

DISASTER FEEDING

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS-SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE PERSONNEL

Who should I contact for information about emergency feeding in disaster situations?

Need to have the following contact person's name and phone number in your State: State Distributing Agency (DA), Red Cross Coordinator, and State Emergency Disaster Coordinator. In addition, School Food Service Directors (SFSD) should have the name and phone number of their county Emergency Assistance Coordinator.

How do I know if I am/will be a disaster feeding site?

You may hear from the DA or the Red Cross. Hopefully, you will have been pre-designated, but not always possible because it's hard to tell ahead of time what buildings will be standing following a disaster. Please remember that the use of Donated Commodities for congregate disaster feeding does not require USDA or FNS approval as long as commodities used are those within the disaster State. If commodities have to be moved from another State, The Regional Office (RO) must be informed and provide at least a verbal approval. In some States, school districts can provide shelter feeding without any prior approval or prior knowledge from the DA. We have had situations in states like West Virginia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, where a localized heavy weekend rain has required congregate feeding for a small number of families, and the SFSD provided school lunch commodities to the Red Cross for immediate emergency feeding without any prior approvals. Such situations may require immediate action and decisions by a SFSD without an opportunity for prior approval from the State DA. The SFSD should inform their state School Food Authorities to make available USDA commodities for disaster congregate feeding to the Red Cross immediately upon request, with or without prior approvals. Please be reminded that the State DA must be notified of any feeding activity as soon as possible.

How do disaster organizations request food and from whom?

Disaster organizations request food assistance through State DA's or State Agencies that administer the Food Distribution Program. The DA then notifies the FNS-RO of the types and quantities of food that are needed by the relief organizations for emergency feeding. State DAs work with the School Food Service staff. Please keep in mind that because disaster situations can be chaotic, a disaster organization at the local level might not be able to contact its local Red Cross or the State DA. That is why it is so important that local emergency feeding officials have knowledge of and immediate access to any and

all available USDA commodities stored in the affected area. This includes commodities from School Lunch, The Emergency Food Assistance Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, etc.

I am a School Food Service Director and have been asked to provide emergency feeding operations; what records do I keep?

Description of the Disaster situation
Number of people affected
Period of time of the mass feeding
Quantity and types of food used
Number and location of feeding sites

How will food used for disaster feeding be replaced?

The State DA will request replacement to the RO, within 30 days following termination of the disaster assistance. FNS will replace foods when the request is received within the 30 days or justification exists to waive the 30-day requirement. Product will be replaced in-kind to the extent possible.

What is the role of the Red Cross using my kitchen?

In almost every State, the American Red Cross is the designated Emergency Feeding Agency. As such, every possible effort should be made to assist and support their mission in a disaster situation. If use of a school kitchen or a central kitchen will help the Red Cross to provide congregate meals to affected victims, then they should be given use of that facility. A school building does not have to be a designated disaster shelter, for its kitchen facilities to be utilized to prepare congregate meals. We have had situations whereby the Red Cross worked jointly with local school food service personnel to prepare disaster meals and manage kitchens.

What if it is a weekend, I receive a call from the Red Cross and they want to start feeding, and I am unable to contact the State DA, what do I do?

SFSD's should do everything possible to assist the Red Cross to provide congregate meals to disaster victims. In addition, SFSD's should offer available USDA commodities to the Red Cross for such feeding. The Red Cross should not have to bring in their own food when our commodities are available. As stated earlier, prior approvals are neither required nor necessary from the State DA. If in doubt, the SFSD should take the precaution to ask for ID to assure that the individuals requesting commodities are in fact legitimate Red Cross workers.

What if the Red Cross knocks on my door and announces they are "taking over?"

When disaster strikes, the timeliness of feeding affected victims is crucial. SFSD's should work cooperatively and professionally with the Red Cross and others (even before the actual event of a disaster). These should not be situations of who is in charge. The Red Cross also has a responsibility to act in a professional manner.

