Press releases involving shellfish products are issued for illness outbreaks as described in the NSSP-MO Chapter II.@.01 A., recalls and shellfish related public health events such as biotoxin or Harmful Algal Blooms. Press releases are reserved for situations where recalls have not been adequate in removing the product from commerce. Additional public guidance for issuing public warnings can be found in Title 21 CFR, Part 7. The purpose of press releases is to:

1. Alert the public that a product being recalled presents a serious hazard to health.
2. Optimize public messaging during a food borne illness outbreak of regional or national significance linked to shellfish by sharing critical information between the ISSC, FDA and participating states/U.S. territories prior to FDA or the affected state/territory making a public announcement. This agreement does not supersede other channels of communication or systems of notification with respective state authorities, e.g., agency heads.
3. Complement other networks of information sharing and to assist agency heads/program administrators and communication specialists in the formulation of appropriate public messages through cooperation between federal and state partners.

The Press release protocol will be followed when a food borne illness outbreak has been determined to be epidemiologically associated with shellfish consumption and implicated product has the likelihood of having been transported across State lines.

In determining whether a public announcement is warranted, the federal and/or state Agency will consider the following:

1. The amount of product that is subject to a recall;
2. The length of time that has transpired between the last date of illness onset and when an outbreak is definitely identified by the state department of health;
3. The amount of product that is still likely to be available in the market;
4. The effectiveness of the initiated state recall, including the results of any recall effectiveness checks that have been conducted;
5. The degree and timeliness of the recall information being provided to ISSC states who received implicated product.
6. Consider the likelihood of the product having been incorporated into another product form and whether the pathogen of concern is still a concern in that product form.

Press releases can cause confusion at the consumer level. The following steps should be taken to improve the effectiveness of press releases.

1. Press releases should be coordinated with involved shellfish control authorities prior to release.

2. Press releases should be as specific as possible regarding the product type and labeling, harvest location and date, and the nature of the risk involved,.
3. Press releases should be restricted to those states/countries where the product is known to have been delivered, or where there is a reasonable likelihood that such product may have been delivered.
4. Press releases should instruct the consumer as to what steps to take with the contaminated product (how to dispose or return to dealer/store)
5. A copy of any press release issued should be sent (with in 24 hours of or concurrent with issuance) to all ISSC members, ISSC Executive Board, FDA CFSAN and the Regional Shellfish Specialists contacts that can be found at the end of the Interstate Certified Shellfish Shippers List.

If the Federal or State agencies conclude that a public announcement is warranted, the FDA Public Affairs office will work with the PIO(s) of the affect state(s) to ensure the public messaging is accurate and provides pertinent information. The ISSC Executive Director, in advance of said announcement, will make every effort to notify affected ISSC members, providing as much information as is available.

The Agency with jurisdiction over the situation will notify all ISSC members of the upcoming announcement.

Information to be shared should include as much information as possible, but at a minimum, it should provide a rudimentary description of the situation, e. g., what is the message that is being presented to the public and the press, and how those interested in more information may receive it.

The PIOs of the affected state/territory and the FDA public affairs office will share news releases with the ISSC for posting on the ISSC's website.

The FDA does not ordinarily classify or audit Interstate Shellfish Shippers (ISS) product recalls where such actions have been, or are being, handled expeditiously and appropriately by the state(s). The FDA district office in which the recalling firm is located must be ensured that all states involved in an ISS plant's recall are participating in ensuring removal of the product from commerce and that, when appropriate, states issue warnings to protect the public health. In the event that FDA determines that the states are unable to effect the recall actions necessary, the agency will classify, publish, and audit the recall, including issuance of a public warning when indicated.