



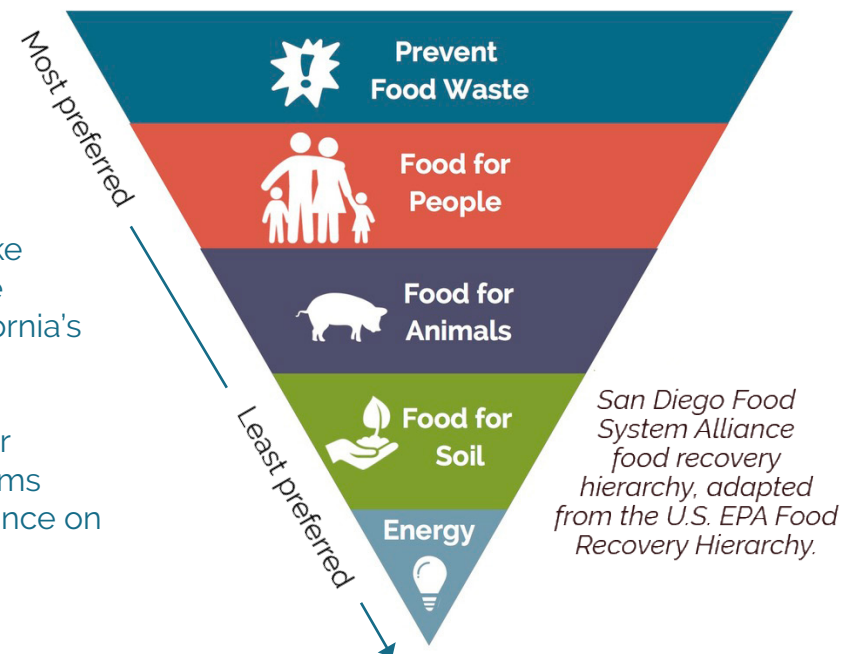
Food Rescue Made Easy

Best Management Practices for CA and San Diego County

Who is this document for?

This food rescue guidance document is part of a series aimed at helping commercial food service providers – e.g., restaurants, hotels, grocery stores, corporate cafeterias, and schools – reduce the volume of organic waste they send to landfills. Achieving California's ambitious diversion goals will take commitment from players across the food service value chain; these tips are particularly geared toward decision makers, trainers, or advisors within California's food service industry.

As shown in the diagram on the right, donating food to hungry people is near the top of the food recovery hierarchy. However, the most successful programs implement several strategies. See the other tip sheets in this series for guidance on food waste reduction and source separation.



Why donate surplus food?

Food donation yields financial, environmental, and social benefits.

- **Save money** by leveraging tax incentives and reducing waste hauling fees.
- Help **reduce methane emissions** by keeping food waste out of landfills.
- **Feed hungry people** – rescuing just 10% of the half million tons of food landfilled in San Diego County every year would feed the County's half million food insecure individuals.¹

California's policy response to tackling the food waste problem includes explicit goals to increase food rescue. The Short-Lived Climate Pollutants Law (SB 1383) targets 20% of edible food that is disposed to be recovered for human consumption by 2025.

Ready to get started?

Key steps to establishing a successful donation program:

1. **Identify** the types and amounts of surplus food to be donated
2. **Understand** labeling and storage requirements to ensure food safety
3. **Partner** with a food rescue organization
4. **Establish** a transportation plan and protocol, including pick-up or drop-off frequency and quantities

Selecting, labeling, and storing food for donation

Most categories of food can be donated, as long as the food is **“apparently wholesome”** or **“fit for human consumption”**. This even pertains to food that has exceeded its manufacturer's shelf-life date. Donated food should be properly packaged and stored to prevent contamination and spoilage. The table below provides specific guidance for packaging, storing, and labeling foods – but these should look familiar as they are aligned with best practices for food handling.

¹ San Diego Food Systems Alliance. Available at: sdfsa.org/food-waste-solution-summit



