FDA’s Reportable Food Registry to track food safety incidents

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The Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has developed a Web site or electronic portal for FDA-regulated establishments to report when there is a reasonable probability that an article of food will cause serious adverse health consequences.

This requirement is a result of legislation and took effect in September with the launch of the portal. Now, food company management must alert the FDA through the Reportable Food Registry (RFR) when a product is adulterated.

“All registered food facilities that manufacture, process, pack or hold food for human or animal consumption are required to submit a report for a food that can cause serious health consequences,” said Jason Young, quality management specialist for the Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center. “Dietary supplements and baby food are not required to report because they are already covered by other regulations.”

A reportable food is one that will cause serious adverse health consequences, which includes but is not limited to, bacterial contamination, allergen mislabeling or elevated levels of certain chemical components.

Parties that are responsible for submitting to the RFR must investigate the cause of the adulteration. Once the initial report is sent, then establishments are responsible to add supplemental information during the investigation and corrective action process.

The FDA authorities will be part of the process and expect the company to follow up with them as needed.

Federal, state or local government food safety officials also can use the RFR to voluntarily report information that came to them about a reportable food.

“When food establishment management identifies the problem at their establishment and the product has been placed on hold and not shipped, then they are not required to submit to the Reportable Food Registry,” Young said.

The RFR is not for consumers, food retailers or food service operators to report a problem or consumer complaint. In emergencies, these facilities will continue to call FDA at 301-443-1240.

“The electronic portal was developed to help the FDA identify and track food safety incidents to better target their inspections of the food processing industry,” Young said.

The FDA has developed a guidance document and instructions for completing the RFR at the electronic portal, which can be found at www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/GuidanceDocuments/FoodSafety/ucm180761.htm.

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