

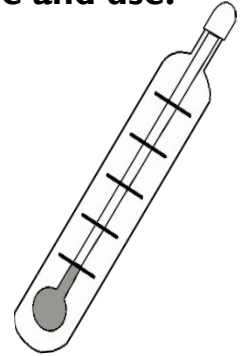


Emergency food providers often receive donated product and may wonder if the product is safe to use. Below are some questions that an emergency food provider can ask to determine the safety of the product and help staff and volunteers effectively judge a product's safety.

Please feel free to post this in a location for staff and volunteers to see and use.

1. How was the product stored before it was received?

In order for a product to be safe to eat or drink, it must be properly stored. If you are concerned about how the product was handled before reaching your facility and suspect it was not stored properly, then discard the product. To verify that the product was handled correctly, contact the place it came from for more information if possible. If it is a USDA commodity, you can contact the TEFAP contact at the Indiana State Department of Health for further instruction.



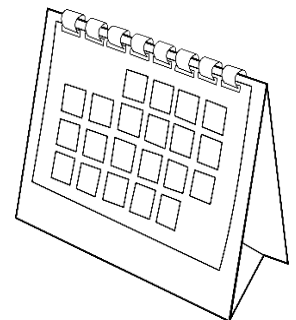
2. Is the product physically damaged?

The product should not have physical damages that compromise the safety of the food. Make sure to inspect the packages for damage. If there is damage that compromises the safety of the product, then discard the product. Possible damage could be:

- rips, tears, punctures, or holes
- rodent droppings or urine stains (use a black light if you have one), rodent gnaw marks
- spills or stains from any unknown source or contaminant
- insect damage such as bugs in the seam, bore holes, movement or spots in the products, insect skins or chaff in the bottom of the container, webs
- missing or illegible labels
- indication of previously being opened or of tampering to the container
- dents, bulges, pits, or leaks in cans
- loose cap or bulging or missing safety seal

3. Is the product past its best-by or use-by date?

Best-by and use-by dates are not indications of expiration, but they do indicate when the safety of a food may become a concern. Products used after these dates may develop off-flavors, odors, appearance/colors, and/or textures. If the product has developed off-flavors, odors, appearance/colors, or textures, then discard the product. The exception to best-by and use-by dates is infant formula. Discard any infant formula past the date on the package.



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: There may be situations where a sensory evaluation is appropriate, such as if you cannot verify how the product
: was handled or if it is missing a best-by or use-by date. A sensory evaluation is another way to assess the overall
: quality of the product. To conduct a sensory evaluation, make sure the food is defrosted and/or cooked if
: necessary, and then open it to assess its color, texture, and smell. **DO NOT** taste the food if you suspect it to be
: unsafe. Discard the product if you determine it is unsafe to eat.
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Sources: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/hhp-biubguide.pdf>; Donated Food Checklist found at <https://www.purdue.edu/indianasefrnetwork/resources/foodsafety.aspx>; Guidelines for Evaluating Bagged and Sacked Food Containers found at <https://www.purdue.edu/indianasefrnetwork/docs/Guidelinesforevaluatingbaggedandsacked.pdf>; Guidelines for Evaluating Boxed and Dry Packaged Containers found at <https://www.purdue.edu/indianasefrnetwork/docs/Guidelinesforevaluatingboxedanddry.pdf>; Guidelines for Evaluating Canned Food Containers found at <https://www.purdue.edu/indianasefrnetwork/docs/Guidelinesforevaluatingcanned.pdf>; Guidelines for Evaluating Glass Food Containers found at <https://www.purdue.edu/indianasefrnetwork/docs/Guidelinesforevaluatingglass.pdf>

For more information

AskFSIS (<http://askfsis.custhelp.com/>). The Food Safety and Inspection Service, a branch of the USDA, has a database of answers to questions that people have asked in the past. You can also ask your own questions and receive answers.



AskKaren (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/informational/askkaren>). This is very similar to AskFSIS.

Still Tasty (www.stilltasty.com). This website has a “Keep It or Toss It?” database that allows you to search by food or beverage to find tips on proper storage and a general idea of how long the product can be stored. An iPhone App is also available with this database.

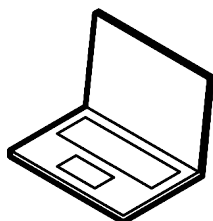
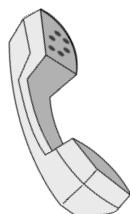
The local health department. They may be able to provide an inspection of a product if you suspect it may not be safe for consumption.

StillTasty
Your Ultimate Shelf Life Guide

More information on product dating. See the information sheet from Still Tasty (<http://www.stilltasty.com/articles/view/5>) and The Food Safety and Inspection Service (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/food-labeling/food-product-dating/food-product-dating>) for more information about product dating.

The government provides phone numbers and emails for the public to contact if they have a question, depending on the category of food:

Food (except meat and poultry)	Phone: 1-888-SAFEFOOD (1-888-723-3366). Call weekdays between 10:00am and 4:00pm EST.	Submit a question electronically by going to http://www.foodsafety.gov/experts/other/index.html and clicking on “ Submit Your Question. ”
Meat, Poultry, or Egg Products	Phone: 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) (TTY: 1-800-256-7072). Call weekdays between 10:00am and 4:00pm EST.	Email: mph hotline.fsis@usda.gov
Pet Food	Phone: Call the FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine at (240) 276-9300 and leave a message.	Email: CVMHomeP@cvm.fda.gov



Learn more about how to evaluate donated products by watching our series of short, entertaining videos featuring Ken McKan, The Food Safety Man at **Indiana’s Emergency Food Resource Network** website. You can find the videos under **Resources** for the **Video Library** at <https://www.purdue.edu/indianasefrnetwork//resources/videolibrary.aspx>.

