

Many residents across the district may wish to provide cooked meals to evacuees on the road or at independent shelters. While we want evacuees to be fed, we also want them to be safe. **The safest way to provide food for evacuees is by donating gift cards at the designated drop-off locations.** Red Cross shelters will not accept prepared food donations. North Central Health District urges all individuals and organizations providing cooked meals to follow proper handwashing, food preparation and food storage procedures to avoid the spread of foodborne illnesses like Salmonella and Norovirus. Following these guidelines can help create a safe environment for evacuees during their stay.

- Wash hands frequently. Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water before, during and after preparing food.
- Always wash your hands after coughing or sneezing, using the restroom, or disposing trash.
- Avoid barehanded contact with ready-to-eat foods: fresh fruits, vegetables or precooked/prepackaged foods.
- Separate raw meats, seafood, poultry and eggs from all other foods.
- If you are sick, avoid helping with food preparation.
- Use separate cutting boards and plates for raw meat, seafood and poultry.
- Use a food thermometer to make sure foods reach internal temperatures high enough to kill germs that can lead to sickness:
 - 145°F for cuts of beef, pork, lamb or veal.
 - 160°F for ground beef or pork.
 - 165°F for poultry, including ground turkey or chicken.
 - 165°F for casseroles or leftovers.
- When serving foods, always use gloves to avoid barehanded contact.
- Keep pets and other animals out of the kitchen or other food preparation areas.
- While serving, hot food items should be kept at 135°F or higher and cold foods items should be kept at 41°F or less.
- Food products not being served immediately should be kept refrigerated. All food left out at room temperature should be disposed of after 2 hours.
- Limit food donations from outside sources – it is best to only accept prepackaged items.
- Use bottled water if the shelter is connected to well water.
- Makes sure there is enough space to collect and store trash. Trash may not be collected on the regular schedule if storms impact routes.
- Always keep medication and chemicals out of children’s reach.

For more information and resources on hurricane preparedness, please visit NCHD52.org/Hurricane.