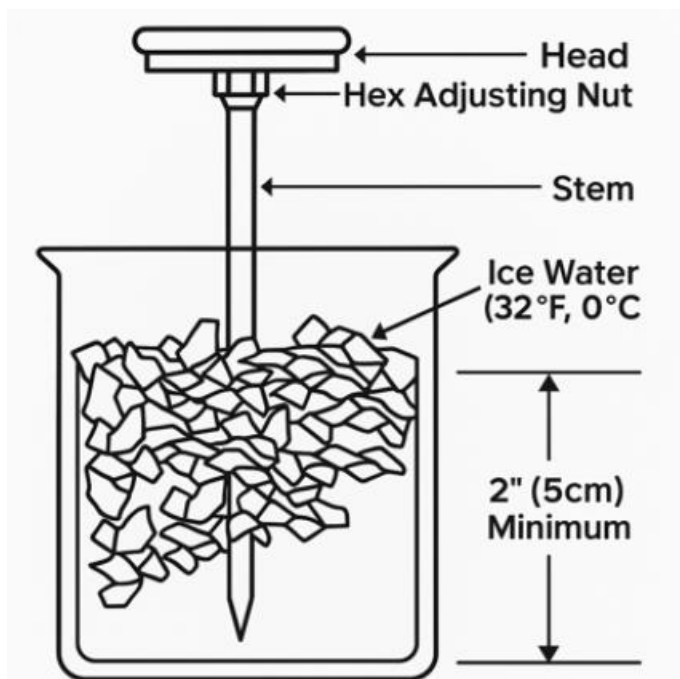


Why Temperature Checks Are Needed

Feeding America requires that all partners who transport food (home deliveries, satellite locations, redistribute) check and record food temperatures to ensure safe handling and distribution of perishable food. This process helps prevent foodborne illness and ensures all refrigerated and frozen products stay within safe temperature ranges from store pickup to drop-off. By following these steps, we help keep food safe for our community!

Equipment

- Use a calibrated probe thermometer (analog or digital), contact surface probe thermometer, or an infrared thermometer.
 - a. Analog thermometers can be recalibrated by hand, using a small wrench.
 - b. Digital probe thermometers are also acceptable to use. However, if they stop reading accurately, some models must be mailed to the manufacturer or a certified recalibration service for recalibration. Please check your thermometer's user guide to confirm proper recalibration procedures.
 - c. Common examples that indicate thermometer is not reading correctly:
 - i. Temperature reading seems too high or low for the product
 - ii. Temperature reading does not stabilize
 - iii. Temperature reading does not change when moved between warm and cold items
 - d. For infrared thermometers and contact surface probe thermometers please follow recalibration instructions provided by manufacturer.
- For Analog probe thermometers, please follow the Orange County Health Care Agency's instructions for thermometer calibration.
 - a. Fill a cup almost to the top with ice, then add a small amount of water.
 - b. Place the thermometer at least 2 inches into the ice water (without touching the sides or bottom of the cup).
 - c. Wait 30 seconds, then read the dial or screen, and it should read 32°F (0°C).
 - d. If it doesn't read 32°F:
 - i. While the thermometer is still in the ice water, use pliers or the small wrench to adjust the nut until it reads 32°F.
 - ii. Wait 30 seconds and check again. Repeat until it reads 32°F.
 - e. Image of analog probe thermometer for calibration:



- f. Video Tutorial for Calibrating a Thermometer: [Calibrating a Thermometer: Ice Water Method by USDA](#)
- g. Recalibrate your thermometer(s) regularly (at least monthly). Please see below for other instances for when your thermometer(s) should be recalibrated:
 - i. If the thermometer has been exposed to drastic temperature changes (like being left in a vehicle during hot days)
 - ii. Any time the thermometer has been dropped or bumped to make sure it stays accurate.
- h. We recommend having a staff member assigned to recalibrate thermometers.
 - i. Having a dedicated staff member responsible for recalibrating thermometers ensures the following:
 - 1. Understanding the process of recalibrating thermometers
 - 2. Keeping recalibrations consistent
 - 3. Knowing where thermometers are at
 - 4. Ensuring they're stored correctly

When to Take Temperatures

- Take temperatures:
 - a. At the point of loading the vehicle (store pickup)
 - b. At the point of unloading the vehicle (at location drop-off)
 - c. Only check cold (refrigerated) and frozen foods
 - i. TCS (Temperature Control for Safety) Items
 - 1. Animal products
 - 2. Cooked food
 - 3. Dairy products
 - 4. Cut fruit and veggies
 - 5. Other moist, protein rich food
 - a. Tofu, plant-based milks (not shelf stable), garlic in oil mixtures
 - d. Produce, non-food, and shelf-stable foods do not need temperature checks

