

Transporting, Handling, and Using USDA Foods

Best Practices

THE EMERGENCY FOOD
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



TEFAP

The Emergency Food
Assistance Program

WHO?

For Staff and Volunteers at
Emergency Feeding
Organizations.

WHAT?

*Best practices to ensure food
stays safe and arrives in good
condition.



USE CLEAN VEHICLES

- Wash and sanitize all surfaces, including floors, walls, and equipment.
- Keep vehicles free of pests and rodents.

INPECT FOOD

- Always check food for damage or open packaging before accepting it.

CHECK TEMPERATURES

- For food marked "Keep Refrigerated," check and document the temperature upon receipt.

MAINTAIN SAFE TEMPERATURES

- Use a thermometer to monitor food temperatures.
- **Cold Foods:** Keep at 40°F or lower.
- Prevent bacteria growth by keeping food out of the "danger zone" (40°F–140°F).

*Best practices are recommendations and not affiliated with the TEFAP Program.



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER



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Food and Nutrition Division
The Emergency Food Assistance Program

This product was funded by USDA.
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Updated 12/20/2024
www.SquareMeals.org



BEST PRACTICES



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By following these steps, you'll help ensure food remains safe and arrives ready to support those in need.

MAINTAIN SAFE TEMPERATURES

- Use coolers with ice or freezer packs to keep food cold during transport.
- Keep food away from heat sources, such as the engine or direct sunlight.

SEPARATE RAW AND READY-TO-EAT FOODS

- Always keep raw foods (like meat) away from ready-to-eat foods to avoid cross-contamination.

PACK FOOD SAFELY

- Use sturdy packaging to protect food from damage.
- Pack heavy canned goods in small boxes to make handling easier.
- Place heavy items at the bottom to avoid crushing lighter items.

TRANSPORT FOOD QUICKLY

- Deliver perishable items as quickly as possible to prevent spoilage.

PLAN AHEAD

- **Clear Out Space:** Ensure refrigeration coolers are ready and have extra coolers available.
- **Use Smaller Containers:** Divide large quantities of food into smaller, manageable containers.
- **Have a Backup Plan:** Prepare for refrigeration failures with a documented plan.

KEEP RECORDS

- Track food temperatures during transportation using a reliable system.

TRAIN YOUR TEAM

- Ensure all staff and volunteers are trained in proper food handling and transportation practices.



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