

Together We Can Build Food-Safe Schools!

Strategy Sheet

Strategies for Emergency Planners

Who knows more about preparing for emergencies, preventing crises, and responding to emergency situations quickly and effectively than you, the emergency planner? Sharing your expertise and working with the school nutrition team can help establish and support safe and healthy schools. By working with partners in the school community, you can help the school nutrition director establish plans to prevent and respond to foodborne illness, particularly illness that may result from intentional contamination.

Food-safe schools adopt a school-wide approach to food safety, and, with the help of partners in the school community, can create a culture of food safety. Food-safe schools address a broad range of topics beyond the scope of what may be required by legislation. This starts with building and supporting strong food safety policies and procedures, and continues with education and training. Partners can help achieve the ultimate goal of making food safety second nature to everyone in the school community, thus creating a culture of food safety.

Emergency Planners Are Essential to Creating a Culture of Food Safety

- You are the local expert in planning and preparing for crises and emergencies. An incident involving the school food supply may warrant an emergency response.
 - You can help schools understand how the effective application of the Incident Command System (ICS) will help when responding to an emergency.
 - You can help school nutrition directors identify and plan for potential emergencies involving food served in schools and the impact of those emergencies on the school community.
- You can assist schools with rapid crisis communication during food-related emergencies.

Thinking About Food Safety

- How do the four phases of effective emergency management planning (Prevention-Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery) apply to school nutrition? Should food-related emergencies be part of a comprehensive school emergency management plan?
- What are some ways that you can help the school nutrition team enhance food safety in the school community?

Take Action!

- Establish a partnership with the school nutrition director.
Collaboration and communication are critical to emergency management. Talk with the school nutrition director about a food-related emergency management plan. Ensure that it takes an “all-hazards” approach; includes a risk assessment, Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), and emergency feeding plan; and addresses intentional and unintentional incidents that may contaminate the food supply.
- Assist in developing a food defense plan.
Meet with the school nutrition director to discuss and review the school district’s food defense plan. Provide specific suggestions to include in or enhance that plan. Assist the school nutrition director in running a drill or exercise to test their preparedness. ■