How to Take Temperatures

- Take one sample temperature for cold and one sample temperature for frozen
 - a. You do not need to take the temperature of every item. Instead, take one sample temperature for cold and for frozen.
 - i. Examples:
 - 1. Boxes of food donated at pickup and drop-off:
 - a. Milk, eggs, cut watermelon
 - Sample the temperature of 1 COLD item
 - If milk is present must check milk
 - b. Frozen chicken, frozen peas, frozen mangos
 - Sample the temperature of 1 FROZEN item
 - If chicken is present must check the temperature of chicken
 - ii. How to choose sample items:

Temperature Monitoring at Loading and Unloading



1. If using probe thermometers elect two of the same (or similar) items from the center of the load (the center holds the most accurate temperature).
 - a. Examples:
 - Cold
 - If there are multiple milks, choose two milks from the center of the load.
 - Frozen
 - If there is frozen meat, select two similar frozen packages from the center. If chicken is present please temp the chicken.
 - b. You do not need to check every item.
- Check the temperature:
 - a. Use your calibrated probe thermometer, infrared thermometer, or contact surface thermometer.
 - a. If using probe thermometers (analog or digital)
 - i. Place the probe between two units of the same or similar items (do not poke through packaging).
 - b. Wait for the reading to stabilize, then record it.
 - i. The reading may take a few minutes to fully stabilize. Please allow for up to two minutes and log temperature if not fully stabilized.
 - c. If using infrared thermometers
 - i. Aim at the center of the product to take a surface reading
 1. If an IR reading seems incorrect or does not make sense, verify it with a probe thermometer
 - d. If using surface contact thermometers
 - i. Press the sensor firmly and flat against the food package. Make sure the entire sensor surface is touching the package.
 - ii. Hold it steady until the temperature reading stops changing. This may take a few seconds.
- b. Record one representative temperature for all cold and one representative temperature for all frozen items.

Acceptable Temperatures

Food Category	Safe Temperature	If It's Too Warm
Cold/Refrigerated (including refrigerated meats that are received refrigerated - not frozen - and still within their best by/freeze by date)	41°F or below	If over 41°F at pickup, leave at store and let staff know product is above safe temperature. If 41° - 50°F at drop-off, return to refrigerator within 2 hours or distribute immediately. If over 50°F at drop-off please dispose of.

Temperature Monitoring at Loading and Unloading



Frozen	32°F or below	If 0-20°F at pickup acceptable If over 20°F at pickup, leave at store and let staff know product is above safe temperature. If 32°F or below at drop-off acceptable if fully frozen. Distribute immediately. If over 32°F at drop-off, please dispose of.
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Recording temperatures

- All loading (at pickup) and unloading (at drop-off) temperatures must be documented
 - a. Record:
 - i. Loading temperature (before loading the vehicle at pickup)
 - 1. Cold item and frozen item
 - ii. Unloading temperature (when offloading the vehicle at drop-off location)
 - 1. Cold item and frozen item
 - iii. Write temperatures on the SHFBOC Transportation of Food Temp Log or template of your own choosing.
 - iv. Give the paper log to the staff member who submits receipts in MealConnect.
 - 1. If the driver is the same person who submits receipts, there is no need to turn in the log. The driver can submit the temperature along with pounds in MealConnect.
 - v. Staff Member then enters the Pounds and Temperatures of the store donation in MealConnect
 - 1. For MealConnect entries:
 - 1. The one cold sample temperature you take (for example, from dairy or deli) should be entered for all applicable cold categories (GR Dairy & Eggs, GR Deli, and GR Milk.)
 - 2. The one frozen sample temperature (for example, from frozen meat) should be entered for all frozen categories (GR Frozen Meat, GR Frozen Miscellaneous)
 - 2. The next image demonstrates what the updated MealConnect receipts will look like with the added pickup and drop-off temperature recordings.

Temperature Monitoring at Loading and Unloading



RECEIPTS

[Guided Tour](#)

Add New Receipt

07/01/2026

AAA Food Bank (1000)

Ralph's (299)

☐ Scheduled Pickup Not Attempted

☐ No Pounds

Category

Grocery Rescue AG, Frozen ...

Storage

Frozen

Description

Description

Pounds

Pounds

Temps (*F)

Pick

+

Drop

Add

Cancel

Add Receipt and Review