

**the polling company™, inc.** *for the Consumer Product Safety  
Commission  
“Recall Effectiveness”  
Dell Notebook Battery and Second Product (To-Be-Determined)  
Group Discussion Guide*

**Introduction & Explanation of Session (5 minutes)**

Ask each participant to introduce themselves to the group:

- Name
- Employment Status/Occupation: retired, full-time or part-time work, homemaker?
- Residence: How long have you lived in the Washington, D.C. area? Where are you from originally? What brought you here?
- Family: number of people in household; married, kids, grandchildren, children living at home?

**General Opinions (10 minutes)**

To begin, how up-to-date do you consider yourself to be on current events and issues facing your local area, the United States, and the world in general? What do you do, if anything, to keep up on news and media? What’s the biggest barrier for you in getting information about news and events?

Please pretend for a moment that you have just entered a new stage in your life, perhaps you got married, bought a home, became a parent, or started a new job. Assume you are going to be making some purchases of brand new products to go along with this change – where would you go for more information? (If respondents rely on Internet: Where would you go if you didn’t have a computer?) Would you confer with friends, family members, call a 1-800 number or expert, contact the company? Why? What would you ask them?

As a consumer, what is your greatest concern? What worries you most when you buy a product? Anything else?

What does the term “consumer safety” mean to you? How do you know when it exists? Is it blind faith? Some sort of tangible? Something you see or hear? Certain trusted brands? Do you know it by reading the instructions or going online to see if it has been recalled?

## **Product Safety Recall Behavior (80 minutes)**

### *Knowledge Testing – 10 minutes*

I'd like to switch topics now and ask if any of you have ever heard of the term "product recalls," sometimes called "product safety recalls?" How would you define this term to those who might be unfamiliar? Anything else?

*To be sure that we are all operating under the same set of facts, a "product recall" is the request that consumers return a product to the maker (manufacturer) for a new one, repair the product, or collect a refund due to the discovery of a potential safety hazard or because the product is defective.*

Based on this information, do you remember seeing, reading, or hearing anything in the media regarding product safety recalls? How long ago? What do you remember about what you saw or heard? Did you respond in any way to this information? If so, how did you respond?

### *Notification - 15 minutes*

We have asked you to come here today because you were sent a written product recall notice for the Dell notebook computer batteries (replace with name of second product). Is anyone familiar with the recall of the Dell batteries (replace with name of second product)? What do remember about it? Is this the first time for anyone having heard of the Dell battery recall (replace with name of second product)?

Do you remember receiving any information about it in the past? Where did you hear about or see it (probe: written notice, television/radio, newspaper, friends/family, website, etc.)?

What do you remember about the recall specifically? If you were to describe the recall notice to someone who knew nothing about the situation, how would you describe it?

*To be sure that we are all operating under the same set of facts, the Dell notebook computer batteries were recalled when it was discovered that the lithium-ion batteries in the computers were overheating, posing a direct hazard to users. Though the batteries were placed in the Dell notebook computers, the batteries themselves were manufactured through Sony Energy Devices Corp. of Japan. (Replace with information about second product recall)*

Thinking back to when you first heard about this recall, what was your initial reaction? What were your concerns and questions? How did you react?

Did the recall notice give you any instructions about what to do or how to handle the situation? What, if any, options were offered to you?

Were you aware or had you noticed your computers getting hot? If so, did you take any action to remedy the situation prior to receiving the notice? (Replace with question specific to second product).

*Pass out specific recall notice sent to participants directly from Dell (replace with recall notice of second product's manufacturer).* Do you recognize this notice? Have you ever seen it before? If so, where do you remember seeing it?

Thinking back to when you received this notice, did you actually read the letter? If so, did you read the entire notice or just a part of it? Why? If not, why did you decide not to read it? Anything else?

After you received this notice, what was your initial reaction/response? What were you doing when you received it? How did reading it make you feel: nervous, anxious, relieved, etc.?

I'd like you to think about this specific notice on a scale of one to five, with "one" being "very helpful" and "five" being "not at all helpful," how helpful was this notice in alerting you to the Dell notebook battery recall (replace with name of second product)?

What, if anything, did you need more information on or what questions did you still have? Did you search for more information? If so, where?

### Consumer Response - 35 minutes

By a show of hands, how many of you took some type of action after hearing about the Dell notebook battery recall (replace with name of second product)? Specifically, what did you do? (Mention the following if not discussed unprompted: returned computer? Contacted Dell and received a replacement battery? Used AC adapter and power cord instead of the battery to power computer? Threw the product away? Asked for recommendations from friend or family?) Anything else? (Replace with appropriate actions regarding second product).

