kids or trying to unload their shopping cart, is going to take time to read them all?

Posts to a grocer's social media accounts, such as Twitter or Facebook.
These can be near real time and may reach people who are customers but aren't loyalty card holders. And the platforms are often on people's phones, so they're readily accessible throughout the day.

But these reach only those customers who follow the grocery on social media platforms and check them in a timely manner. There is also the possibility of users spreading misinformation if they share posts from unofficial sources that look legitimate.

Posts to a retailer's website.
It's good to have one central place with a list of current and historic recalls. But these are of limited benefit unless customers can sign up for email or text alerts about new listings. What grocery shopper is going to be diligent enough to check their grocer's online recalls list every day or even every week?

Direct messages to customers.
People who bought the recalled product may get alerts through automated phone calls, text messages or emails, obtained through loyalty card memberships or other information provided voluntarily. These are the most timely – particularly the phone calls or text messages.

Thesmar of the FMI, the Food Industry Association said direct phone calls, texts or emails can be better than posting a notice in a store, because they're faster and will cover shoppers who bought items online or may not be back in the store for days. "For instance, electronically contacting consumers who have purchased food via the internet is often the best choice for purchases that occur over the internet because the retailer knows exactly what the consumer purchased and has reliable information to contact them," she said, "and because those consumers may never see a posting in a store location."

Direct notifications to shoppers is the best strategy and have the best chance of success, but even these aren't fail-safe. Notifications to loyalty card customers will reach only those who have the card membership and used it for that purchase and have current contact information on file with the store.

It would seem the best approach would be for grocery stores to use as many tactics as possible. If shoppers hear about a potentially dangerous or even life-threatening food recall more than once, great.

At FMI, the Food Industry Association, which represents retailers who sell to consumers, producers who supply the food and companies in between, officials agree with a multi-layered approach.

"When it comes to notifying customers of product recalls, shoppers tell us they want to receive this information in a variety of ways," said Thesmar, the executive with FMI, the Food Industry Association. Consumer surveys have shown here's how they want to be notified, she said.

- Email (56%).
- In-store notifications (39%).
- Text messages (26%),
- Information at the checkout register (25%).
- Social media updates (18%).

"Communication preferences vary generationally and regionally; therefore, there is not a one size fits all and retailers utilize multiple methods of communication depending on the circumstances to communicate recalls to their customers," Thesmar said.

"Since there's no one way that consumers obtain information, grocery stores must leverage multiple channels when communicating recall information – traditional media, social media, websites, loyalty cards, phone calls, customer emails or in-store notifications," she said. "As technology and the way we communicate

evolve, retailers have, and will continue to, develop more effective and efficient ways to notify customers about product recalls that meet the shopper's needs."

TYPES OF FOOD RECALLS

Class I recall: a situation in which there is a reasonable probability that the use of or exposure to a violative product will cause serious adverse health consequences or death.

Class II recall: a situation in which use of or exposure to a violative product may cause temporary or medically reversible adverse health consequences or where the probability of serious adverse health consequences is remote.

Class III recall: a situation in which use of or exposure to a violative product is not likely to cause adverse health consequences.

SOURCE: FDA

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When you have hundreds and sometimes thousands of people getting sick every year from food – many of them after recalls have been announced – then you have to look at what more can be done. There is no single solution that will reach everyone who has purchased a particular product for their family or business.

And while more communication is needed, there's also the risk of inundating consumers with so many recall alerts that they become indifferent.

Here are some steps that would help:

The FDA in particular should develop a way for consumers and businesses to receive direct alerts of all Class I recalls and any allergens they care about, said Prince, the former Kroger executive. "This would be so easy," he said.

Products with undeclared allergens such as peanuts or milk make up more than 40 percent of recalls, but only 4 to 10 percent of the population has some kind of food allergy and would care significantly about those recalls.

The FDA and USDA combined post an average of a half-dozen recalls a week. Many aren't a huge risk to most people. If an individual were to get email or text alerts about every single recall – one almost every day on average – they'd suffer from "recall fatigue," Prince said. Many people would stop noticing or would get annoyed by all of the alerts and stop reading them.
Prince proposed customized alerts to the FDA years ago. "Nothing has ever happened with it," he said.

Food producers should leverage technology so consumers can easily learn whether an item in their home has been recalled, Chapman said. If every product contained a QR code, for example, you could scan it with your phone and find out about any recalls in real time.

