

5 Steps for Streamlining Recall Management

✓ Disseminate consumer notification

You will need to cooperate with the appropriate regulatory agency to develop and issue a public announcement to the media. An announcement that fulfills the regulatory agency's requirements will form the basis for any other notifications you create, including letters mailed directly to consumers in a warranty database. All forms of notification should be concisely written, provide consistent recall information and issue a clear call to action.

✓ Notify customers, retailers, consumers and vendors

Consumers should also be contacted individually about the recall. These target audiences can be notified in a number of ways, including news releases, online communications, confidential data registries, traceable direct deliveries, safety alerts and physician and retail communications. Notification is critical to ensure that your recall is effectively managed as quickly as possible.

✓ Preserve and file all communications to all consignees

All notifications should also be catalogued in order to monitor effectiveness. Documentation will also be helpful for compliance purposes when reporting to the regulatory agency or corporate stakeholders.

✓ Quickly pull affected products from retailers

When recalls get too large or complicated, retrieval field forces can be used to conduct site visits and remove affected products from retail shelves. Timeliness is essential when it comes to brand preservation and customer goodwill. If for any reason it appears that traditional removal from the marketplace will be slow or incomplete, using retrieval services can help speed the process, minimize errors and protect the brand from further damage.

Using retrieval services has another advantage: preserving the relationship between manufacturers and retailers. Recalls are a serious inconvenience for all parties involved, and providing a retrieval field force is a value-added service that the manufacturer can offer to help retailers, ensuring that the logistics of the recall are executed efficiently and with minimal inconvenience.

✓ Document all product retrieval efforts

When monitoring the recall process, regulators rely on their own recall documentation of consumer complaints, effectiveness checks and industry studies to determine whether a company has achieved recall effectiveness and compliance. As a manufacturer or retailer managing a recall, you need to provide regulators with all the recall documentation you can gather to support your request to close out the recall as soon as possible. A vast number of data points must be tracked in your recall documentation—from recall notices sent, phone calls received and locations visited to remedies provided to consumers.

Documentation is also key to preventing future litigation and increased recall costs. Detailed records of each step in the recall process and every action taken to complete the recall must be logged to meet the reporting guidelines of regulatory agencies and to prepare future litigation.

With this in mind, your legal team should receive all recall documentation from the consumer notification process and call centre records. With this information in hand, the lawyers can mine the data for potential litigation threats, manage the appropriate follow-up and mitigate risk before lawsuits are filed.