Further, the question of who is ultimately in-charge of managing kitchen operations would depend on what agreement the State has with the Red Cross as the designated Emergency Feeding Agency. For instance, in Puerto Rico, the State Emergency Plan states that any School Food Service Authority facilities used for disaster meal preparation will be staffed and managed by school food service personnel. However, many States do not have written plans or agreements that go into such detail. The Red Cross has the responsibility to provide congregate meals utilizing USDA commodities. When they request help from school personnel, it should be given. If a SFSD wants to give full management authority of the emergency kitchen operations to the Red Cross, that is fine. However, if the SFSD wants to participate on an equal basis with the Red Cross in his/her kitchen, utilizing his/her USDA commodities, he/she has every right to do so. The senior on-site Red Cross official and the local SFSD would have equal status, and hopefully, work as equals towards the common goal. Both would share in the management of the facility operations.

Can we feed Red Cross and other volunteers and do we include that count in what is reported to the State DA?

The Food Distribution regulations require that disaster organizations distribute donated foods only to recipients eligible to receive them. However, if recipient agencies serve meals containing donated foods to persons other than those who are eligible, these individuals must be few in number compared to the eligible persons served. Volunteers may eat as long as they are present and don't outnumber the disaster victims. Volunteer meals should be included in the total meal count.

Whose responsibility is it for clean up after the meal(s) is served?

Whichever organization is operating the feeding facilities. If no agreement were in effect, the Red Cross would probably have such responsibility. There could be an instance where another agency or organization would be designated specific responsibility for maintenance of disaster shelters and feeding sites.

Who pays me for working over-time, school or Red Cross?

If it were a Presidential Declared Disaster, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) would pay 75% of the directly related disaster overtime. The State would have to cover the other 25%. In Non-Presidential disaster situations, reimbursement would have to be sought from the State.

Who does the actual menu planning?

Traditionally, the Red Cross does menu-planning, requests for specific foods, and maintains meals served/USDA commodities usage records. The SFSD is also responsible for keeping usage records.

What if we need paper products, utensils, etc., who pays gas used to shop for supplies, who does the actual shopping?

As stated earlier, FEMA should reimburse 75% of these costs if it is a Presidential Declared Disaster. If not, reimbursement would have to come from the State. If any shopping is required for paper products, utensils, etc., the Red Cross normally brings or orders such supplies to a disaster site, or will place a request order through FEMA to bulk purchase such supplies. The Red Cross or FEMA might ask the State if they have such supplies warehoused and available for use. Reimbursement for these supplies would come from the Red Cross or FEMA.

What liabilities if any are there regarding "accidents" in the kitchen i.e. if Red Cross staff or a school food service worker falls, slips or gets burned?

FEMA would be involved in such coverage if the disaster was Presidential Declared. Otherwise, Workmen's Compensation rules would apply like any other on-the-job injury. These issues are usually worked out between the disaster organization and the SFSD without FNS involvement.

Exhibit 22-9 Players & Partners

Victims	School district administrators	Donors
Salvation Army	School board	Distributors
National Guard	City officials	Media
Red Cross	Volunteers	Government
	Health inspector	

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Importance of Record Keeping

The school food authority must keep accurate records of all foods used or provided during emergency situations. If foods are transferred to disaster feeding organizations, obtain signed receipts. The state's director of food distribution will ask for the approximate numbers of meals and people fed, the number of days, and the types and amounts of foods used if the school food and nutrition program had to assume feeding on an immediate basis. Feeding of volunteers or similar support personnel with USDA commodity foods is not authorized. Prompt reporting of required information to the state agency involved is essential. If possible, USDA will either obtain replacement value for some of the foods used or replace foods with other desirable foods. (See Exhibit 22-12 for suggested menus to be used in emergency situations.)

APPLICATION

School food and nutrition personnel often want some way to evaluate their community relations to see if they are doing a good job in this area. The following checklist (Exhibit 22-13) identifies characteristics of a school food and nutrition program that has good community relations.²⁸ Apply the following indicators to a specific school or school system. After completing the evaluation, collaborate with members of the community to develop a plan to work on problem areas.

Establishing successful community relations can enhance the morale and working environment for school food and nutrition personnel. While networking with community groups and involving parents in the program, remember the following tips for success:

Exhibit 22-10 Supply Reminders

The following are critical foodservice-related supplies.