"I can scan a product and get its nutritional value but I can't scan whether something has been recalled? We have the technology to do this," he said.

This would also help address the issue of recalled foods at food pantries and soup kitchens. They don't have the computer systems a grocery store has, so volunteers have to go through products by hand.

"That's a big challenge we have," Chapman said.

Retailers need to do more. Even though it's not required by regulators, more stores should offer shoppers a way to be contacted by phone, text or email in case of recalls involving items they bought, whether that's through a loyalty card or some other system. Retailers are inconsistent here; remember only half of the large chains we surveyed offer a way for customers to be contacted directly about recalls.

Retailers are also inconsistent with posting recall notices in stores – where they post them or whether they even post them at all. Some large groceries prefer to contact customers directly because they fear customers won't see in-store notices, particularly if they're not regular shoppers or buy their groceries online and pick them up curbside or get them delivered.
But grocers should ask themselves whether posting notices of Class I recalls would

reach some people who otherwise wouldn't find out. A multi-layered approach to communication can help.

The FDA needs to adopt this part of the Food Safety Modernization Act so that retailers are required to post recall notices in a consistent manner.

Consumers should do more to be informed, particularly if their home includes people with severe food allergies, or young children, senior citizens, pregnant women or others who are medically more vulnerable. Consumers should be proactive to make sure they have multiple ways to find out about recalls through their grocers, free apps, government alerts and news alerts.

Here are several tips for consumers.

The FDA should "create a culture of recalls being a real emergency," Chapman said. The AFDO report also noted there's a "lack of urgency to notify states of a pending recall and request assistance" and that recall notices are sometimes "delayed or contain conflicting information."

In addition, the government should have one body that oversees the recall process from start to finish, Chapman said. "It would be phenomenal if we had one agency," not all of the state and local ones that each have a piece. "It would be a radical change."

The FDA in the past asked the non-profit STOP to create a workgroup focusing on recall process improvement. The communication is only one part of it.

"There is no one agency, stakeholder or node in the food chain that controls these processes," STOP said. "An effective recall of a product means that a risky item has been rapidly identified, traced, and communicated about to downstream buyers and, ultimately, to consumers.

"Our current recall processes have evolved into a patchwork of approaches … To be more effective, recalls must be quicker, more coordinated, better utilize technology," STOP said, "and ensure that consumers better understand and act in response to recall communications by disposing of or returning recalled products."

APPENDIX

STORE/CHAIN	# OF STORES	STATES	CUSTOMER NOTIFICATION	COMMENTS
Acme (Albertsons)	About 160	Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania	Email within one business day	At Albertsons Companies, the health and safety of our customers is of the highest priority, and a key component of that is ensuring that our customers are promptly notified of food recalls, often well before the FDA posts a notification on its website. As such, Albertsons utilizes multiple methods for consumer notification.
Albertsons	About 390 Albertsons among 2,250 total under parent	Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Louisiana, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wyoming	Email within one business day	At Albertsons Companies, the health and safety of our customers is of the highest priority, and a key component of that is ensuring that our customers are promptly notified of food recalls, often well before the FDA posts a notification on its website. As such, Albertsons utilizes multiple methods for consumer notification.
Aldi	About 2,200	38 states	Company website	In addition to visiting this page for recall announcements or updates, ALDI shoppers can access more information at http://www.recalls.gov or the CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission) at http://www.CPSC.gov.
Amazon	Online	Online	Email	We monitor public recall alert websites. We also learn of recalls from manufacturers and sellers. When we learn of a recall, we stop all impacted product offerings and hold any related stock in our Fulfillment Centers. We also contact customers that bought such products and sellers that may have offered such products, to tell them about the recall.
BJ's Wholesale Club	About 220	Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia	Company website	BJ's believes in keeping consumers informed on product recalls and other important news.
Brookshire's	About 180	4 states: Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas	Company website	Didn't respond.
Circle K/Holiday (Couche-Tard)	About 7,100	47 states	Unknown; company didn't respond; no information found on Circle K website or parent site.	Didn't respond. No recall or notification information on its website.
Costco	About 570	47 states	Automated phone calls, emails	Notifications go out as soon as Costco is made aware of a problem. Oftentimes this happens before a recall is even announced by the FDA, USDA, or CPSC. We know what the right thing to do is and we do it.
CVS	About 9,900	49 states	Unknown; company responded but didn't provide information.	Company gets timely updates from suppliers.
Dollar General	About 17,300	46 states	Company website	No additional information provided on website.
Food Lion	About 1,100	10 states: Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia	Emails	We are able to identify customers who purchased the affected product if they used their Food Lion MVP Customer Rewards account to make the purchase and have a valid email associated with their account.
Giant Eagle	About 470	5 states: Indiana, Ohio, Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia.	Automated phone calls	The safety of our Team Members and guests is always our top priority. When a product is recalled due to an imminent health risk, guest notification – primarily via our automated phone call method and posting on our GiantEagle.com website -- is an important part of our recall process.
Giant Food	About 190	3 states: Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and Washington DC	Automated phone calls	We notify customers of all Class I recalls.
Grocery Outlet	About 400	7 states: California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Pennsylvania and New Jersey	Social media	No information found on website.
H-E-B	About 350 in US	Texas	Company website	Consumers can sign up to receive email updates from the H-E-B newsroom.
Hannaford	About 180	5 states: Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont	Emails	We notify customers of all Class I recalls.
Harris Teeter	About 250	7 states and Washington DC: Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia	Automated phone calls	Yes, we have an internal policy in place to notify customers when products sold in stores are recalled. We notify customers in the event of Class I recalls ... once all relevant information related to the recall has been obtained. This allows us to communicate to customers effectively and efficiently and notify them of recalled product to maintain consumer safety.
Houchens Markets	About 330	14 states	Unknown; company didn't respond; no information found on website.	None found
Hy-Vee	About 280	8 Midwestern states: Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wisconsin	Company website	Some recall information provided on website.
IGA	About 800	More than 40 states	Unknown; company didn't respond; no information found on website.	None found.

