

Blue Plastic Set To Solve Food Contamination Recalls

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A ?Blue? Plastic Material May Eliminate Many Food Recalls

So far, 2016 has seen some of the largest food recalls by large food processors. Significant recalls of poultry specifically seem to have occurred several times this year. The interesting part is that the root cause of many of these kinds of recalls is preventable, Industrial Plastic Supply, Inc. says. The specific recalls listed below are labeled as possible plastic contamination in the food product.

The company states that these food processors should consider some simple steps that can almost totally eliminate these kinds of contaminates from migrating into their products.

All food processors are using materials that are FDA approved; this includes plastic materials for conveyor parts and moving components. One issue is that many processors use the cheapest available approved materials. This means that many producers are using a natural (white) Acetal, HDPE, UHMW or other white approved plastic material. While these materials are safe and approved, after long use some of these parts may break or wear to the point where parts can crack and small parts can get into the food processing system.

Eliminating The Root Cause

The first rather easy step would be to continue to use the same quality FDA approved material, but to source the Blue colored version of this same approved material. Changing to a vivid Blue material will be simple to visually detect should a piece break free.

Detectable Plastics And How They Can Help

The next upgrade to the FDA-approved material is a plastic product that has additives that make it possible for detection. These FDA-approved plastics are now detectable by the X-ray or metal detection equipment that is already in use in these food lines. These high performance plastic materials that are ?detectable? do cost more, but the small additional investment in the correct material will certainly cost less than the recent 4.5 million pound poultry recall, the company says.

Back in September 2016, Tyson Foods announced a recall of 130,000 pounds of chicken nuggets for ?foreign materials? in the packaged product: http://www.cnn.com/2016/09/27/health/tyson-chicken-nugget-plastic-recall/.

"According to Tyson Foods, the plastic material ranged in size from 21mm in length and 6.5mm in diameter and may have come from a round, hard plastic rod used to connect a plastic transfer belt. The firm said the products pass through a metal detector, but the plastic is not detectable to this technology," the USDA recall announcement said.

This could have been prevented with the use of Detectable Plastics, the company states. These materials have been available for over 6 years. Industrial Plastic Supply, Inc. of Anaheim, CA, says they have been supplying the FDA approved Metal Detectable UHMW rod since early 2010. The plastic manufacturers have taken on the challenge of developing materials that can be detected by multiple methods. There are now several FDA-approved plastic materials produced in visual Blue; these included UHMW, Acetal, Polyester and now PEEK. Several grades of plastic materials are now available in a ?triple detection? version, this makes the plastic material detectable in 3 ways, visually due to the vivid Blue color, and also with the additives that make them Metal detectable and X-Ray detectable. One of the most promising detectable plastics is Ensinger Plastics new Hydex 4101 UD Blue, an FDA approved Polyester material that is has the triple detection properties.

Back in April and May of 2016, Pilgrim?s Pride had a recall totaling 5,550,904 pounds of chicken products do to possible contamination of foreign matter: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/recalls-and-public-health-alerts/recall-case-archive/archive/2016/recall-027-2016-release-exp3.

Evaluating the cost of these huge food recalls

The estimated cost is staggering, and who ultimately is saddled with these costs is the question most asked, says the company. The answer is the costs are passed on to the consumer. To recall these huge quantities of product takes a large number of people to identify and locate the possibly contaminated batches of food. Then begins the tedious process of notification; this includes notifying the wholesalers, distributors, markets and consumers. The process takes time to implement, with hopes to recall all the suspected lots or batches of food. The USDA is normally notified as one more step to notify the public.

Comparing costs it to change to a detectable plastic

The expense has many variables, including type of material, design and physical property considerations. In most cases, simply changing from a Natural version of a specific plastic to a Blue or Detectable material does not require any other changes.

Here is the cost comparison of these materials, according to experts. Changing from a current used material of an FDA approved grade of Natural Acetal rod (a popular performance plastic used in food processing). A standard industry price for this material would be approximately $2.00 - $2.75 per linear foot. Converting this Natural Acetal to the Bright Blue FDA approved grade of Acetal Rod would cost about $3.50 - $4.00 per foot. Upgrading to a Metal and X-ray detectable FDA grade of Blue Acetal plastic rod would cost in the range of $8.25 - $9.00 per foot.

While these cost differences are not small, the company states, they are neglagable in comparison to a recall of 100,000 pounds of chicken and poultry. The company says to consider the upgrade an inexpensive insurance policy against these kinds of monster recalls.

Reference Articles:

Tyson Recalls

Oct 15, 2016 - 1,148 pounds:

http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/recalls-and-public-health-alerts/recall-case-archive/archive/2016/recall-096-2016-release

Sept 27, 2016 ? 130,000 pounds: http://www.cnn.com/2016/09/27/health/tyson-chicken-nugget-plastic-recall/

Pilgrim?s Pride

May 13, 2016 ? 5,550,904 pounds: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/recalls-and-public-health-alerts/recall-case-archive/archive/2016/recall-027-2016-release-exp3

Michigan Turkey Producers

Oct 15, 2016 ? 54,011 pounds:

http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/recalls-and-public-health-alerts/recall-case-archive/archive/2016/recall-097-2016-release

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Industrial Plastic Supply, Inc.

Industrial Plastic Supply, Inc. has been serving the Engineering and Mechanical Plastic Sheet, Rod and Tube market for over 40 Years. With the largest inventory of in stock plastics in the Western United States.

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