

# FOOD SAFETY GUIDE

For Volunteer Groups Providing Meals to  
Homeless and Disadvantaged Populations



**Environmental Health Division  
Food Protection Bureau**

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## Introduction to Food Outreach Events

Even though food establishment permits are generally not required for events where the homeless and disadvantaged are served, the food safety rules must still be applied. This guide provides basic food safety information for groups or individuals engaged in providing food to homeless and disadvantaged populations in Salt Lake County. This type of food service is often staffed by volunteers who are not employed in the food industry and who may not be aware of safe food practices. The homeless and transient populations have a higher risk of contracting illness than average people. These guidelines are intended to ensure that they are protected from food-borne illness.

### General Food Safety Guidelines

1. Food service workers must practice good hygiene, including frequent hand washing and using gloves to handle ready-to-eat food.
2. Cook and reheat foods to proper temperatures.
3. Hold foods at proper temperatures.
4. Prevent cross-contamination of food and equipment.
5. Practice proper cleaning and sanitizing procedures.
6. Ill persons should never prepare or serve food.



## Choosing Your Menu

The simpler the menu, the easier it is to maintain food safety. It is recommended that you serve those foods that:

- Are commercially packaged (potato chips, cookies)
- Do not require any heating or cooking (cold cut sandwich)
- Can be heated and served immediately (hot dogs, canned chili)
- Can be cooked and served immediately (spaghetti, sloppy Joes)

Cooking food in advance is discouraged because it is very difficult to properly cool and store large amounts of food. Even in a professional restaurant it is a challenge to cook and cool the amount of food needed to serve 50-100 people. If you choose to cook and cool food, and then reheat the food, you must take great care to do this correctly. Hot food should never be left out until it reaches room temperature because bacteria grow rapidly at this temperature. As bacteria grow, they produce toxins that will linger in the food, even if you reheat or cook it again. These bacteria and toxins will make people sick. Hot food must be cooled rapidly as it passes through the temperature danger zone – from 135°F to 41°F.

The cooling process must take no longer than 6 hours. The food must get down to 70°F within the first 2 hours. To help speed up the cooling process hot food must be divided into smaller portions. Place soup, chili, ground meats and other hot foods into shallow containers such as cake pans and place them into a refrigerator. Leave plenty of space around foods in the refrigerator to help the cool air to circulate. You may also prepare an ice water bath in a clean kitchen sink and place containers of hot food into this sink, stirring frequently to rapidly cool the food to 41°F.

## WASH YOUR HANDS!

Frequent hand washing is an extremely important method of preventing foodborne illness. **Hands should always be washed BEFORE any food handling**, and whenever they may have become contaminated. When handling food and beverages, hands must be washed in warm water with soap for at least 20 seconds and dried with a paper towel. **Hand sanitizers do not replace hand washing!**



○ Use **SOAP** and **WARM WATER**

○ **SCRUB** your hands **VERY WELL**



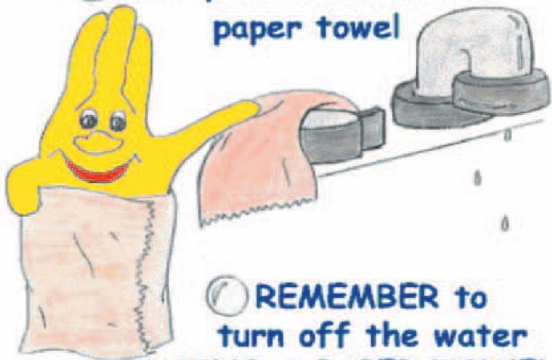
○ **WASH**

- Between Fingers
- Wrists
- Under Fingernails
- Backs of Hands

○ **RINSE WELL**



○ **DRY** your hands with a paper towel



○ **REMEMBER** to turn off the water **USING A PAPER TOWEL** **INSTEAD OF YOUR HANDS**

## Temporary Hand Wash Station

- All food workers must wash hands with soap.
- Hand sanitizers can be used in addition to soap, but not instead of soap.

If a permanent sink is not available, set up a Hand Wash Station like the one below.