Ingles Market	About 200	orgia, North Carolina, South Carolin	Company website and social media	Company's Facebook page has more than 120,000 followers.
Jewel-Osco	About 190	Indiana, Illinois, Iowa	Emails	At Albertsons Companies, the health and safety of our customers is of the highest priority, and a key component of that is ensuring that our customers are promptly notified of food recalls, often well before the FDA posts a notification on its website. As such, Albertsons utilizes multiple methods for consumer notification:
Kroger	About 2,700	35 states	Automated phone calls and receipt tape messages.	We have an internal policy in place to notify customers when products sold in stores are recalled. We notify customers in the event of Class I recalls ... once all relevant information related to the recall has been obtained. This allows us to communicate to customers effectively and efficiently and notify them of recalled product to maintain consumer safety.
Meijer	About 260	6 states: Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin.	Company website	At Meijer, our primary concern is the health and safety of our customers. The list below details recent items that have been recalled or voluntarily withdrawn. It may also include product safety alerts and information. For further information about product recalls and safety information, please visit the web site www.recalls.gov.
Piggly Wiggly	About 500	17 states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia	Unknown; company declined comment; no information found on website.	This is a franchise owner business and C&S Wholesale Grocers only owns certain regions. Company declined comment.
Price Chopper	About 130	Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont,	Phone calls and website	In addition to phone calls, "whenever a manufacturer or the government takes action on a product and initiates a recall due to some unsafe issue, we will list them on this page for your referral."
Publix	About 1,300	7 states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia.	Company website	We take our responsibility to for our customers' safety very seriously. We vigilantly monitor regulatory agencies, so we're among the first to know when a product recall or food safety warning is issued. If a recall or warning occurs, we immediately alert store locations to remove the product from the shelves (if sold there). We post details here on Publix.com to keep you informed.
Ralph's	About 190	California	Automated phone calls	Yes, we have an internal policy in place to notify customers when products sold in stores are recalled. We notify customers in the event of Class I recalls as required by regulatory authorities once all relevant information related to the recall has been obtained. This allows us to communicate to customers effectively and efficiently and notify them of recalled product to maintain consumer safety.
Rite Aid	About 2,500	18 states: California Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia and Washington	Unknown; company didn't respond. No information on food recalls found on website or product recalls page.	No information on food recalls found on website or product recalls page.
Roundy's (Pick 'n Save, Copps, Metro Market and Mariano's)	About 160	Wisconsin and Illinois	Automated phone calls	Yes, we have an internal policy in place to notify customers when products sold in stores are recalled. We notify customers in the event of Class I recalls as required by regulatory authorities once all relevant information related to the recall has been obtained. This allows us to communicate to customers effectively and efficiently and notify them of recalled product to maintain consumer safety.
Safeway	About 900	17 states and Washington DC: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington and Wyoming	Emails	At Albertsons Companies, the health and safety of our customers is of the highest priority, and a key component of that is ensuring that our customers are promptly notified of food recalls, often well before the FDA posts a notification on its website. As such, Albertsons utilizes multiple methods for consumer notification:
Sam's Club	About 600	45 states	Emails	All shoppers are members, so we have everyone's emails.
Save Mart (Lucky California, FoodMaxx)	About 200	More than 200 stores. 191 are in California. A handful are in Nevada.	Company website	Recalls listed on website
Save-A-Lot	About 900	32 states	Unknown; company didn't respond. No information found on website.	No recall information found on website.
Shoprite	About 300	6 states: Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Maryland, Pennsylvania	Automated calls and emails	Customer health and safety is always a priority at ShopRite, we make sure customers are notified promptly when there is a Class I product recall.
Smart & Final	About 250	California, Nevada and Arizona	Company website	Recalls listed on website

