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Minnesota Food Safety Recall – Communication Model

Introduction

The Food Distribution Program in Minnesota is demand based. Recipient Agencies respond to Commodity Preference Surveys in the spring and fall, selecting from a variety of Regular USDA Packaged Commodities. When Minnesota orders and receives a truckload of commodities, every case is accounted for and has a specific destination. In addition commodities are received and distributed through regular commercial distribution channels.

Background

Refer to handout “Minnesota Recall Communication Model”.

- Define each Stakeholders role in a food safety recall:
 - o USDA role is to issue the Food Safety Recall and give instruction on the disposition of the recalled commodity.
 - o The State Agency role is to communicate and coordinate efforts
 - o The Commodity Warehouse, Distributors, and the SFA’s role in a Food Safety Recall is to Secure, Account for, and Submit Claims for reimbursement.
- Since school year 2001, Minnesota’s primary communication medium with all of the stakeholders has been through the use of email (listserv). SFA’s are required to maintain at least two email contacts that check their email daily. The warehouse and participating distributors are required to communicate electronically with the State Agency.

Minnesota has developed this communication model to assist with the goal of securing, accounting for, and submitting claims for reimbursement. Next, I want to share with you the communication methods, data collection elements, and the tools used to collect the data during a Food Safety Recall.

Referring to the Communication Model handout, you will notice that there are three rings of communication. Broadcast, Target Recipients, and Data Collection. Looking in the center, the Data Collection elements include identifying the Recipient Agency, the Location and Quantity, the Disposition of the Recall, and Pay Claims. The Communication Methods in the lower left hand corner include using Email, Facsimile, Phone, Media and On-site. The data collection tools include using a SQL – Query, E-mail Merge, Excel and an Access database.

Food Safety Recall Overview

Once a food safety recall is announced:

1° Broadcast Message - Secure

- A **Broadcast Message** is sent to all of the stakeholders via email. Additional communication tools may include Facsimile, Phone, Media, and if necessary On-Site. The goal of the Broadcast message is to enable stakeholders to identify and secure the Recalled commodity from distribution, production, and prevent its consumption. All of the stakeholders receive the Broadcast message.

2° Target Recipients - Account

- After the Broadcast Message has made all of the stakeholders aware of the Food Safety Recall; the State Agency begins to **Target Recipients to Account** for the Recalled commodity. With Minnesota's Demand Based Food Distribution model, we are able to **Query** the database for the SFA's involved in the recall. This allows us to compare the amount allocated to the reported amount on hand. The query of SFA's allows us to narrow the scope and **Target Recipients** of the recalled commodity.

3° Data Collection - Claim

- With the list of **Target Recipients** involved, we then start the **Data Collection** phase. To communicate to the **Target Recipients**, the State Agency uses the Email Merge feature available in Microsoft Word. Using the Email Merge feature allows us to individually communicate to the **Recipient Agencies** and instruct them on how to report the **Location and Quantity** of the Recalled commodity. The individual email message allows us to monitor SFA's receipt and response to the recall. The correspondence is then recorded in a Microsoft Access database. The Access database records the **Disposition** of the Recalled commodity, the claiming for **Reimbursable Costs**, and to facilitate the **Payment of Claims**.

Closing

- I know this is a brief overview of Minnesota Communication Model. But we must understand that one of the major shortcomings of any recall is whether or not all of the stakeholders have been informed of the recall and the necessary steps have been taken to secure the recalled food from being consumed.
- Last School Year Minnesota had three Food Safety Holds and/or Recalls. Using this communication model enabled the State Agency to send a **Broadcast Message** to secure the commodity from consumption. Identify **Target Recipients** to account for the commodity that was allocated to them and facilitate the **Data Collection** process for submitting claims.
- Process improvement will include surveying Distributors in 2004 on their Food Safety protocol for commercial products and identify activities that can streamline a Food Safety Recall.

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