



Adventist Risk
Management, Inc.

Potluck SAFETY

Food + Fellowship = Fun, but did you know there are many dangers to avoid when organizing safe food fellowship?

Exposures can be injuries from fires, slips, trips and falls, being struck by something, burns, electrical shocks, and kids playing unsupervised. To protect those fellowshiping at your church activity, first make sure your kitchen is clean and organized. Then look for potential hazards involved in the common areas used during the potluck, both inside and outside the kitchen.

Once these preliminary factors are managed, put together a plan to keep your potlucks safe and to protect those who fellowship with you. Your plan may include 3 important steps: Assessing, Implementing and Educating.





1. Assess

- Take a walk around your church's food storage and preparation facilities. Are they clean and in good repair? Is there any evidence of pest activity? Are there food preparation checklists and instructions posted prominently? Are there thermometers in your refrigerators and ovens? Is there a dedicated hand washing area?
- Talk to local health authorities. Your state or municipality may have special licensing or inspection requirements. If you routinely hold large-scale food events, consider bringing in a professional advisor to evaluate your food preparation areas.
- Do another kitchen assessment while a potluck is in full swing. Note the workflow: Are volunteers using the hand wash station, or are they just using any sink? How long is food sitting out on tables? Use a food thermometer to check whether food is reheated to at least 165 degrees before being served. Is there adequate space for food preparation? Are there enough cutting boards, utensils and serving dishes? Is someone overseeing food preparation and clean-up, or is it a free-for-all?

2. Implement

- Create an action plan to correct the problems noted in your assessments—this should include any equipment updates or additions, changes to the workflow, addition of signage and checklists in the kitchen area, a pest control schedule, education and training plans for volunteers.
- Identify those in your congregation who have experience in food preparation, and give them the responsibility of supervising volunteers at church events involving food. Their job is to make sure food is being prepared, served, and stored safely, and to report to church administration if they note problems that need corrective action.

3. Educate

- Do your food service volunteers understand basic food safety protocols? If not, periodic training sessions can help make sure everyone knows how food should be prepared, served and stored in the church kitchen.
- Consider a broader education campaign—through the church bulletin or on the church website—aimed at members who'll be preparing potluck contributions in their own kitchens. Do they know how long food can safely be kept at room temperature?
- Don't underestimate the potential impact of foodborne illness. By taking a proactive approach to food safety, you can ensure that potlucks and other food service events at your church or school are memorable for all the right reasons.



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