



Cooler Packing for Safe Food Transport

Action	Recommendation	
1. Collect equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insulated cooler • Freezer packs (for unfrozen donations) • Food thermometer 	
2. Clean equipment 	Clean inside and outside of cooler with a bleach-and-water mixture. Make sure freezer packs and thermometer are clean.	
3. Get pickup details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of Food – How much food are you picking up? Is it frozen or just refrigerated? (This determines how many coolers are needed and whether you need freezer packs.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel Time Estimate– How much time will it take to travel between the food pickup and the agency? (Required travel time is combination of distance, speed limits and any likely traffic or construction delays.) • Day and Time of Pickup

Note: The travel time recommendation for coolers is up to 4 hours. If travel time goes over 4 hours, or if food is refrigerated but not frozen at pickup, use freezer packs to help maintain the food at or below 40° Fahrenheit (F), 4° Celsius (C). Freezer packs can also be used to pre-cool the cooler prior to donation pick up. If possible, use a food thermometer that registers lower temperatures (0° to 60° F, or -17° to 16° C) to monitor food temperature during transport.

4. Monitor risks at pickup 	Contamination Risks – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note whether cooler bottom is exposed to dirty surfaces and avoid placing it on food preparation tables. • Donations should be labeled and securely packaged. • Wash hands prior to packing cooler. 	Temperature/Time Risks – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure food donations are frozen or were properly refrigerated prior to pickup. • Place cooler in a clean, cool location in transport vehicle, avoiding contamination risks through contact with dirt and foreign objects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have freezer packs and a thermometer, place freezer packs on top of food in cooler, and place thermometer between bags of food (but not touching a freezer pack) to monitor temperature during transport.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the time when cooler was packed at the donor location and then note the time it is unpacked at delivery to calculate transport time. 			
5. Monitor risks at delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon delivery, inform the agency of any contamination risks encountered, or problems with food temperature, packaging, or transport time. (For example, if travel time was over 4 hours, or food was not frozen at pickup.) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid placing the cooler on a food preparation table.