

A Guide to Evaluating Dented Cans

Cans that are leaking, bulging, or have holes in them have Critical (Class I) defects and are easy to identify as unsafe. The difference between Major (Class II) and Minor (Class III) defects in cans is more difficult to evaluate.

Some dented cans are harmless, but others can cause serious illness if the food inside is eaten. This guide is designed to help you decide which dented cans are safe (Minor defects) and which dented cans are unsafe (Critical or Major defect).

There are two types of seams on a can: side seams and end seams. Side seams are on the side of the can and are usually covered by the label. End seams are on the top and bottom of the can. If there is a dent over any of these seams, the can has at least a Major defect, meaning it is unsafe.

If a dent has sharp or pointed edges, it is also considered to have an unsafe, Major defect.

On the following pages, there are many pictures of safe, Minor defect cans and pictures of unsafe, Critical or Major defect cans. The Critical and Major defect cans are labeled with red arrows and the Minor defect cans are labeled with green arrows.

After reading this document, you should have a good idea of what cans have only Minor defects and are safe and which cans have Critical and Major defects making them unsafe. If you find yourself with a dented can you are unsure of, don't take a chance. ***When in doubt, throw it out!***

Dents on the Side of the Can



Major (Class II) - Dents over a side seam:

When inspecting cans for dents, pay close attention to where the side seam is located. In the picture to the left, there is a large dent over the side seam. Notice that there are no sharp edges or creases around the dent in the can on the left. This dent would be a Minor (Class III) defect if it were not located over the side seam.

Minor (Class III) side dent:

Note that the can in the picture on the right has a dent that covers a large surface of the can. This dent, although large, is only a Minor defect as it does not have sharp edges or creases. The dent also does not involve the top, bottom or side seams.



Major (Class II) defect:

The dent in the can on the left has pointed/sharp edges making it a Major defect even though it is not over a seam.

Major (Class II) - Two Dents Meet at a Point:

The can in the picture to the right was impacted in two places and these two dents form a point. This causes a crease which is unsafe.



Major (Class II) - Side Dent Involving End Seam:

The dent in this can would be Minor if it was more toward the middle of the can. Because it is near the top of the can, it affects the integrity the end seam, making it unsafe.

Major (Class II) - Crushed Cans:

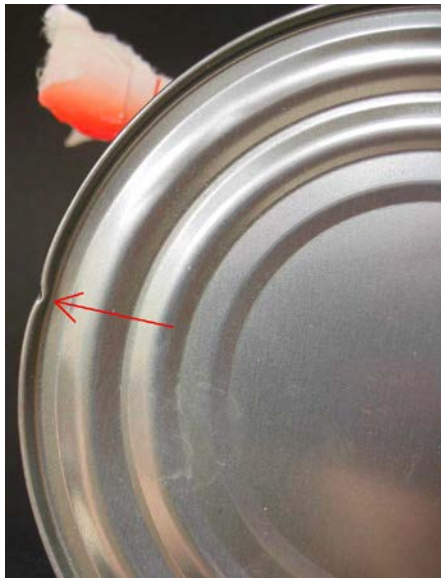
The dent in this can result from the can being crushed. Any cans with defects like this are unsafe.



Dents on the bottom of the can (without a seam):

There are two main types of cans: cans with seams at both ends (top and bottom) and cans with seams only on the top. On the right is an intact can with no seam on the bottom. Because the bottoms of these cans do not have a seam, they can have significant dents and still only have Minor defects. For instance, the can below left has only Minor defects because the dent has no sharp points or sharp edges. The can below is a side view of a can that also has only a Minor defect for the same reasons. If there were a seam on the bottom of these cans, the defects would be Major because they would affect the integrity of the seam.





Minor (Class III) end seam dents:
 Sometimes the dent on the end of the can does not affect the end seam. For instance, the can on the left has a small notch on the rim. This notch does not affect the integrity of the seam and so it is only a Minor defect.

Minor vs. Major End Seam Dents: The dent indicated by the black arrow is a Major defect as it is larger and involves the seam. The other dent indicated by the pink arrow is a Minor defect as it only affects the rim and not the seam.



Another example of a Major (Class II) dent affecting the end seam.

Swollen Cans (Critical – Class I Defect)
 The following pictures are a demonstration of a can with a seal that has been affected and is now swollen. See how the lid gives under pressure.