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| + Styrofoam cups | + Napkins |
| + Dish soap | + Plastic wrap |
| + Bleach | + Foil |
| + Dishwasher supplies | + Towels |
| + Disposable gloves | + Bar mops |
| + Disposable aprons | + Garbage bags |
| + Hair nets | |

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other nations! If a district association sold fresh, seasonal citrus fruits as a fund-raiser would parents and the community stakeholders perceive the program differently than if a bake sale was sponsored?

DISASTER FEEDING

School food and nutrition programs have an opportunity to demonstrate how they can benefit their communities when natural disasters strike. Beth Hanna, director of school food service in West Des Moines, Iowa, had an opportunity to do just that during the summer of 1993 when the Mississippi River and its tributary rivers flooded. So did Linda Stoll, director of Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District during 1996 when Alaska had the worst wildfire in its history.²⁴ (See Exhibit 22-7.)

Use of USDA Commodity Foods

Congregate feeding might be needed in the community during disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. According to the *Code of Federal Regulations* (7 C.F.R. 250.8) commodity foods that the USDA provides can be used for disaster feedings.²⁵ The state's director of commodity distribution is responsible for directing the distribution of these foods within the state during emergencies. USDA does not specifically designate foods for this purpose. Therefore, the community must depend on foods in state warehouses, foods that are being stored by commercial distributors for the schools, and those foods stored by local school food authorities.

Foods can be provided to any recognized disaster-relief agency, such as the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, Civil Defense,

Exhibit 22-7 Disaster Dos and Don'ts

DO

- Cooperate.
- Get permission to use federal commodities.
- Remember who you are doing this for —your neighbors.
- Keep records as best you can for food used and meals served.
- Have someone answer the phone and log all phone calls.
- Log all accidents with the name, address, and phone number of the victim, as well as details of what happened.
- Have volunteers sign in, record name, address and phone number; these are good for Red Cross records as well as thank-you notes.
- Be flexible; counts may go up and down quickly.
- Be specific.
- Be willing to make decisions quickly.
- Be tactful and diplomatic.

DON'T

- Turn over your kitchen to an outside organization.
- Be afraid to ask for help.
- Forget sanitation.
- Be afraid to stand your ground and insist on important issues.

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and many religious denominations, civic organizations, and unions. USDA must issue prior approval before food is used for disaster feeding.

Disaster Planning

Preparedness is the key to successful delivery of services during an emergency situation. See Exhibit 22-8 for a checklist of commonalities that should be addressed during planning. A response team in each community should develop a written emergency plan. Procedures should be developed and followed for keeping this plan current. Include food service as a part of the local board of education, city, and/or county plans. Since schools frequently serve as emergency sites, local school food and nutrition program directors should serve on food preparedness committees.

Keep an updated list of state and local contacts. (See Exhibit 22-9.) Know which specific schools in the school system are designated as emergency shelters. Generally, do not select a school with an all-electric kitchen to be an emergency shelter. Determine how to identify, secure, and distribute foods for use. Take steps

to maintain sanitary conditions during distribution, storage, and preparation of the foods. Establish procedures for transferring foods to other schools or sites and returning unused products, if necessary. Be sure that workers have written policies and procedures to follow. (See Exhibit 22-10.) Integrate disaster feeding plans with the rest of the disaster plan for the community.

The emergency agency responsible for the site can provide a trained site manager and personnel to operate the feeding operation. Directors who have experienced disasters in their communities recommend refraining from turning the kitchen over to an outside agency.²⁶ If local school food and nutrition personnel are needed, determine whether funds are available from local, state, and federal disaster organizations to pay them. Determine who is responsible if equipment is broken or misplaced. Find out how the school system will be reimbursed for commercially purchased foods that are utilized. Clarify these issues in advance of the emergency. Offer training annually to staff members who will be involved if an emergency occurs. Exhibit 22-11 provides training suggestions from a school system in Wisconsin.²⁷

Exhibit 22-8 Disaster Planning

Can you really plan for a disaster? Beth Hanna, food service director for the West Des Moines, Iowa, school district, notes that while each crisis is different, there are commonalities you can plan for.

