



# Disaster Feeding Guidance for School Food Authorities Using USDA Foods

This guide was developed to help School Food Authorities (SFAs) understand how to successfully assist with disaster feeding response operations using USDA Foods\*. It is important for SFAs to be prepared in advance since disaster response situations can sometimes be chaotic. Please review this guide to better understand the steps to take before, during, and after disaster response.

## **Before the Disaster:**

Food Service Directors can take steps before disasters occur to ensure they are included as part of the disaster response team in their community and are briefed on their role should their SFA be needed as a congregate feeding site. Consider the following:

- Contact your local jurisdiction and ask to be added to the Emergency Response Team so you or a member of your staff can participate in any planning meetings or calls.
- Make a presentation to the Emergency Response Team in your community that details how the School Food Service Department can assist with congregate feeding.
- Work with the Emergency Response Team to identify any sources of USDA Foods in the community, including those for School Meals, Child and Adult Care Food Program, or The Emergency Food Assistance Program.
- Create an agreement to outline how an SFA would be involved in the feeding operations should a disaster occur.
- Share any information or plans with your SDA as they will be needed to support any disaster response at the local level.
- Create an emergency/disaster contact list with the following names and 24/7 phone numbers:
  - Your Immediate Supervisor (FS Director, FS Coordinator, Asst. Superintendent, etc.)
  - State Distributing Agency (SDA)
  - County/City Emergency Assistance Coordinator
  - Local Disaster Feeding Coordinator
  - State Emergency Disaster Coordinator (FEMA ESF-11)

## **When A Disaster Hits:**

### ***Notification to Assist with Disaster Feeding***

Your SDA or the local disaster feeding organization may let you know that you have been selected as a congregate feeding site for disaster response. You may have been pre-designated as an approved response site through your pre-planning, but it's not always possible to know ahead of time exactly where disaster feeding will be needed most.

The use of USDA Foods for congregate disaster feeding does not require USDA approval as long as USDA Foods originate from the State where the disaster occurred. **Your SDA must be notified of any disaster feeding activity at your site as soon as possible.** If an emergency occurs on a weekend, the Food Service Director should contact their SDA as soon as possible the next business day.



# Disaster Feeding Guidance for School Food Authorities Using USDA Foods

## ***Disaster Organizations Role in School Kitchens***

Food Service Directors should do everything possible to assist the Red Cross or other Emergency Feeding Organizations to provide congregate meals to disaster survivors and/or make USDA Foods available for feeding activities. If use of a school kitchen or a central kitchen will help the Red Cross to provide congregate meals to affected survivors, then they should be given use of that facility. An SFA may also help coordinate their food service staff to volunteer in the kitchen since they are familiar with the facility and equipment operation. A school building does not have to be a designated disaster shelter in order for its kitchen facilities to be requested to prepare congregate meals. The Red Cross has successfully worked with local school food service personnel to prepare disaster meals even when the meals were served elsewhere.

**IMPORTANT!** School Food Authorities should never give the Red Cross or other disaster organizations authority to take USDA Foods out of the schools on their own. **ONLY** the SFA has authority to distribute and/or use USDA Foods from their inventory. Additionally, please take care to request IDs or other documentation to ensure individuals requesting USDA Foods are legitimate Emergency Feeding Organization workers.

## ***Additional Food Requests for Disaster Situations***

In addition to the USDA Foods inventory provided by the SFAs, disaster organizations may request food assistance from the State Agency that administers the Food Distribution Program. The SDA will notify the USDA Regional Office of the types and quantities of food needed for emergency response. SDAs should contact SFAs in the affected areas to provide additional guidance about the process for handling any additional inventory provided through this process.

Disaster feeding organizations should be provided access to any and all USDA Foods available in the case of emergency response, including those for School Meals, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and The Emergency Food Assistance Program. SFAs should work with their SDA to help the Red Cross access any available USDA Foods.

## ***Who is “In Charge” in the Kitchen in a Disaster Response?***

When disaster strikes, the timeliness of feeding survivors is crucial. Food Service Directors or designees should work cooperatively and professionally with the Red Cross or other disaster organizations to provide food and assistance as needed. The question of who is ultimately in charge of managing kitchen operations would depend on the agreement the State has with the Red Cross or the designated Emergency Feeding Agency. In Puerto Rico, for example, the emergency plan states that any SFA facilities used for disaster meal preparation will be staffed and managed by school food service personnel.

Red Cross has the responsibility to provide congregate meals in disaster situations and they are permitted to use USDA Foods. SFAs are expected to assist the Red Cross or other emergency response organization, but there are no defined guidelines for who will have full kitchen responsibility in this



# Disaster Feeding Guidance for School Food Authorities Using USDA Foods

situation and is up to the Food Service Director to make this determination.

A Food Service Director can provide Red Cross with full management authority over emergency kitchen operations or choose to share management responsibilities since the operation is being conducted in their kitchen. The senior on-site Red Cross official and the local Food Service Director would have equal status and should come to an agreement about kitchen management responsibilities that allows them to work effectively toward a common goal that ensures effective management of the kitchen and the use of USDA Foods.

