

Kroger uses technology to stop flow of recalled items

March 11 2009, By Barry Shlachter

Supermarkets across the country cleared the shelves of more than 2,600 items recalled after salmonella contamination was found in some products made by the Peanut Corp. of America.

But [Kroger](#), the nation's second-largest [food retailer](#), has gone a big step further than most - harnessing [electronic gadgetry](#) and databases of consumer shopping histories to keep [tainted goods](#) from being sold or consumed.

As in past recalls, the first step was removing flagged items from shelves, leaving behind tags in both English and Spanish informing customers the products had been pulled because of the salmonella threat, said Rebecca King, a Kroger spokeswoman.

The chain then made sure that mis-shelved products picked up elsewhere in the store couldn't be scanned by cashiers or at self-checkout counters.

"At an Irving store, I witnessed a customer in line ahead of me trying to buy protein bars," King said. "But the screen said: 'Item under recall. Do not sell.'"

Then someone in Kroger's consumer-safety department came up with the idea of using the chain's technology in two more ways: Shoppers holding the Kroger Plus card who had previously purchased any of the recalled items would receive a personalized message on their cash register receipt tape telling them to dispose of those products. The

warning is repeated on their next visit.

The customer also receives an interactive voice response call from an automatic dialing system, informing them to dispose of items they purchased because of the salmonella list, King said.

To get a refund, customers can take the recalled product back to the store with no receipt necessary. If the item was thrown out, a receipt is required, she said.

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