

FDA launches Web page on recalled foods

The agency's new site compiles recall notices in a searchable table, displaying information on recalls since 2009. The goal is to make navigation easier for consumers.

The task of finding consumer information about recalled food products grew a bit easier with the launch of a Food and Drug Administration website that compiles recall notices in a searchable table.

The Web page displays information on recalls since 2009 by date, product brand name, product description, the reason for the recall and the firm doing the recalling. It also includes an image of the product label and links to the press release on each recall -- which generally contain additional information.

The redesign was mandated by the food safety law signed by President Obama in January. The law also gives FDA the power -- as yet unused -- to order food recalls on its own authority instead of depending on industry cooperation.

Recalls, "mandatory or otherwise, are serious and we must do everything possible to make it easier for people to know about these recalls so they can take all appropriate steps to protect themselves and their families," Mike Taylor, FDA Deputy Commissioner for Foods, said in a statement.

The earlier iteration of the page presented recall information in a jumble of text and it wasn't always in a single spot, said Nancy Donley, president of the Chicago-based food safety group Safe Tables Our Priority, one of several consumer and food industry organizations consulted by FDA in designing the web page.

"You had to go to a couple of different places. The information is now in one place. It's a lot easier to navigate and consumers get a more complete picture," Donley said.

As an added feature, the Web page aggregates recalls across all other areas regulated by the FDA including drugs, biologics, veterinary products and medical devices.

The FDA "felt that was better for consumers, they go to that one recall page and then can redirect themselves from there," said agency spokesman Doug Karas.