

# Food safety guidance for preparing food during emergency situations

## Are places structurally sound for preparing or handling food?

Once the building has formally been declared as safe you will need to make sure any damage to food areas, such as leaking pipes, does not stop you from operating hygienically.

## Are there toilets and personnel hygiene facilities available?

Make sure toilets for food handlers are in working order. If a “boil water” notice is in effect, staff should wash hands using cooled boiled water, or water treated with bleach/chlorine (five drops of bleach to one litre of water); then use a hand sanitiser. If clean water is not available, use alcohol wipes, gels and hand sanitisers.

## Clean preparation areas

Areas used for food preparation and serving must be thoroughly cleaned, and food preparation surfaces 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.

## Is the water safe to use?

Whenever a “boil water” notice is in effect:

- Boil all water for drinking and use as an ingredient in food, or use (sealed) bottled drinking water.
- 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.
- 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) 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 and cold food cold.
- 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.

### **Donated food**

- Food that has passed its “Use-by” date must not be used.
- Food marked with a “Best-before” date can be used after the date has passed, provided it is otherwise fit to eat. There may be some loss of quality after this date but there should not be any safety issue.
- Packaging, or at least the inner wrapping, should completely enclose donated food. Do not use any food that has been exposed and may have become contaminated, and don’t feed this food to your pets.
- Food must be clear of mould or slime or other signs of spoilage.
- Fresh meat should be frozen on or before its “Best-before” date. It should be hard-frozen when it is received.
- Cans that are excessively rusty or have been damaged along seams, or “spring” at the end, or are leaking should not be used.
- Chilled foods should have been maintained in the chill-chain at, or below, 4°C.
- Hot foods should have been thoroughly cooked and kept above 60°C.
- If reusing boxes and packaging, ensure that these have not been used for anything other than food, and have been made clean and hygienic.

### **Further information**

For information about food safety in an emergency:

- Contact your local council, or
- Visit: <http://www.foodsafety.govt.nz/elibrary/industry/food-safety-in-the-canterbury-earthquake.htm>
- Call **MAF Food Safety** on **0800 693 721**