



The Food Bank Response to Disasters

Food banks are an important resource to help meet the food needs of those affected by emergencies and disasters. For food banks that participate in The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), one effective way to address disaster food needs is to enroll affected individuals and families in TEFAP. Under certain conditions, food banks may also work through their State agency to request approval from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to operate a household disaster food distribution program using USDA Foods. TEFAP and household disaster feeding are two separate and distinct programs that can be used to respond to emergencies and disasters.

TEFAP Feeding During Disasters

TEFAP offers an immediate means of providing food to those in need during an emergency or disaster. TEFAP is an ongoing program with an already established distribution network. States determine the income eligibility guidelines, and disaster survivors often qualify. USDA Foods distributed through TEFAP during a disaster are part of the State's TEFAP allocation, and are not eligible for replacement.

Establishing a Household Disaster Feeding Program Using USDA Foods

Household disaster feeding using USDA Foods takes place only as needed, requires approval from FNS Headquarters, and comes with certain conditions that must be met. Only FNS has the authority to re-designate TEFAP food for use in disaster feeding. Food banks should **not** distribute TEFAP foods as part of a household disaster food distribution program without first working through their State Distributing Agency to obtain approval from FNS. The State Agency will work through their FNS Regional Office to obtain approval from FNS Headquarters. Approval from FNS Headquarters ensures that all conditions for replacement of the USDA Foods used have been met. Keep in mind that FNS has no authority to reimburse food banks for **administrative** expenses associated with any household disaster food distributions.

Before FNS will consider approval of a household disaster food distribution program, the following circumstances must exist in the disaster area:

- Commercial food distribution channels are disrupted making it difficult for food retailers to operate, and for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to be redeemed.
- Congregate feeding is not practical or expected to be inadequate to meet the needs of all affected households.

- Households are sheltering in place at home and are in need of food.
- The local disaster feeding organization can efficiently and effectively receive, store, and distribute USDA Foods.

Applications to use USDA Foods in a household disaster food distribution program must be submitted to FNS Headquarters through the State Distributing Agency. The application should, to the extent possible, include the following information:

- A description of the disaster, emergency, or situation of distress.
- Identification of the specific areas that would be served, and the number of households expected to participate in disaster feeding.
- An explanation as to why household distribution is warranted, and the anticipated distribution period.
- The quantity and types of food needed.
- Assurances that households will not receive both USDA Foods and Disaster SNAP benefits, and a description of the system used to prevent dual participation.
- The method(s) of distribution available.

Food banks approved to a household disaster food distribution program are required to collect minimal household information and, if Disaster SNAP is also operating, obtain a signed statement from each household that they are not also receiving Disaster SNAP benefits.

FNS regulations addressing USDA Foods for disasters can be found at 7 CFR 250.69 and 250.70. More information on this topic can also be found at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/fd-disasters/> or by contacting your FNS Regional Office.

