

WHITE PAPER

Food Safety Concerns and Packaging

FPA-SAFE Audit Participation

Introduction

Food safety is a topic that concerns and affects everyone. Food manufacturers, packaging materials suppliers, governmental agencies, regulatory bodies and consumers, among others, have a vested interest in the protection of the food supply. Food safety is at the core of health and well-being on a worldwide basis.

The safety of what the world eats is a multi-faceted issue as well. From concerns with basic cleanliness, proper food processing and handling techniques, proper packaging and restaurant preparation, to issues like avian flu transmittal and/or deliberate acts of terrorism, food safety is more than ever a concern for the 21st century.

Influenced by the events of September 11, 2001, a number of laws were passed, including the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002. Title III of that act concerns “protecting safety and security of the food and drug supply.” Obviously the concerns about food safety and security reached new levels of public awareness in late 2001.

More recent surveys (Source: CMI Survey, 2006) suggest that 75% of Americans are concerned about food safety issues and that they pay close attention to food packaging. It is these safety concerns regarding our food supply that have led to additional steps being taken to ensure food protection. One of the key actions being taken is the auditing of various companies involved in the food industry supply chain. The Food Products Association is a perfect example of this next level of activity, with their FPA SAFE (Supplier Audits for Food Excellence) audit program. As of 2005, Weatherchem is a participant in the FPA-SAFE Program.

FPA-SAFE Auditing

The FPA-SAFE auditing program began in 2001 with most of the large food companies in North America participating to meet the safety concerns of the food industry. The food companies wanted an audit with a strong focus on quality systems and food safety/quality. This year the FPA-SAFE organization developed an audit checklist specifically for packaging manufacturers, like Weatherchem.

A partial list of the food companies that created the SAFE program includes:

- Agrilink Foods Inc. (now Birds Eye)
- Borden Foods Corp.
- Campbell Soup Co.
- ConAgra Grocery Products Co.
- Del Monte Foods Co.
- Dole Foods Co.
- General Mills
- H.J.Heinz Co. North America
- Hershey Foods Corp.
- Hormel Foods Corp.
- Kraft Foods Inc.
- Nestle' USA, Inc.
- The Proctor & Gamble Company
- Tyson Foods
- Welch Foods, Inc.

While this is not the complete list of the original companies involved, this gives a clear indication of the types of companies and the level of importance placed on food safety. Today, SAFE not only has the involvement of the food processors, but also retailers, trade associations, and food service companies both national and international. Some of the companies participating on the SAFE Operation Committee include: Safeway, Kroger, Costco, Target, Pepsico Beverages and Food, Wrigley, Sysco, the Corn Refiners Association, AIB, McDonald's Corporation and many others.

Clearly the FPA-SAFE program, with its more than 300 auditors around the world, is a state-of-the-art food safety auditing program covering six audit standards: Food Safety, Primary Packaging, Aseptic, Warehouse and Distribution, Spice and Dairy.

Weatherchem and the FPA-SAFE Program

As a manufacturer of controlled dispensing closure systems used for dry foods, vitamins and supplements and many other products and markets, Weatherchem is pleased to be a participant in the FPA-SAFE auditing program. We are strong proponents of maintaining high levels of food safety and security throughout the food supply chain.

While Weatherchem has long had its own quality and safety programs in place, there were a few revisions and changes that we made in order to be an active participant in the SAFE program.

As with most companies we have many business visitors to our facility on any given day. With participation in the audit program we changed and strengthened our policies regarding facility access. Any visitors to our plant must comply with FPA-SAFE guidelines before any access is granted to the manufacturing facility.

Another key area Weatherchem addressed concerns chemicals and their usage and storage within our facility. We instituted a Chemical Tracking System in our operation. This system provides the name of every chemical that is in our facility, as well as the usage of each those chemicals. In addition, and maybe most importantly, the system allows us to determine where in our facility these chemicals are permitted to be located.

HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point)

When applying HACCP to Weatherchem, we reviewed our entire product flow process, looking for any existing or potential hazards. We reviewed areas where these three types of potential hazards might have been present:

- Chemical Hazards
- Physical Hazards
- Biological Hazards

When we performed the HACCP analysis on each of the three types of hazards, we found no hazardous control points that needed monitoring.

Addressing the Issues

One issue that we did address as part of the FPA-SAFE process centered on the recall system the process required. The audit process requires that a company must have recall capabilities and traceability within the United States within a two-hour time period. At Weatherchem there are two facets to the recall process. “Upstream” recall addresses items such as color and resin traceability. “Downstream” recall refers to issues with shipped product traceability.

At Weatherchem we did of course have a recall system in place but it was largely a “paper” system that made it difficult to have all information ready and available within a two-hour time frame. To comply with FPA-SAFE audit requirements we instituted an electronic system that lets us have all of our information available to efficiently and quickly meet the two-hour audit time requirements.

Weatherchem – Providing Safe, Secure Products for our Customers

We recognize the importance of quality and safety as a member of the food safety supply chain. Our customers can have that extra level of confidence in knowing that their supplier of controlled dispensing closure systems is an eager and willing participant in the FPA-SAFE audit process. The level of concern in the world for the safety of what we eat and drink is not diminishing, and requires a continued high level of vigilance. At Weatherchem we will maintain our strong commitment to the safety and quality of our products, and along with many of the nation’s largest food processing companies, distributors, restaurants and trade associations we will continue to be a part of the FPA-SAFE audit process.



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