

Transcript for Food Storage Guidelines for Food Safety Segment

Hi, this is Marci. Whether you're a food safety professional, or simply interested in food safety for your home, [AAA Food Handler Training School](http://www.aaafoodhandler.com) welcomes your questions. We invite you to visit www.aaafoodhandler.com where you'll find our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page, which lists answers to some of the most often asked questions, or call us toll free at 1-877-222-3487.

Our classroom-style video courses for [Food Safety Managers](#) provide over 5 ½ hours of training to prepare you for your ANSI approved and nationally accepted [Food Manager certification exam](#). And now, here's a segment on proper food storage from one of our courses.

Introduction for Food Storage Guidelines for Food Safety Segment

In this section of the course Sung will discuss food storage, which will, for the most part, be about walk-in refrigerators and freezers, and how you place items in them. He'll talk about appropriate lids and how you locate items in relation to other items. He'll explain the policy of FIFO, First In, First Out, and labelling. He'll talk about which items to place closer to the refrigerator door, why, and he'll explain the Seven Day Rule and exceptions to it.

Storing Foods Properly in Walk-In Refrigerators and Freezers

For now, I want to turn to "How Do We Store Foods Properly in Refrigerators and Walk-In Freezers." So, if you look at this photo over here, in this first photo you see some trays of different Ready-To-Eat foods stacked on top of each other on a shelf inside what looks to be a walk-in refrigerator. What's wrong with this photo first of all? Well, the shelves are filthy. Secondly, the trays are stacked directly on top of each other with the bottom of the tray touching the food that's Ready-To-Eat, and we don't know where that bottom of the tray has been laid on. So, it's introducing all types of contaminants.

Secondly, we see in this photo, just below that tray is another tray that has some tin foil covering it. Tin foil and plastic wraps are not allowed s proper coverage for storing of foods. They may protect from dust falling; however, they are flimsy, they tear too easily, and if you put anything on top of it, it will just sink right in and the integrity will be compromised and then you will have cross-contamination going on, which is why we're always required to use very solid, nice fitting, tight fitting lids for all our products. OK?

Let's look at the next picture. In the next photo, what we see is... We see a whole celery stacked on top of what looks like a pork butt or pork shoulder, uncooked, raw. What is wrong with that situation? Well, that one is more obvious, isn't it? That celery is Ready-To-Eat. All it's going to get, at best, is some washing, get cut and go right to the customer, most likely. The hunk of meat, that's got all kinds of contaminant potential. That is definitely cross-contamination.

Protecting Against Cross-Contamination

So, in order to help us protect against this, there are a lot of things in our industry. We have to practice, first of all, FIFO, First In, First Out. We should label everything, and when we do label everything we also need to be aware of how to put these things away.

Advice on Selecting and Installing Walk-In Refrigerators and Freezers

And before we get into this question that I'm going to talk about, I want to address something else. For example, when you have refrigerators and freezers... And refrigerators and freezers – we have different types. We have the reach-in type, but we also have the walk-in type. And I would recommend, whenever possible, get the largest walk-in refrigerator and freezer that your facility is able to handle, that you can afford. The reason for that is that in the long run it's going to make your life a lot easier.

Now when you're installing the walk-in refrigerator, be mindful of where the door is going to go. You know that depends on the size of the area where you're going, but you also want to keep in mind how you're going to place your storage shelves.

Recommendations for Items to Place Near The Door

And we know that when the door is opening as deliveries come in, they're going to be remaining open for a while as we get everything in there. So, the temperature of the walk-in is going to go up. So, it's important to put products that are going to be less affected by that increase in temperature inside that walk-in. For example eggs are required to be delivered at 45°F, not 41°F or lower. So, even if the fluctuation varies a few degrees, putting Whole Shell Eggs closer to the door will be less concerning than putting raw seafood or raw beef, for example. So, you want your meat products further back where there would be less temperature fluctuation, and you would want your fruits and vegetables closer up front because, for the most part, they're less affected by that. Fruits and vegetables, in most cases, you don't even have to cook them. You just wash them and serve the raw.

Guidelines for Proper Placement of Foods on Shelves

Another thing you want to keep in mind is “How am I going to store these products from top to bottom?” And that's what this next question is about.

Of course, we want to label everything according to FIFO, First In, First Out, and as new products are made you want to put them towards the back. Bring out the older products to the front. Put a “First Use” sticker on them. All of them should be labelled with an identification name for them, when it was made, when it should be used by, and the Seven Day Rule. All Prepared Foods go by the Seven Day Rule.

Here's an example of the Seven Day Rule: A package of Ready-To-Eat food, such as hot dogs or bologna, with an expiration date 30 days from now, if opened is only good for seven days from the date of opening, or the expiration date, whichever is sooner.

The only items that don't go by the Seven Day Rule is an item which has a much further expiration date. The example of, say, a dry salami. That typically would have not a problem. Beef jerky, and things like ultra high pasteurized products, things like that. Pretty much everything else goes under the Seven Day Rule.