What Must Be Planned?

- Menus They should be simple but filling, easy to eat, two to three meals per day. Keep in mind hot or cold, preparation techniques (canned versus scratch) and special diets.
- Supplies Don't forget the little things, like spices, condiments, utensils, pens, paper, masking tape, name tags.
- Staffing Review volunteers versus paid staff.
- Distribution Can you get the food to where it needs to go? How? Can you receive items in a timely manner? How?
- Cleaning Schedule lots of help; it's something no one likes to do and everyone is tired when it needs to be done. Remember that your volunteers don't know sanitation and will need to be trained. Use instant sani-solutions when possible.
- Repairs Your equipment will be used hard; expect repairs for the next year.

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Exhibit 22-11 Top 10 Training Tips

The Red Cross training offered so much valuable information. Here are the top 10 most valuable lessons learned in La Crosse, Wis.:

1. Determine if your school has a partnership agreement with the Red Cross to serve as a mass care shelter during a disaster.
2. Call the Red Cross and offer to serve as a volunteer during an emergency; note your department's food service expertise.
3. Recruit staff and colleagues to become volunteers and take required training.
4. Participate in a disaster drill.
5. Establish a contact person for the Red Cross to call during an emergency.
6. Develop a calling-tree within your department to notify trained volunteers.
7. Prepare menus in advance.
8. Organize a list of supplies and a "to do" list.
9. Clearly define the different roles of the Red Cross and the school during the emergency, particularly as to how food and supplies are paid for and other administrative details.
10. Share with the superintendent, the school board, and the community what good stewards of the community are working in their school kitchens!

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- Show enthusiasm.
- Be proactive.
- Stick with the program's mission.
- Don't be concerned about who gets the credit.
- Don't burn bridges because your paths may cross again.
- Be persistent.
- Involve all members of the school food and nutrition staff.
- Give employees recognition and credit.
- Compromise, if necessary but more important, create win-win situations.
- Relax and have fun!

SUMMARY

Leading professional nutrition organizations, including The American Dietetic Association, recognize that school-based nutrition programs should be designed to have a

parental and community involvement component.²⁹ Janet Bantly, a past president of the American School Food Service Association, acknowledged the need to work with partners and allied groups at the national, state, and local levels to achieve the association's vision of having healthful school meals and nutrition education available to all children as an integral part of education.³⁰ This aspect of the program is addressed in federal regulations governing the program. It has meaning only when caring, committed school food and nutrition professionals find innovative ways to involve parents and community stakeholders. An effective community relations program is based on communication, networking, marketing, involvement, and resolution of actual or potential conflicts.³¹ In order to successfully accomplish this goal, school food and nutrition personnel must be prepared to facilitate these key processes.



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Food and Water in an Emergency

How to Store Water

Store your water in thoroughly washed plastic, glass, fiberglass or enamel-lined metal containers. Never use a container that has held toxic substances.

Plastic containers, such as soft drink bottles, are best. You can also purchase food-grade plastic buckets or drums.

Seal water containers tightly, label them and store in a cool, dark place. Rotate water every six months.

Emergency Outdoor Water Sources

If you need to find water outside your home, you can use these sources. Be sure to purify the water according to the instructions on page 3 before drinking it.

- Rainwater
- Streams, rivers and other moving bodies of water
- Ponds and lakes
- Natural springs

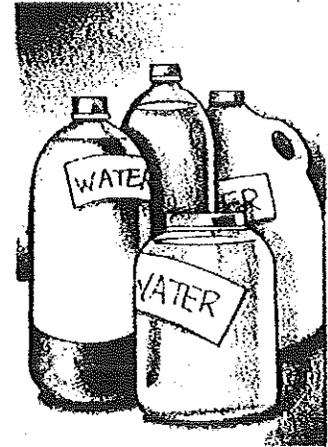
Avoid water with floating material, an odor or dark color. Use saltwater only if you distill it first. You should not drink flood water.