Food Handling Guidelines for Donating Food

	Prepared Foods	Packaged Foods	Fresh Produce
Examples of foods and storage requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrees (pasta, pizza, vegetables, prepared meat): Chilled at 41°F or below or frozen at 0 °F or below • Baked goods: Cool and dry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelf-stable (boxed, canned foods): Cool and dry • Meat (fresh), dairy, perishable: Chilled at 41°F or below • Meat (frozen or unprocessed): Frozen at 0 °F or below 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole: Cool and dry • Chopped: Chilled at 41°F or below
Recommended language for the label	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The name and location of food distribution organization (pre-printed) 2. The name and location of donor 3. The food description 4. The date of donation 5. Allergen disclaimer statement (pre-printed) <p>WARNING! This container holds rescued food! This food may contain, have come into contact with, or have been produced in a facility which also produces milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts (walnuts, almonds, pecans, hazelnuts/filberts, pistachios, cashews, coconuts, pine nuts, macadamia nuts, and/or Brazil nuts), fish, shellfish (crab, crawfish, lobster, shrimp, mussels, and/or oysters), wheat, soybeans, and/or sesame seeds,</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The common or usual name of the product 2. The name and place of business of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor 3. The net quantity of the contents 4. The common or usual name of each ingredient, listed in descending order of prominence <p>(Packaged foods typically have sufficient labeling from the retailer)</p>	No label required

Table adapted from: Conference for Food Protection (2016). *Comprehensive Resource for Food Recovery Programs*, p 15 and pp 37-38. Available at: foodprotect.org/media/guide/comprehensive-resource-for-food-recovery-2016-version.pdf

Partnering with food rescue organizations

Frequent communication and site visits with partner food rescue organizations can foster positive relationships, build trust, and help drive successful donation programs. It is also important to have a **written agreement** with partner organizations so that there is shared understanding of what foods will be donated, how that food will be handled and stored, and how frequently that food will be transported.

Establishing a food transportation plan

Canned and shelf-stable foods have different transportation needs than temperature-controlled foods. Speak with your partner food rescue organizations to ensure that food is being transported appropriately. **Keep transportation logs** to ensure that food is arriving at the donation location in the same condition as it left your facility. The form to the right is an example of a transportation log that can be used to ensure that food is transported safely and appropriately.

Click to view larger



COMBINED AGENCY PICKUP AND DELIVERY TEMPERATURE LOG

Donor name and location _____ Date _____

PRODUCT At Pick-up at Donor (Take refrigerated product temperatures only)	Temp. @ pickup (<41F)	Temp. @ delivery (<41F)	Temp. Taken by	PRODUCTS NOT PICKED UP a) Temperature over 41F. b) No label, ingredient list, allergen declaration. c) Packaging damaged. d) Product did not look or smell good. e) Other (Explain)

- 1) Take product temperatures at random, not all products need to have their temperature taken.
- 2) Use an Infrared thermometer or place a digital thermometer probe between 2 packages;
- 3) Do not insert the thermometer probe into the product.
- 4) "Temp. Taken by" use the initials of the person taking the temperatures.
- 5) Use codes a, b, c, d for products you do not accept; if using e then give an explanation.
- 6) Agency needs to relay all product conditions back to the donor; not the "Out of temperature" concerns as that is an Agency transportation issue.
- 7) Separate sheet should be used for each donor.
- 8) Keep these records for 2 years.

Sector spotlight:

San Diego County Regional Airport Authority

Since 2013, the San Diego Airport has been diverting wasted food from the landfill. Change has happened incrementally; what began as one vendor's coffee grounds has expanded to **diverting all pre-consumer food scraps from 40 restaurants and prep kitchens**. In 2015, seven full-service restaurants began post-consumer food waste diversion and in 2016, the airport launched its food recovery and donation program in partnership with the United Service Organization.

The San Diego Airport is the site of the world's largest USO airport facility, receiving about 11,000 active duty service members and their families per month. Airport concessionaires donate surplus food to USO, leveraging a unique opportunity for the airport to create an onsite food rescue program.

The Airport Authority provided each food and beverage concession with a blue bin for surplus or unsold edible food (along with a green bin for food scraps). The Bradford Airport's Logistics team, which operates refrigerated trucks and was already delivering goods to the airport terminals, collects the blue bins twice a week and delivers them to the USO facility. In the first 10 months of implementation, over 8000 pounds of food were donated to feed the military and their families, with excess being donated to the San Diego Rescue Mission. **By 2018, the total edible food rescued had risen to 102,035 pounds!**

The San Diego Airport Authority's food waste diversion program is a big win for the environment, preventing greenhouse gas emissions that would have resulted from landfilling food waste, along with the emissions associated with transporting that food waste to a disposal facility. The economic benefits are also substantial – **the Airport Authority is saving about \$20,000 per year in avoided tipping fees.**





Sector spotlight:

Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina

The Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina launched their food waste diversion program in 2011. Today, the hotel is **saving nearly 40% on its monthly hauling fees** as a result of increasing from a 15% to nearly **90% landfill diversion rate**.

For food rescue, the Sheraton partners with the San Diego Rescue Mission, which has a refrigerated truck and collects surplus food from the hotel three times per week. In 2018, Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina **donated 35,000 pounds of edible food** – the equivalent of over 29,000 meals – that would have otherwise been landfilled or composted. community in this effort.

