

Guidelines - Food Donations for During An Emergency

Staff and volunteers working at emergency services centres may be offered donations of food. To avoid foodborne illness at the centres, this guide helps you decide what types of foods to accept and how they should be handled. For further information about proper food handling, contact your local Environmental Health Officer.

Sources

- Food donations may be accepted from any premises approved to supply and/or sell food (refer to the [BC Food Premises Regulation](#)). Depending on the location of the emergency services and facilities available, we recommend single service plates, cutlery, napkins, be provided along with the food.
- Food donations should only be accepted from the general public if they are pre-packaged, ready to eat, and from approved sources, or are lower risk* (e.g. baked goods with no meat or dairy filling, whole fruit/vegetables).
- Raw foods requiring further preparation should not be accepted.



Separation

- Food donations should be stored separately from on-site health services areas. Caution should be taken to ensure there are no other activities in these areas that could lead to the contamination of food.
- Foods should, ideally, be served from their original containers.
- Workers and volunteers should eat these foods on their designated break times.

Temperature and Time Controls



- Perishable food donations should be consumed within two hours of receiving them, unless hot foods can be kept above 60° C and cold foods can be kept at or below 4° C. If food cannot be consumed within two hours it should be discarded. Mark the food with the date & time of arrival (or when the food should be eaten) so staff/volunteers know when the two hour time limit is approaching. Lower risk foods, foods that do not need refrigeration (e.g. most baked goods, jams and jellies, most whole fresh fruits and vegetables) do not need to meet these temperature controls.
- Food should not be cooled, and then reheated for later consumption.

Sanitation

- Workers and volunteers should thoroughly wash hands before and after eating.
- Anyone handling food must be free of illness and any stomach related symptoms (vomiting, diarrhea etc.) for 72 hours prior to handling food.
- Individuals preparing or serving the food must wash their hands before working with food or food contact surfaces. Direct hand contact with the food should be avoided – use clean utensils or wear disposable gloves (non-latex) to serve. The server should also have clean clothing, hair controlled and observe good personal hygiene.
- Serving utensils and re-usable dishware, if used, should be washed, rinsed and sanitized after use. The typical process is: 1) wash in hot soapy water, 2) rinse in clear hot water, 3) sanitize with a small amount of bleach in hot water [25mL (1oz.) bleach per 4L (1 gallon) of water], 4) air dry the utensils/dishware. Clean utensils/dishware should be stored where they are not subject to contamination.
- Counters or tabletops should be cleaned and sanitized after use. Wipe with a clean damp paper towel and sanitize using the diluted bleach water mentioned above.