If an earthquake, hurricane, winter storm or other disaster strikes your community, you might not have access to food, water and electricity for days, or even weeks. By taking some time now to store emergency food and water supplies, you can provide for your entire family. This brochure was developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in cooperation with the American Red Cross and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Having an ample supply of clean water is a top priority in an emergency. A normally active person needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day. Hot environments can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers and ill people will need even more.

You will also need water for food preparation and hygiene. Store a total of at least one gallon per person, per day. You should store at least a two-week supply of water for each member of your family.

If supplies run low, never ration water. Drink the amount you need today, and try to find more for tomorrow. You can minimize the amount of water your body needs by reducing activity and staying cool.



Federal Emergency
Management Agency



American
Red Cross



Three Ways to Purify Water

In addition to having a bad odor and taste, contaminated water can contain microorganisms that cause diseases such as dysentery, typhoid and hepatitis.

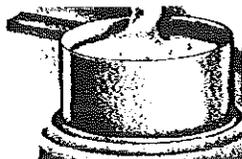
You should purify all water of uncertain purity before using it for drinking, food preparation or hygiene.

There are many ways to purify water. None is perfect. Often the best solution is a combination of methods.

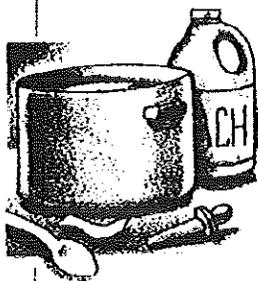
Two easy purification methods are outlined below. These measures will kill most microbes but will not remove other contaminants such as heavy metals, salts and most other chemicals. Before purifying, let any suspended particles settle to the bottom, or strain them through layers of paper towel or clean cloth.

BOILING. Boiling is the safest method of purifying water. Bring water to a rolling boil for 3-5 minutes, keeping in mind that some water will evaporate. Let the water cool before drinking.

Boiled water will taste better if you put oxygen back into it by pouring the water back and forth between two clean containers. This will also improve the taste of stored water.



DISINFECTION. You can use household liquid bleach to kill microorganisms. Use only regular household liquid bleach that contains 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite. Do not use scented bleaches, colorsafe bleaches or bleaches with added cleaners.

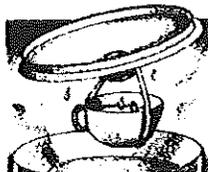


Add 16 drops of bleach per gallon of water, stir and let stand for 30 minutes. If the water does not have a slight bleach odor, repeat the dosage and let stand another 15 minutes.

The only agent used to purify water should be household liquid bleach. Other chemicals, such as iodine or water treatment products sold in camping or surplus stores that do not contain 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite as the only active ingredient, are not recommended and should not be used.

While the two methods described above will kill most microbes in water, distillation will remove microbes that resist these methods, and heavy metals, salts and most other chemicals.

DISTILLATION. Distillation involves boiling water and then collecting the vapor that condenses back to water. The condensed vapor will not include salt and other impurities. To distill, fill a pot halfway with water. Tie a cup to the handle on the pot's lid so that the cup will hang right-side-up when the lid is upside-down (make sure the cup is not dangling into the water) and boil the water for 20 minutes. The water that drips from the lid into the cup is distilled.



FOOD STORAGE

Shelf-life of Foods for Storage

Here are some general guidelines for rotating common emergency foods.

■ Use within six months:

- Powdered milk (*boxed*)
- Dried fruit (*in metal container*)
- Dry, crisp crackers (*in metal container*)
- Potatoes

■ Use within one year:

- Canned condensed meat and vegetable soups
- Canned fruits, fruit juices and vegetables
- Ready-to-eat cereals and uncooked instant cereals (*in metal containers*)
- Peanut butter
- Jelly
- Hard candy and canned nuts
- Vitamin C

■ May be stored indefinitely (*in proper containers and conditions*):

- Wheat
- Vegetable oils
- Dried corn
- Baking powder
- Soybeans
- Instant coffee, tea and cocoa
- Salt
- Noncarbonated soft drinks
- White rice
- Bouillon products
- Dry pasta
- Powdered milk (*in nitrogen-packed cans*)