Example of Applying the Guidelines for Food Safety

Alright. So, let's look at this next example. We have received these five different items. We need to put it into a refrigerator. It could be regular reach-in refrigerator. You have five shelves. How would you place this from top to bottom? They are:

- Raw Beef
- Whole Shell Eggs
- Raw Chicken
- A Tray of Baked Beans
- Raw Vegetables

So, you've got five different products. How would you place them in your refrigerator from top to bottom, in order to minimize cross-contamination? Think about that for a moment. Alright. Have you written it down? Let's see what the correct answer is. So, the order would be: On the very top, the Tray of Baked Beans, below that the Raw Vegetables, below that the Whole Shell Eggs, below that Raw Beef, and then finally on the bottom Raw chicken. Now this is the correct order in order to help minimize cross-contamination. The question is "*Why* is this the correct order?" That's what's really important to understand to really understand how cross-contamination works. And the answer really has to do with one key factor. That key factor has to do with the final cooking temperature of the product.

The Top Shelf

So, let's look at this. The first one, Tray of Baked Beans. OK. The Tray of Baked Beans is a Ready-To-Eat product. Now I *can* reheat it to 165°F, but I can also serve it cold if I want to. It's Ready-To-Eat. So, if I were to serve it cold, it would get zero cooking, or reheating. So, it's got to go on the very top. We know that all Ready-To-Eat products must be maintained above uncooked products. So, that one was actually easy.

The Second Shelf

Next comes the vegetables. Now, it says Raw Vegetables. That means maybe it wasn't even cleaned, which means it can possibly drop dirt, and that's not good, which is why, if possible, especially in a walk-in, you want to put all your fruits and vegetables on one side on a set of shelves, then all your meats and meat products on another side. OK? So, you never have this thing happening. And, of course, when you do that you want to put all your cut, washed fruits and vegetables on the top and then the unwashed boxes below that, OK? But in this situation we don't have that. We're thinking the best they're going to do is get washed and served straight, like lettuce, or cilantro for salsa. So, you don't want any raw meat products above it. You don't want the egg above it because if it was to crack it could induce Salmonella into the vegetables. So, you want to make sure you have the vegetables above the meat products.

The Third Shelf

Now, how do we know it's the Whole Shell Eggs, and not the beef or the chicken? Because Whole Shell Eggs get cooked to a final temperature of 145°F, plus they usually come in those cartons. They're protected. They're cleaned and washed. If you were to see any dirt from the vegetable, most likely you would rinse that away before you cracked it and used it. OK? But they do get cooked to

145°F whereas vegetables do not get cooked, and if you do cook it, they're only required to be cooked to 135°F, so that goes above Whole Shell Eggs.

The Fourth and Bottom Shelves

Finally, below those would be the Raw Beef, which is 155°F for 15 seconds, and finally Poultry, which is 165°F for 15 seconds. So, you see we're going always from lowest to highest cooking temperature as we work our way down.

Always separate your cooked, Ready-To-Eat foods from your uncooked products. Try to keep all your shelves so like your cooked beef goes over raw beef, cooked chicken goes over raw chicken, and so forth. If you have to use the same shelf, always follow the cooking temperature order. OK? Whenever you can, separate everything. That's even better.

Review of Food Storage Guidelines for Refrigerators and Freezers

The closer an item is to Ready-To-Eat food, the higher it should be stored. For example, cooked chicken should be stored above marinating chicken which should be stored above unopened packs of raw chicken. Anything to help minimize cross-contamination.

The larger your walk-in refrigerator, the easier it will be to properly store foods. You would be able to store each type of meat (chicken, beef, or pork) on its own shelving unit, keeping in mind how close each item is to Ready-To-Eat foods. The closer an item is to Ready-To-Eat foods, the higher it should be placed. Ready-To-Eat foods go on the top shelf, while unopened packages of raw meat go on the bottom shelf, and so forth. The reason for this order is simple: If something falls to a shelf beneath it, the higher cooking temperature of the item it fell into will eliminate the possibility of illness due to the contaminant. Remember that the Six Inch Rule applies to refrigerators and freezers, too. Nothing is to be stored on the floor.

If space is more limited, you may have to place different types of meat on different shelves of the same shelving unit. In this case, the final cooking temperature of the meat affects the storage height of the item. Items with a lower final cooking temperature are to be stored above items with a higher final cooking temperature. Again, if something falls to a shelf beneath it, the higher cooking temperature of the item it fell into will eliminate the possibility of illness due to the contaminant.

The final cooking temperature also applies to non-meats. For example, packaged deli meats and cooked foods would be placed above uncooked egg whites and egg yolks, which would be placed above cases of eggs. In another example, Ready-To-Eat foods would be placed above washed vegetables, which would be placed above raw, unwashed vegetables.

Because the area near the door will get a bit warmer when the door is opened, place items that are less affected by slightly higher temperatures near the door. Eggs and vegetables are good examples of items to place near the door.

These same guidelines apply to organizing items in walk-in freezers to minimize problems in case of dripping due to a power outage.

Conclusion of Food Storage Guidelines for Food Safety Segment

[AAA Food Handler Training School](#) offers programs for:

- [Basic Food Handlers](#),
- [Certified Professional Food Safety Managers](#),
- [Convenience Store Food Safety Managers](#),
- [Grocery Store Food Safety Managers](#), as well as
- [Certified Food Safety HACCP Managers](#),

which prepare you to take and pass ANSI approved exams from the National Registry of Food Safety Professionals, ServSafe, and Prometric.

By working with over 2500 testing centers throughout the United States, we can easily schedule your exam at a date and time that is convenient to you.

Also, please visit our website, www.aaafoodhandler.com, for interesting newsletters, articles, and [products](#) regarding the food service industry.