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Cargill recalls 1 million pounds of beef

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The giant agribusiness company Cargill Inc. said Saturday it is recalling more than 1 million pounds of ground beef distributed in 10 states that may be contaminated with E. coli bacteria.

The ground beef was produced between Oct. 8 and Oct. 11 at Cargill Meat Solutions' plant in Wyalusing, Pa. and distributed to retailers across the country. They include Giant, Shop Rite, Stop & Shop, Wegmans and Weis.

A spokeswoman for Cargill said 10 states in the East are included in the recall — Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

Cargill learned the meat may be contaminated after the Agriculture Department found a problem with a sample of the beef produced on Oct. 8, the company said. The bacteria is E. coli O157:H7.

"No illnesses have been associated with this product," said John Keating, president of Cargill Regional Beef, said in a statement. "We are working closely with the USDA to remove this product from the marketplace."

E. coli is harbored in the intestines of cattle. Improper butchering and processing can cause the E. coli to get onto meat. Thorough cooking, to at least 160 degrees internal temperature, can destroy the bacteria.

E. coli O157:H7 is a potentially deadly bacterium that can cause bloody diarrhea and dehydration. The very young, seniors and people with compromised immune systems are the most susceptible to E. coli.

Cargill Meat Solutions, based in Wichita, is the umbrella organization of Cargill's beef, pork and turkey businesses.

The Wyalusing plant produces 200 million pounds of ground beef annually.

Cargill Inc., based in Wayzata, Minn., is one of the nation's largest privately held companies. It makes food ingredients, moves commodities around the world and runs financial commodities trading businesses.

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