Tax incentives

There are financial perks for food donation that can be leveraged through **federal tax deductions and California tax credits**.

- General tax deduction (federal). Allows businesses to write-off the cost of the product to the business.
- Enhanced tax deduction (federal). Allows businesses to write-off a deduction close to fair market value when certain conditions are met with respect to the receiving organization and the fate of the donated food.
- CA Tax Code § 17053.88 (credit). Allows taxpayers responsible for planting, managing, and harvesting agricultural products to receive a credit worth 10% of inventory cost of donated produce.
- CA Tax Code § 17053.12 (credit). Allows taxpayers engaged in processing, distributing, and selling agricultural products to receive a credit equivalent to 50% of transportation costs of donated agricultural crops.

The federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (42 U.S.C. § 1791) encourages food donation by providing liability protections for businesses and schools that donate “apparently wholesome” food in “good faith” to nonprofit organizations.

But I’m worried about liability

Several **federal and state laws protect food donors from liability**. The federal **Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act** (42 U.S.C. § 1791) encourages food donation by providing liability protections for businesses and schools that donate “apparently wholesome” food in “good faith” to nonprofit organizations.

California’s Good Samaritan Food Donation Law (first passed in 1977 and updated in 2017) gives further protection to food donors. The law extends protection:

- Regardless of compliance with food labeling/packaging laws and storage/handling by the recipients;
- Even if food has exceeded the labeled shelf life date recommended by the manufacturer and narrows the exception to protection from liability to injury resulting from gross negligence or intentional misconduct;
- To food facilities that donate food directly to end recipients for consumption.

Sector spotlight:

Vista Unified School District

The Vista Unified School District's (VUSD) 27 elementary, middle, and high schools all participate in a food donation program that was designed to divert as much food as possible from the landfill.

The schools utilize a share cooler system, where students can make unopened foods available for their peers. Typical items in the share coolers include unopened milk and juice cartons, string cheese, crackers, hummus cups, and dried fruit. Implementing the share coolers entailed training students and lunch-time supervisors to understand share cooler guidelines and restrictions in CA. The share coolers are very popular and middle schools are even training students to monitor them during meal times. **Whatever remains in the share cooler at the end of the day is included in each school's donation to the San Diego Food Bank.**

Share coolers (or tables) are increasingly popular across California schools and are a great way to prevent food waste while helping to ensure that every student has enough to eat. In California, everything from unopened packaged foods, to whole uncut produce, to unopened milk and other perishable foods that are stored in properly temperature-controlled environments may be put on share tables or donated.

VUSD developed food donation procedures by working with stakeholders across the food value chain – from kitchen leads to delivery drivers and the warehouse storekeeper. They piloted draft procedures at one school, refined the process, and then held a district-wide meeting to review and answer questions before rolling out across all schools. Transportation is streamlined by having drivers move surplus food from schools to nutrition services' central kitchen a few times a week. The San Diego Food Bank collects donated food once a week from the central kitchen.

VUSD donates over 38,000 pounds of food each school year – equivalent to nearly 26,000 meals that would have ended up in the landfill.



Resources

[San Diego Food Bank](#) – The largest hunger relief organization in the county. They partner with 500 non-profit organizations to get fresh and prepared foods to needy recipients.

[Feeding San Diego](#) – Helps connect fruit tree growers with gleaning organizations around San Diego. They also work with other food donors to accept and distribute meals.

[Share Tables At Schools](#) – The Department of Environmental Health for the County of San Diego published a reference document for food safety management for food on share tables.

Questions?

For questions about setting up food donation, ask your food inspector or contact the County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health at: (858) 505-6900 or, visit their [website](#).





The Center for EcoTechnology (CET) helps people and businesses save energy and reduce waste. CET acts as a catalyst to accelerate the development of a vibrant marketplace to divert wasted food from the commercial and institutional sectors. We have been a leader in the wasted food reduction and diversion movement for more than 20 years, implementing some of the first wasted food composting programs in the country, and contributing to effective public policy.

We believe that better managing wasted food is critical in order to address climate change, feed more hungry people, and grow our economy. If you are a city, state or federal agency, industry group or foundation, and want to tackle the issue of wasted food, please contact us!

**Phone: (888) 813-8522 | Email: wastedfood@cetonline.org
wastedfood.cetonline.org**

This material is based upon work supported under a grant by the Rural Utilities Service, United States Department of Agriculture.

Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are the sole responsibilities of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Rural Utilities Service.

The Center for EcoTechnology is an equal opportunity provider and employer.