

# GENERAL FOOD STORAGE GUIDELINES



This is a general list of the Foodbank's guidelines only. These guidelines do not replace, supersede, or in any way exempt your agency from compliance guidelines established by other authorities regulating or governing the activities of your agency.

If your agency is eligible for USDA and state commodities there are additional guidelines explained in the **Ohio Food Programs Manual**.

## General Food Storage Guidelines

All food storage areas must provide protection from weather, fire, theft and pests. Aisles between pallets or shelves must be wide enough to provide easy access for inspection, inventory and pulling of products. The following guidelines must be met to provide proper storage for your food.

- **Store Food At Least 6" Off The Floor**  
This can be done by keeping the food on pallets, platforms or shelves. Storing food off the floor helps prevent pests and protects the food from any possible water damage from minor flooding.
- **Store Food At Least 6" From The Walls**  
This must be maintained for proper air circulation and pest control.
- **Store Food At Least 18" From The Ceiling**  
This will help avoid high storage temperatures and allows for proper air circulation. Proper air circulation can also help prevent possible mold or mildew.
- **Date Each Case With The Month And Year It Was Received**  
Every case of product should be dated with the month and year it was received to maintain proper stock rotation. Older dates should be moved to the front and used before newer dates.
- **Your Full Stock Should Be Rotated Every 3 Months To Avoid Expired Product**  
To help assure the quality of products, the First In – First Out (FIFO) practice must be followed. Member agencies should never maintain more than a three-month supply of food.

- **Store Non-Food Items Separately**

All toxic items such as cleaning supplies and maintenance supplies must be kept away from food to avoid the possibility of cross-contamination. Storing these products below food products is acceptable, but a separate cabinet, shelving unit or storage location is highly recommended.
- **Clean Floors, Pallets And Shelving Regularly**

All areas should be swept and mopped regularly. Clean spills immediately and sanitize storage areas regularly. Cleaning helps prevent possible cross-contamination due to spills or leaks and helps to control any possible pests by eliminating possible food sources. It is a best practice to establish a cleaning schedule listing the necessary frequency of cleaning for each location. Floors, including under pallets, should be swept and cleaned at least monthly. High traffic areas require more frequent cleaning.
- **Keep Doors, Windows And Roofs Well Sealed**

By maintaining the integrity of the seals, you can prevent pests from entering your storage area and prevent water damage from heavy rains or melting snow.
- **Maintain A Pest Control System**

Have a proper pest control plan in place or contract with a licensed pest control firm. Poison must not be used due to possible contamination to the food. Traps and glue boards are recommended. If your agency chooses to handle pest control internally, please make sure to record and maintain the dates of inspection, the inspection results, any corrective actions taken and the name of the person(s) handling the pest control. Pest control records must be kept for three years.
- **Maintain Equipment Regularly**

Check all refrigerator and freezer units on a regular basis for leaks or problems. Gasket seals should be cleaned and checked for gaps. If your equipment shows signs of moisture build-up or ice around the door gaskets, the gaskets should be replaced. Maintaining a proper seal will help ensure proper refrigeration temperatures are maintained and help save money on your utility bills. Air filters on the equipment should also be cleaned to help prevent the equipment from overheating.

- **Maintain Proper Temperatures In All Storage Areas**

Thermometers must be kept in all storage areas. Proper temperature ranges for each storage area are:

Refrigerated Units	33 <sup>0</sup> – 40 <sup>0</sup> F
Freezer Units	0 <sup>0</sup> F or below
Dry Storage Areas	50 <sup>0</sup> – 75 <sup>0</sup> F

- **Maintain Temperature Logs For All Storage Areas**

Temperature logs can show variances in temperatures over a period of time. Fluctuating temperatures can be a sign that your equipment is malfunctioning and may need to be repaired or replaced. Early detection of problems can save you money and prevent loss of food should the equipment break down. Temperature logs should be updated weekly with the date the temperature was checked, the thermometer reading and the initials of the person completing the log. Temperature logs must be kept for three years.

- **Follow Basic Rules For Stacking Product**

Limit the height of the product stacks to protect food on the bottom layers from being crushed or the stack from toppling over. As a rule of thumb, stacks should never be taller than the average human height. Heavier items should always be stacked on the bottom and lighter items stacked on top. Cross-stack cases on pallets to ensure the stack will be sturdy and solid to avoid tipping. Shrink-wrap stacks for stability if the product is to be moved. Remove any cases that are bent or damaged from the stack to avoid weak areas that could collapse. These boxes can be placed on the top of the stack.

- **Report Damaged Product**

If you receive damaged or infested products from the Foodbank, please contact us immediately. Any damaged or infested product should be moved from your secure storage location and saved until you have contacted the Foodbank for further instructions. Foodbank staff may ask you to take a picture of the products to document the problem and you may be asked to complete a report. We must receive notification within 48 hours from receiving your order to consider credits if applicable.

Any questions or concerns regarding general food storage guidelines should be directed to the Member Services Department at 330.535.6900.