Smith's Food and Drug (Kroger)	About 140	7 states: Arizona, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming	Automated phone calls and receipt tape messages.	We have an internal policy in place to notify customers when products sold in stores are recalled. We notify customers in the event of Class I recalls ... once all relevant information related to the recall has been obtained. This allows us to communicate to customers effectively and efficiently and notify them of recalled product to maintain consumer safety.
SpartanNash (Family Fare, Martin's Super Markets and D&W Fresh Market)	About 150	9 states: Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin	Company website	Lists current recall notes by store.
Sprouts Famers Market	About 370	23 states: Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia and Washington.	Company website	Safety is our top priority! Sprouts is committed to providing product safety updates for our guests, a promise we take very seriously. In the event that a product recall should occur, we will list current information and updates here.
Stater Bros. Market	About 170	California	Company website. Can subscribe to online community for emails about various topics.	Can subscribe to online community for emails about various topics.
Stop & Shop	About 420	5 states: Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York and New Jersey	Automated phone calls and post to company website.	We notify customers of all Class I recalls.
Target	About 1,900	50 states	Company website	At Target, our purpose is to help all families discover the joy of everyday life. It is who we are, how we work, and what we value. Our guests, your safety, is our highest priority. For this reason, we maintain a comprehensive list of our recalled products.
Tops	About 160	3 states: New York, Pennsylvania and Vermont	Automated phone calls	We are able to notify our customers because we can see who purchased the items through our TOPS BonusPlus program. When they scan their Tops BonusPlus Card when they check out, it keeps track in our system of all of their purchases so we can easily track items when a recall takes place.
Trader Joe's	About 530	42 states: All except Alaska, Hawaii, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wyoming	Emails	Our recall-related communications go well beyond regulatory requirements: we share news through in-store signs, on our website, and through email alerts. Only consumers who have a purchase history that includes the recalled product are notified.
Vons	About 200	Nearly all in California; a handful in Nevada	Emails	At Albertsons Companies, the health and safety of our customers is of the highest priority, and a key component of that is ensuring that our customers are promptly notified of food recalls, often well before the FDA posts a notification on its website. As such, Albertsons utilizes multiple methods for consumer notification:
Walgreens	About 9,000	50 states	Company website	This page captures recall notifications issued by government agencies and manufacturers for certain products sold to consumers at Walgreens. The following Walgreens recall list is not comprehensive, but specifically identifies Walgreens and Walgreens Boots Alliance owned brand OTC (over-the-counter) drug and general merchandise products sold in Walgreens stores.
Walmart	About 4,700	50 states	Emails to online customers	Customers opt-in to notifications automatically when buying online.
Weis Markets	About 200	7 states: Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia	Automated phone calls; company website	Not only is food safety a concern for Weis Markets, it is a priority from our corporate offices to our warehouses so fresh food is always a guarantee for our customers. ... We let our customers know about recalls when they happen, so you can be sure we are giving you and your family quality food every day.
Whole Foods	About 500	44 states: All except Alaska, Delaware, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, /est Virginia	Emails	Email through Prime Membership. Customers can receive email alerts by purchasing online or by scanning their Prime QR code for each in-store transaction.
Winn-Dixie	About 500	5 states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi	Emails and texts and company website	Customers are automatically enrolled for recall notifications when they have our loyalty program. We reference transactional data to ensure we know every store in which a recalled item was purchased, and we can additionally narrow down the purchase by person using data from our store loyalty program.