*For those who DID NOT respond:*

Why did you choose to not take any action? Would you say that the Dell battery (replace with name of second product) recall itself or your own individual life circumstances at the time were the bigger reason for your decision NOT to take action?

Which of the following was the biggest reason for your decision not to take action: time/commitment, cost, safety was not a concern, or something else? Please explain.

Did you have any particular experience in the past that made you less inclined to respond to the recall?

Please finish this sentence: If I were to receive another recall notice tomorrow about ANY product I own, the one thing that would motivate me to respond is \_\_\_\_\_?

Probes: additional information in notice, more media attention, greater concern for family/friends, more convenient, etc.? Anything else?

*For those who DID respond:*

What motivated you to respond to the Dell battery (replace with name of second product) recall? What steps did you have to go through to complete this process? Did you act immediately after reading the notice or did you wait? If there was a delay, why didn't you act immediately?

What information was particularly important for you to know before you responded to the Dell battery (replace with name of second product) recall? Did you seek out any more information than what was in the letter? For example, did you look online (specify websites), in newspapers, talk to friends or family, contact manufacturer, local government, or retailer? How did you know where to go or where to look? Did you actually receive information that was helpful to you? What?

Did you talk to anyone else about the Dell battery (replace with name of second product) recall? If so, what did you say? Did you try to find others who may have received the notice? If so, why and how? Why was finding others who were in the same situation important to you?

What did the recall notice say to do about remedying the situation (probe: discontinue use, replace battery, eject battery/use a power cord, return the computer, throw computer away, etc.)? (Replace with appropriate actions for second recalled product).

Did you seek out the assistance of anyone to remedy the situation? If so, who? What was the final outcome? Were they helpful/unhelpful/other? Did they make it easier to take the necessary steps?

The recall specifically said that the batteries were overheating. What if the recall only said that the batteries were defective, and stopped working after a certain point? Would your reaction have been different? If so, how? If not, would you have reacted the same? (Replace with appropriate actions for second recalled product).

In general, how important is the specific reason for the recall to your decision of how to react? Why or why not?

After reading the Dell battery (replace with name of second product) recall, did you check if any other products you owned had been recalled? What motivated you to do this? Which products did you examine specifically? Why those and not others? Where/how did you check about other recalls?

Looking back, would you have done anything differently? If you were to have received information about a similar recall (such as for another electronic device) would you take the same action? Why or why not?

Did the recall affect your relationship with the retailer, product manufacturer, or some other company involved in the recall? Anything else?

Does a recall influence your impression about either Dell or Sony (replace with name of second product's manufacturer and a competitor)? After learning of the recall, which company do you have a worse impression of? Better? How so? In general, are you likely to have a more positive or more negative impression of Dell (replace with name of second product's manufacturer) after learning about the product recall, or does it make no difference? Why?

Are you more or less likely to buy a product from a manufacturer, such as Sony (replace with name of second product's competitor), that has issued a recall OR the retailer, such as the Dell store (replace with name of second product's manufacturer), or does it make any difference? Why?

Thinking more generally now, is this the first time you had ever responded to a recall? If not, do you typically respond to recalls? Describe the situation when you last responded. What was the product being recalled? Where did you find information about the recall? What was your initial reaction? What action did you take? What was the result?

#### Consumer Motivation - 20 minutes

I'd like to talk about 4 different scenarios that are typical of product recalls. For each one, please tell me whether you would be likely to comply with the recall in each case:  
(NOTE: 2-3 scenarios may be tested in each group, depending on time).

- 1.) A manufacturer sends out a recall saying that the slats could separate on a child's crib making it an entrapment hazard. The company is asking that you stop using the crib until you receive a repair kit and make the necessary repairs.
- 2.) A candle manufacturer has found that one of their \$8 candles poses a fire hazard. You are asked to mail the candle back for a full refund.
- 3.) A maker of lighters has found that they are not child-resistant and could pose a fire or burn hazard to children. The recall says to stop using the lighter and dispose of it safely. Alternately, consumers can return the lighter and receive a gift certificate to use for other products from the company.
- 4.) A furniture manufacturer has found that one of their entertainment stands poses a tipping hazard and needs to be readjusted. Consumers are told to contact the company for a free repair.

Probe responses of group: Why do you think you would be more likely to respond to some of these but not others? What specifically about these scenarios would motivate you to take action?

Would you be more or less likely to respond to the recall if you were offered an incentive to do so? What would that incentive have to be to interest you?