## ***Disaster Feeding Menu Planning***

Traditionally, the Red Cross will create menus, submit requests for specific foods, and track the meals served and USDA Foods usage. It may be helpful for SFAs to be involved in the menu planning process and share their breakfast and lunch menus since the available on-site inventory will likely support these menus. The Food Service Director or designee is ultimately responsible for ensuring that USDA Foods usage and congregate feeding records are maintained appropriately as they will be responsible for submitting these documents after the disaster.

## ***Using USDA Further Processed End Products in Disaster Feeding***

SFAs can use USDA Foods further processed end products in disaster feeding, but they should keep in mind that only the portion of USDA Foods in the finished end product is eligible for reimbursement. The remaining cost of the processed product may be reimbursed by the local Office of Emergency Management. Similar to other products used, SFAs should closely track the further processed end products used in disaster feeding to submit appropriate documentation for reimbursement.

## ***Disaster Meal Counting and Claiming***

The Food Distribution regulations require that disaster organizations distribute USDA Foods only to recipients eligible to receive them. However, if recipient agencies serve meals containing USDA Foods to persons other than those who are eligible, these individuals must be few in number compared to the eligible. For example, volunteers and servers may eat prepared meals as long as they don't outnumber the disaster survivors. Any volunteer meals served should be included in the total meal count.

## ***USDA Foods Disaster Recordkeeping***

Recordkeeping is a standard practice for School Food Authorities, including production, service and inventory records. It is important to keep a separate record of the USDA Foods used in a disaster response to ensure replacement or entitlement reimbursement can occur if Federal funding is available. USDA Foods will need the following information to process a reimbursement request:

- Description of the disaster situation
- Number of people affected



# Disaster Feeding Guidance for School Food Authorities Using USDA Foods

- Period of time for congregate feeding
- Quantity and types of food used
- Number and location of feeding sites

## ***Disaster Meal Clean Up Responsibilities***

Typically, the organization that is operating the feeding facilities would be responsible for clean up after service. However, there is a possibility that another agency or organization would be responsible for maintenance of disaster shelters and feeding sites per a written disaster-response agreement. It may be helpful for SFAs to work with the Emergency Response Team in your community to better understand the plan and the SFAs responsibilities during the event.

## **After the Disaster:**

### ***Replacement of Commercial and USDA Foods Used in a Disaster Response***

**USDA Foods:** SFAs should work with their state to submit appropriate documentation of the disaster response service and USDA Foods usage. The SDA or USDA Regional Office is required to submit a FNS-292A form online to request USDA Foods product replacement or reimbursement within 45 days after the end of the disaster assistance or later if justification exists to waive the 45-day requirement. If the disaster has a “Presidential Disaster Declaration”, USDA can replace product or reimburse the value of the USDA Foods. If the disaster, emergency or situation of distress does not have a Presidential declaration, USDA will attempt to reimburse the SDA for the value of the USDA Foods used if funds are available. It is the responsibility of the SDA to transfer the disaster reimbursement to the SFA USDA Foods account, or to replace the product. Reimbursement for USDA Foods is guaranteed for Presidentially declared disasters and emergencies, but is not guaranteed for Situations of Distress, disasters or emergencies that do not have a Presidential declaration.

**\*CASH or CLOC Schools:** If your district receives USDA assistance in the form of Cash in Lieu of Commodities (CASH) or Commodity Letter of Credit (CLOC), and you participated in State authorized disaster congregate feeding, you will be required to provide purchasing receipts/invoices for the food used for disaster feeding, similar to your current program requirements for participation in CASH or CLOC.

**Bulk USDA Foods for Further Processing:** If an SFA decides to use products that contain bulk USDA Foods, only the portion of USDA Foods in the finished end product is eligible for reimbursement through USDA. SFAs will be asked to provide a copy of the National Processors’ Summary End Product Data Schedule or State Processors’ End Product Data Schedule to report the total Bulk USDA Foods that were used. The remaining cost of the processed product can possibly be claimed for reimbursement by submitting a request to their local Office of Emergency Management who works directly with FEMA and can submit a claim on behalf of the SFA.

**Non-USDA Foods:** For Presidentially declared emergencies or disasters, SFAs can apply for reimbursement of the value of foods by submitting a request to their local Office of Emergency Management. The local OEM works directly with FEMA and can submit a reimbursement claim on the



# Disaster Feeding Guidance for School Food Authorities Using USDA Foods

SFAs behalf. In some situations of distress, the SFA may be able to set up a per-meal-rate for the Red Cross, subtracting out the value of the USDA Foods.

## **Disaster Non-Food Supply Reimbursement**

FEMA should reimburse 75% of the cost of non-food supplies used in a Presidentially Declared Disaster. Otherwise, reimbursement would be expected 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 or SFA if they have such supplies available for use. Reimbursement for these supplies would come from the Red Cross or FEMA.

## ***Compensation for SFA Overtime in a Disaster Response***

If the disaster has a Presidential Declaration, FEMA would pay 75% of the directly related disaster overtime and the State would have to cover the other 25%. In Non-Presidential disaster situations, reimbursement should be sought from the State. If your employees are not working on a voluntary basis, labor hours and wages directly related to the disaster response must be recorded to submit for reimbursement to the local Office of Emergency Management who can file a claim for payment of hours worked to FEMA. The remaining portion should be submitted to the State Distributing Agency.

For additional information on USDA Foods Disaster Response go to:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/FDDDisasterManual.pdf>