



Extension News Column

*University of Alaska Fairbanks, Cooperative Extension Service, www.uaf.edu/ces/
fycit@uaf.edu, 907-474-5211, FAX 907-474-6885*

Contact: Debbie Carter, information officer, 907-474-5406, dscarter@alaska.edu

Author: Roxie Dinstel, Tanana District Extension Faculty, HHFD, 474-2426, rrdinstel@alaska.edu

Re: CES column for Our Town, Tuesday, April 19, 2011

When you're buying and using products, safety comes first. However, recalls have become commonplace in the news. Whether it is the recent problems with Toyota vehicles or spinach contaminated with salmonella, the media does their best to let us know what could be harmful to our health. The question is: do we listen?

Two of the most famous recalls in history were the Ford Pinto (for possible gas tank fires) and Firestone tires that the government said were faulty. Owners of the 1 million Pintos were offered free repairs and Firestone offered free tires to replace the faulty ones. After two years, more than 1/3 of the cars hadn't come in for repairs and almost half of the tires hadn't been returned. The answer to the question is: no, we don't listen.

The same can be said for all those Toyotas on the road. Ten million cars were covered by the recall, but information from October, 2010 said that about half that number had come in.

I must admit that sometimes my eyes just glaze over as I hear of another recall. There are so many of them and often are regionally based—the food they are recalling isn't sold in Alaska. Who calls for the recall and keeps up with these products?

If it is a consumer good, the Consumer Products Safety Commission is in charge; with motor vehicles, it is the National Highway Traffic Safety Commission. Environmental products are covered by the Environmental Products Administration (EPA) and the Coast Guard holds sway on boats. Medicine and cosmetics are governed by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) and food is covered by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) or the FDA or even the Center for Disease Control. Who can keep it all straight?

There is a website to help you out with this problem, www.recalls.gov. To provide better service in alerting the American people to unsafe, hazardous or defective products, six federal agencies with vastly different jurisdictions have joined together to create www.recalls.gov -- a "one stop shop" for U.S. Government recalls.

There is a simple tab system that allows you to check for recalls from each of these federal agencies. If you are interested in buying a car seat for your child, you can check out what has been recalled. Perhaps you heard the end of a news report and want to know exactly what product was recalled. The answer lies on this website. It is easy to navigate and is continually updated by the appropriate agencies.

And now, with all the smart phones in use, you can even get this information through the phone. There's an app for that--a product recalls application will give you vital safety information whenever and wherever you need it - right on your mobile phone, thanks to the [RECALLS.GOV mobile application](#).

Whether you're at your child's day care center or a yard sale, whether you're at a store or at home, you can now type a product's name into your phone and learn immediately whether that product has been recalled because of a safety concern. You can also see photos of recalled products and learn what to do with recalled products in your homes.

No matter if you use the website or the mobile phone app, safety is important. Be sure to keep up with current recalls.

Roxie Rodgers Dinstel is a professor of extension on the Tanana District Extension Faculty. Questions or column requests can be e-mailed to her at rrdinstel@alaska.edu