

Food Safety on Field Trips

(Note to school nutrition manager: Provide a copy of this handout and review it with the person(s) picking up the meals for transport.)

School nutrition staff, teachers, other school staff, parents and volunteers must work together to ensure that field trip meals are safe to eat. Harmful bacteria multiply rapidly in the "Danger Zone" — the temperatures between 41°F and 135 °F. So, perishable foods and beverages won't stay safe long when being transported. Here are safe handling recommendations to prevent foodborne illness from "bag" lunches:

- Receive all cold perishable foods at 41 °F or below from the school nutrition staff and note the time that the food was removed from refrigeration temperatures in the cafeteria and mark the storage cooler with a "Must be eaten by: xx (time)" message (i.e. the message should be either 4 hours or 1 hour depending on the storage temperature). Cold foods should be kept below 41°F OR eaten within 4 hours if stored below 70°F OR eaten within 1 hour if kept at temperatures above 90°F.
- If items are placed in portable food transport units (such as coolers), keep the units tightly closed until meals are distributed. These units should have an ambient air thermometer or a probe thermometer inside of the unit and the temperature of the perishable foods should not be above 70 degrees for more than 4 hours.
- These are the types of foods that should be kept in portable cold storage units.
 - Deli sandwiches – turkey, ham, roast beef, chicken and tuna salads, etc.
 - Cut fresh fruit and vegetables especially melons, tomatoes and leafy greens (excludes whole fruit and pre-packaged, shelf-stable cut fruit like fruit cups and applesauce)
 - Dairy products – milk, yogurt, cheeses
- Keep assembled and cut foods, like sandwiches and sliced fruit or vegetables, in tightly wrapped or sealed containers.
- Plan to serve foods and beverages within 4 hours of picking up meals from the school nutrition program (unless foods are above 90 degrees; if so, use the 1 hour rule). Record the time that the meals are served. This could be done directly on the student roster for checking meal service.
- Store transport containers and foods out of direct sunlight and away from engines.
- Wash hands prior to distributing meals. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer is not a suitable substitute as it is not effective against foodborne viruses and allergens.
- Use clean disposable gloves or utensils when distributing any unwrapped or unpackaged ready-to-serve food (i.e. whole pieces of fresh fruit, sandwiches packaged in bulk containers, etc.)
- Have students thoroughly wash their hands before receiving meals and eating.
- Ask that students not share foods to reduce incidences of allergic reactions.
- Discard all leftover food items immediately following the meal service.

In addition to following proper food safety procedures to prevent food borne illness, there are some additional considerations for keeping students safe and accounting for meals accurately.

- Be aware of students with food allergies and request that students not share foods without adult supervision and consent.
- Check the student roster to indicate which students received a meal and return the roster to the school nutrition manager after the field trip.