**Food Safety Guidance for preparing food for large groups during emergency situations**

Preparing food for large groups of people can be particularly challenging when you are in the middle of an emergency. Serving unsafe food has the potential to affect a large number of people, so it’s vital that you take the necessary steps to ensure food is safe. If you are using food prepared by others, make sure they also know how to keep food safe and have followed this guidance.

**Toilets and personal hygiene facilities**

Make sure toilets are in working order for both food preparers and guests to use. If a “boil water” notice is in effect, food preparers should wash hands using cooled boiled water, or water treated with bleach/chlorine (one teaspoon of bleach to 10 litres of water). If clean water is not available provide alcohol wipes, gels and hand sanitisers.

**Clean preparation areas**

Areas used for food preparation and serving must be thoroughly cleaned, and food preparation surfaces, equipment and utensils sanitised before use.

• Only use water that is safe (see next section).

• Pre-clean to remove visible dirt.

• Wash with hot water and detergent.

• Rinse with clean, hot water.

• Sanitise with a food-safe sanitiser.

• Final rinse (see sanitiser instructions as required).

• Air dry or use a single-use drying cloth.

Reusable cleaning cloths must be cleaned and sanitised before they are used again.

**Ensure water is safe to use**

Whenever a “boil water” notice is in effect:

• Boil all water for drinking, cleaning and use as an ingredient in food, or use (sealed) bottled drinking water. Reboil water that is not used in 24 hours.

• Turn off ice machines until the “boil water” notice has been lifted.

Most coffee machines only heat water to 80–85°C, so these machines need to be supplied with pre-boiled water. Plumbed-in machines should not be used.

When the “boil water” notice has been lifted, run taps to check the water before you use it. If you notice anything unusual with the colour or cloudiness or smell, contact your water supplier for advice. Don’t use the water until your supplier has confirmed that it is OK.

**Personal hygiene**

Always wash and dry your hands thoroughly before touching food, and especially after going to the toilet and touching dirty surfaces. If clean water is not available, use alcohol wipes, gels and hand sanitisers.

People who have cold or flu symptoms or have had sickness or diarrhoea within the previous 24 hours, or anyone with sores/lesions on their hands, neck or head should not help with food.

Using disposable gloves might help, but remember to change them regularly and wash your hands in clean water when you do so.

**Transporting and storing food**

• Separate raw and uncooked foods from foods that have been cooked or are ready-to-eat.

• Cover/wrap foods and keep in clean, closed containers when transporting.

• Transport cold foods containing meat, dairy products or seafood in a cold chilly bin below 4°C and then store them in a fridge or a cold chilly bin until use.

• Transport and store hot foods above 60°C.

• Make sure that the part of the vehicle where the food is carried is clean and free from things (i.e. chemicals)

that might contaminate the food.

**Preparing food**

• Buy fresh food from shops/supermarkets and prepare as close to when food is needed as possible. If you think or suspect that food is not safe, throw it out.

• It is illegal to sell food that has been caught for recreation or home-killed.

• Wash hands thoroughly after touching raw foods and before touching other food.

• Thoroughly clean equipment and surfaces before preparing food.

• Keep food wrapped or in clean, sealed containers when not being prepared or cooked.

**Keep food simple and cook it thoroughly**

Proper cooking kills harmful microbes present in foods containing poultry, meat, fish, shellfish and dairy products. Cook foods so that the centre of the thickest part is “done” – meat should not be pink in the middle and any juices should run clear, liquids should be bubbling hot.

**Cooling and reheating hot food**

Quickly cooling hot foods and thoroughly reheating them (reducing the time they are in the temperature danger zone between 4°C and 60°C) will help prevent the growth of harmful organisms.

• Put cooling food in a refrigerator as soon as possible – either when it has reached room temperature or has been cooling for no longer than two hours.

• Cooling can be speeded-up by putting hot food in a larger dish or dividing it into smaller portions to increase surface area.

• Reheat food until it is steaming hot all the way through. Keep it hot (above 60°C) until it’s served.

**Displaying food**

• Keep hot food hot (above 60°C) and cold food cold (below 4°C).

• Cover food displayed or stored at the event and keep it away from pests and pets (i.e. off the ground).

• Serve customers using clean tongs or equipment, rather than letting them handle your food.

• Use different tongs or utensils when handling raw foods to cooked or ready-to-eat foods.

• Thoroughly clean dishes before refilling them with food for display.

**Further information**

For information about food safety in an emergency:

• Contact your local council, or

• Visit: [www.foodsafety.govt.nz](http://www.foodsafety.govt.nz)

If you have any specific food safety question that is not covered by available advice, please phone 0800 69 37 21 for further information.