



FOOD STORAGE, HANDLING AND SAFETY PRACTICES

3/2017

General Practices

For the most part, health and safety practices are a matter of common sense. A phone call to your county health department is a good way to alert them to the existence of your operation and find out what their concerns might be. In general, good warehouse and storage practices are:

- Transport, receive and store food at proper temperatures (41° F. or below for chilled, 0° F or below for frozen food, 50° - 70° F. for dry storage foods.)
- When transporting food, use a passive (thermal blanket/cooler with ice packs) or visibly active temperature retention system (refrigeration unit) to maintain temperatures within the allowable limits; sample temperatures must be taken and documented at the time of pickup and delivery.
- Check temperatures of all storage areas: dry units weekly, cold storage daily when open and maintain a log of the date and temperature of each.
- Keep food 4" off the floor by storing it on pallets, platforms or shelves
- Keep food away from walls for good ventilation and pest control
- Keep food, pallets and shelves clean
- Keep doors and windows well sealed to prevent pest entry and water damage
- Maintain a good pest control system. Check rodent traps at least once per week (preferably daily) and maintain a log of the date and findings at each trap. Make a map of rodent trap locations as a safety precaution and to assist in proper tracking.
- Ensure no leaky compressors in freezers and refrigerated units. Remove ice build-up as it occurs.
- Repackaging of shelf-stable dry foods must follow safe food handling standards: surface sanitation with bleach solution, hand washing, gloves, food-grade containers, no repackaging of liquids.
- Ensure that food is labeled completely as stipulated in the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act or add a label prior to distribution that includes the common name of the product (e.g. Lasagna, Chicken Noodle Soup etc.), name and location of the distributing agency, the name and location of the donor OR a designated donor ID number that can be tracked in the inventory system, the date of the donation and an allergen disclaimer statement.
- All canned and packaged foods must be inspected; especially salvage and food drive products. Bulging cans and cans with sharp dents or rust on the seams should be discarded. Contact OFB or your regional food bank for more information on what to look for in sorting salvage. Training materials are available through OFB and your regional food bank. See OFB Food Safety Training Video.

- Products past “pull date” should be inspected to assess fitness for consumption. Request information from the donor on how long past the pull date (often a “best used by” date) the product will be nutritious and safe to eat. Many products last well past the pull date with only a slight deterioration in nutritional value, or a change in coloring; other products go bad within a day or two of the pull date. Refer to your Fresh Alliance Guidelines poster for perishable dating information.

Donation Receiving Standards

A. Rejecting Perishable Donations

1. If perishable products are donated and are not at appropriate temperatures, they must be promptly isolated and discarded.
2. If a frozen perishable product is provided and no longer frozen, the item cannot be refrozen. It must be promptly isolated and discarded.
3. If any perishable meat, pork or poultry product is not frozen by its sell-by date, it must be promptly isolated and discarded.

B. Repacking of frozen or refrigerated product is not allowed unless the Agency can demonstrate to the PDO their capability to maintain product safety and to ensure adherence to any time and temperature guidelines established by the food industry and/or regulatory agencies.

1. Each Agency which repacks bulk product must ensure adequate food safety control and operating practices to prevent potential product contamination.
2. Thawing frozen product to repack is not permitted (i.e. bulk meat).

C. Handling Donations from Retail and Hospitality Establishments – This includes but is not limited to product from restaurants, caterers, hotels, retail establishments and convenience stores. It does not include whole produce. Agencies wishing to accept these types of foods should work with RFB staff to determine their capability to accept these products, as they require special food handling procedures and certification.

Keep all toxic chemicals, such as those used for pest control and cleaning products, well away from food areas. DO NOT STACK NON-FOOD ITEMS ABOVE FOOD ITEMS. DO NOT STACK TOXIC ITEMS ABOVE PAPER PRODUCTS.

It is recommended to keep non-food items away from high traffic areas, in a row or space separate from food items. It is a good idea to have a buffer row, such as empty pallets or crates between food and non-food rows.

- **REMEMBER: It is important that sound judgment be exercised at all levels of the food bank distribution system to ensure that all food items are in good condition upon receipt by clients of partner agencies. Please refer to the full OFB Food Storage, Handling and Safety Practices document for detailed information and view the OFB food safety training video, which can be accessed via Inside the Network.**