## How to Maintain Proper Temperatures

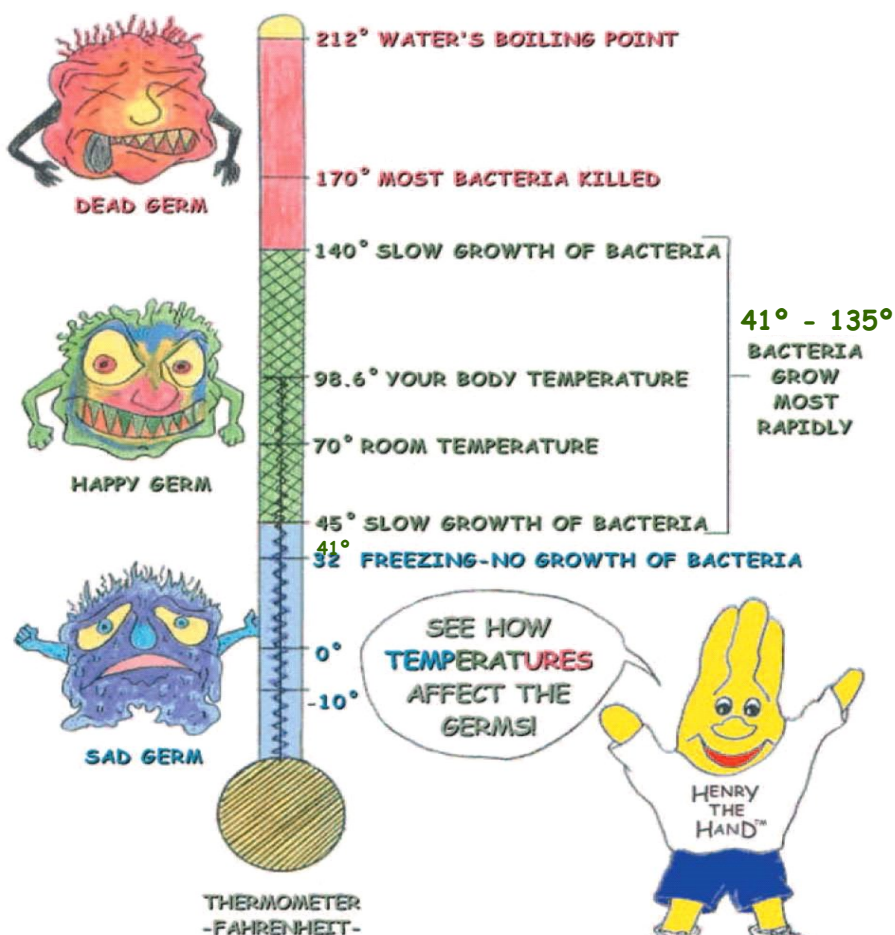
Food must be kept either **cold at 41°F and below**, or **hot at 135°F and above** at all times. Food must only be out at room temperature during absolutely necessary periods of preparation/serving. You must transport cold foods in a cooler with adequate ice. Transport hot foods in a hot box to their destination. You will need a probe thermometer to take temperatures of food.

### Minimum Safe Cooking Temperatures:

Poultry (turkey, chicken)—165°F

Ground beef or ground pork—155°F

Steak, roasts, fish, chops, eggs—145°F



## Food Handling

Bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat foods must be avoided. Ready-to-eat foods are foods that will not be cooked before serving, or foods that have been cooked but will not be reheated before serving. Bread, lettuce, cheese, and cold cuts are all examples of ready-to-eat food. Use tongs, spatulas, deli tissues, or single-use gloves to handle these foods.

The use of disposable gloves can provide an additional barrier to contamination, but gloves do not replace hand washing. When gloves are used, they must be used for only one task, such as working with ready-to-eat food *or* with raw meat. Gloves must be discarded when damaged or soiled, or when interruptions occur in the operation.



