

Maple Leaf Foods Bartor Road Plant Investigation Media Backgrounder

Maple Leaf Foods voluntarily recalled 191 products produced at its Bartor Road facility from January 1, 2008, to present, as a precautionary measure after the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Public Health Agency of Canada concluded that the same *Listeria monocytogenes* strain identified in some Maple Leaf products was linked to the illness and loss of life of several Canadians.

- Listeria, like many bacteria, is pervasive in our environment. Combined with the fact that we routinely conduct ongoing sanitization to remove listeria bacteria, this made the investigation into the source of contamination extremely difficult.
- After careful study of the records, the physical plant, and product test results received from the CFIA, internal and external experts have concluded the most likely source of root cause of the listeria contamination at the Bartor Road plant.
- We believe that the most likely source was deep inside the mechanical components of two identical slicing machines.
- Our equipment sanitization process was completed in accordance with (in some cases exceeding) recommended manufacturer's cleaning protocols on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. However, upon full disassembly, areas were found deep inside the slicing equipment where bacteria may have accumulated. Other secondary environmental factors, including the location of a service elevator, floor drain and tote bins, may also have been contributing factors.

Actions at the Bartor Road Plant:

- Maple Leaf voluntarily shut down all operations at its Bartor Road plant on August 20th, 2008. Since then we have been conducting a comprehensive investigation and deep sanitization of the plant, working in close consultation with the CFIA.
- All products were removed from the facility and all machinery disassembled to allow access to internal components deep within the equipment for supplementary sanitation. This represents sanitation above usual standards and was necessary as there was no immediate cause found for the product contamination.
- A specialized industrial contractor was retained to wash and sanitize using a triple application/sanitization method. The plant has undergone four complete cleaning/sanitization cycles, well beyond normal cleaning practices, under the supervision of external microbiologists and sanitation experts.
- The slicing equipment on the two lines involved (8 and 9) has been completely torn down, deep cleaned four times, tested multiple times and reassembled. All remaining lines in the plant have been deep cleaned and reassembled.

- The effectiveness of all stages of sanitation has been verified through intensified tear-downs and swabbing, involving over 1,000 tests for listeria from various points on all production lines and throughout the plant.
- We have comprehensively inspected all 84 slicing machines in the Maple Leaf network. Fourteen of these are from the same manufacturer as the Bartor Road slicing machines. They have all been disassembled, deep sanitized and swab tested, and we will undergo ongoing deep sanitization as part of our cleaning protocols. All of our slicing equipment is undergoing comprehensive deep cleaning.
- We have increased the depth and frequency of our already rigorous testing and sanitation procedures across our plants.
- We have also completed other operational improvements, including enhanced drain sanitation protocols and additional food safety training, including training specific to listeria, with our employees to supplement the existing procedures that were already in place. Future use of the elevators near production lines will also be strictly curtailed.
- When the plant starts up, no products will be released until the CFIA and Maple Leaf are fully satisfied that our food safety protocols are effective. This will include test runs of products before any new product is distributed from the plant.

Product Recall and Consumer Support:

- We acted immediately and pre-emptively in response to put consumers first. This included a voluntary recall of ALL products produced at the Bartor Road plant from January 1, 2008, to present, well beyond the two lines where the contaminated product was produced. This involved 191 products, one of the largest recalls in Canada.
- Subsequent tests to date on recalled products show no listeria contamination was present in any products other than those produced on lines 8 and 9.
- All products at the retail level have been removed from store shelves, with visual inspections of customer shelves undertaken by our sales team.
- We recalled foodservice product from customers and distribution warehouses, which included notifying and contacting over 9,000 foodservice end-user customers.
- Our customers have responded with outstanding co-operation and support, quickly removing affected products and posting signs notifying consumers of their actions.
- We have responded to approximately 50,000 calls to date, providing information and support to our consumers.