If I were to tell you that you would receive a rebate from the manufacturer in return for the recalled item, how likely would you be to consider following through with the return?

Now let's make some assumptions: 1) You feel that you or a family member is at risk of injury from the product OR 2) You feel that you or a family member is not at risk of injury from the product. Also, let's say the rebate would be for the full price of the product. What if the rebate was 20% of the price (for example, you would receive a \$5.00 rebate for a \$20.00 shirt).

### **Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) (25 minutes)**

Based on what you know, who do you think is responsible for determining that a product should be recalled? Who do you think is responsible for communicating recalls to the public? Who do you think should be responsible for communicating recalls to the public? Why?

How familiar are you with the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) (very, somewhat, just a little bit, not at all)? How and when did you first learn about it? What, specifically, did you see or hear about the CPSC?

*The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is responsible for protecting the public from the risk of hazards from more than 15,000 types of consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction. They cover products such as toys, computers, clothing, and general household items. They are not responsible for cars, drugs, cosmetics or firearms.*

Given this information, how likely would you be to look into information about CPSC? Have you ever heard of CPSC's toll free hotline? Website? Have you ever used their website or contacted CPSC directly? Please tell us about the experience(s).

If you were to learn that the CPSC was a federal government agency, would you be more or less favorable to them? Why or why not?

Pretend for a moment that you were just named the Chairman of the CPSC and were responsible for getting information out to the public on hundreds of recalls a year. What would you do to get this information to the people that need it most? Anything else?

As you may or may not know, there is a website, [www.recalls.gov](http://www.recalls.gov) which posts information about recalls, and allows visitors to sign up for email notifications and search information about consumer products safety. Based on this information alone, does this sound like a website you would likely use? Why or why not? What information would you hope to find?

What if you were told that six federal agencies, including the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) came together to develop the [www.recalls.gov](http://www.recalls.gov) website. Do you think this is a good thing? Why or why not? Would this information make you more or less interested in going on and using the website? Why?

### **Messaging to Consumers (25 minutes)**

Thinking about the next time you purchase an item similar to a Dell notebook computer, such as another electronic device, how likely will you be to seek out information about whether there are any safety concerns either with that product, brand, or manufacturer? Please explain. Where would you go to look?

*Hand out the CPSC news release entitled “Dell Announces Recall of Notebook Computer Batteries Due to Fire Hazard.”* This news release from the CPSC concerned the Dell battery we have discussed today. (Replace with information about second product’s recall). Have you ever seen this before?

This is the type of news release that the CPSC produces every day about a number of product recalls. Looking over this information, how effective do you think this is? What information would you want that is not supplied here? Anything else?

Where would you expect to find this notice? Where should it be posted? Why?

The CPSC posts many of these alerts directly on their website. Is this something you would be likely to access in the future? Why or why not?

What, if anything, should be changed about notifying consumers about recalls? Would you be more or less apt to respond if there were more visuals, such as pictures, diagrams, etc.? Why or why not? Would you be more or less likely to respond if the safety of the product were highlighted? Why or why not? Anything else?

Please finish the following sentence: The best way to contact me about a recall is \_\_\_\_? Imagine for a moment that you own a product that is going to be recalled tomorrow and the manufacturer is looking to alert you so that you can return the product. Considering a typical day in your life, what would need to be done to make sure that the recall information got into your hands?

*Probe: Ask participants to vote for the top method of contacting them about product recalls? (Write on flip chart)*

- Email alerts
- TV Ad
- Radio Ad
- Newspaper Ad
- Website Link
- Direct Mail (specify source)
- Phone call
- In-store display/alert

You may or may not know that a product safety registration card is one way to get recall information to the people that own products. The cards are typically given to consumers when they make some purchases and one purpose is so that the manufacturer can identify owners of products that are later recalled. Have you ever registered a product? If so, where? How did you complete the registration? Do you register some products and not others? If so, which products are you likely to register?

Would you be more or less likely to fill out a registration card if you were not asked about your personal buying habits?

What form of registration would you be more likely to use – filling out a card and mailing back to the manufacturer or using the manufacturer’s website to register the product? Why or why not?

**Conclusion (5 minutes)**

Finally, I would like to thank all of you again for participating in what has been a productive exchange of ideas and opinions. I’d like to go around the room and have everyone name one or two things that would make you more likely to respond to a product recall or any advice you would give to the CPSC on how they might be able to motivate more people to respond to product recalls? It can be related to something we talked about today or something else that is on your mind. (For those who say nothing, ask them why it is not worth it to them to respond to product recalls).

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN TODAY’S DISCUSSION!