## Ill Food Service Workers

Ill food service workers, including volunteers, should never be allowed to work in a food preparation or serving area. These workers can easily transmit disease-causing organisms to food, drink and items such as utensils that patrons use. Ill food workers are a significant cause of food-borne illness. Any person recently having diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, fever with sore throat, jaundice, cuts or burns on hands must not be allowed to work around food.



## Outdoor Food Service

If you will be preparing or serving food outdoors you must take additional steps to protect the food and to protect the health and safety of the public. Outdoor food service should not be done within 100 feet of potential sources of contamination such as portable toilets. You need to set up a booth with the following:

- A hand washing station
- A roof, awning or other top covering, impermeable to weather, over the entire food preparation, service, clean-up and storage area.



- Two side walls (not screening), which will reduce the entry of dust and dirt, and exclude non-authorized personnel.
- The front service wall should be a counter, half-wall or table. The back wall may be open for employee access or solid as desired.
- The floor should be a surface of plywood, concrete, asphalt or other durable material. Flooring should be supplied if the booth is on dirt, gravel, grass or poorly drained surfaces.
- Lids or other non-flammable covers over cooking equipment.
- Barrier or separation around cooking equipment to prevent patrons from getting burned.



## Outdoor Food Service (cont.)

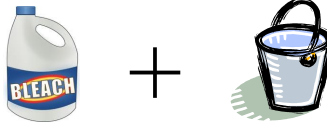
- Serving utensils that have been cleaned and sanitized
- Disposable plates, eating utensils, wrappers, etc.



- Tables or other equipment to keep all food, dishes, and utensils off the ground.



- A bucket of sanitizer solution (~1 cap of bleach per gallon of water) to store wiping cloths for wiping up spills. NOT FOR WASHING DISHES.



- Water container to transport dirty water after the event. This must be dumped into the sewer, not onto the ground or into a storm drain or gutter.



- **Dish Washing:** It is recommended that you only use disposable utensils and containers. Any multi-use items must be washed in hot soapy water; rinsed in clear hot water; sanitized in a bleach water solution (~1 cap of bleach per gallon of water); and air-dried. This is best accomplished using three large dish tubs.



# Home Preparation

Food for high-risk populations such as the homeless must not be prepared in a private residence.



Nobody wants to believe that their home kitchen is dirty or contaminated; most probably

are not. However, kitchens in private homes have a lot more going on in them than just food preparation. This is what sets them apart from kitchens in restaurants, churches, community centers, etc. Home kitchens are often visited by pets, toddlers, and family members whose goal is not food safety or sanitation. This could lead to unintentional contamination of food.

One of the fastest ways to spread disease through food is by having sick people around food or in food preparation areas.

Unfortunately, home is where sick people usually go to recover. They stay there to avoid getting other people sick at work or at school. The germs that caused the sickness can easily pass to food in a home setting, and could eventually cause illness in people that eat food prepared in that home.

For these reasons, food must be prepared in nonresidential kitchens such as those found in a church, a community center, or even a restaurant.

## Coordinate your efforts

Preparing a meal may not be the most helpful service for you to offer. **Among the various organizations in Salt Lake City, breakfast, lunch, and dinner are already served to the homeless and those in need nearly every day of the year.**

Before your event, we recommend that you contact one of the organizations below. These organizations have a structure in place to utilize your time, goods, and money in the most efficient way possible. If you are still interest in organizing your own independent outreach, these organizations may be able to give you suggestions and hints that will make your event more effective and successful.

St. Vincent De Paul Soup Kitchen .....	801-363-7710
Rescue Mission of Salt Lake .....	801-355-1302
The Road Home.....	801-359-4142
Salt Lake Mission .....	801-355-6310

Unfortunately, some groups that seek to help the disadvantaged actually cause problems in the community because they have failed to coordinate their food event with other organizations. A common problem is that too much food is being served by multiple groups at the same time, which leads to food being wasted and littered on sidewalks and streets. Similar problems arise when a group serves food but fails to provide garbage cans for plates, utensils, and wrappers. Coordinating with shelters and



Ensuring food safety at your volunteer event is your responsibility. You can help to ensure a healthy, safe and successful event for all to enjoy by following the recommendations in this guide.

