

EMERGENCY

Response Planning For Child Care Providers



Nebraska

Panhandle Public Health District

**Emergency Response Planning
for Child Care Providers**

Panhandle Public Health District has created this Emergency Response Planning for Child Care Providers document to provide recommendations for keeping children safe and parents informed. The outcome of an emergency situation is dependent on how well the people involved have planned and prepared. This guide identifies the concerns in the Nebraska Panhandle and offers examples from other organizations and input from subject matter experts to better equip you with the tools you need to develop an emergency response plan. The information can be tailored to meet the needs of your child care facility. Be sure to evaluate the risk for your specific location.

Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance

Purpose

To assist child care providers in protecting the health and safety of the children in their care should a disaster or emergency (be it natural or deliberate) affect the facility, its operation or its community. The safety of the children and staff is the primary goal. This is accomplished by supplying child care providers with the knowledge and tools to establish an “all hazard” emergency response plan for their individual child care program.

Objective

Identify emergency situations that may occur in child care programs; identify the roles and responsibilities that need to be considered in building an emergency response plan; identify the different type's of emergency responses; create a written Emergency Response Plan.

Acknowledgements

This document was developed by the Emergency Response Coordinator at the Panhandle Public Health District. Much of the information is based on the recommendations from the Department of Health and Human Services Preparedness and Response Program, including the document EMERGENCY Response Planning for Child Care.

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Ordering Information

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The threat of disaster is nothing new to the Nebraska Panhandle and facing unexpected and emergency situations in child care is not unheard of. This binder is available to assist the providers in thinking through their plans in an organized fashion and offer templates to further develop the Emergency Response Plans. Those who are prepared have better outcomes from a disaster.

Disasters can come in many forms and your Emergency Response Plan (ERP) should address each:

- **Medical Emergencies**
- **Natural**
wind, ice, floods, fire, flood, tornado, winter storms
- **Unintentional**
medical emergencies fire, chemical spills, utility disruption, transportation breakdown, missing child
- **Intentional**
disgruntled or impaired parents/guardians, potentially violent situations terrorist activities (bombs, bioterrorism, hostage taking, snipers)

Considerations:

- Is your program in a shared building?
- If in a school system, do you know the ERP of the school system?
- Do you have children or staff with special needs in your program?

If your program is in a shared space such as a school or office building, you need to seek out the emergency response director for the building and coordinate your plan with the building plan. You may have to advocate for the special needs of the children.

Be Prepared:

Being prepared for emergency situations requires staff/programs to:

- Develop written policies and procedures
- Train staff
- Practice

All staff should receive a written copy of the policies and procedures. Due to staff turnover include this in new employee orientation. All staff should be strongly encouraged to have their own Family Plan.

Practice is very important for the FCC where one provider may be caring for up to 8 children, 2 of them less than 24 months. Practice with the children to truly evaluate how your plan will work.

Emergency Responses

Emergency responses can be placed in four broad categories. All four of these actions need to be practiced, evaluated and updated on a regular basis.

- **Medical Emergency**
Assess the situation and contact 911, if necessary
- **Shelter in Place**
Stay where you are or go inside a designated place.
- **Lock Down**
Secure the children, staff and visitors in protected spaces.
- **Evacuation**
Leave your location.

Steps to prepare for Emergency Responses:

- Post procedures for all three actions in each room.
- Practice all three actions with the children on a regular basis.
- Take all supplies on all drills
- Evaluate the outcome of each drill.

Make sure that the procedures are posted in plain sight and are easy to read. Practice with the children, taking all supplies that would be required. The drills should be non-threatening. Much of what the children perceive will come from the provider; think of how a new child reacts the first time he encounters a fire drill, then how that same child will react after a year of fire drills.

To evaluate each drill consider:

- The results of each drill
- Staff input
- Effectiveness of warning system
- What problems were encountered

When dealing with children consistency reduces confusion and makes the children feel more secure. Using the same commands for all situations regardless of the type of emergency can accomplish this. For example, loudly saying “Ready” or blowing one long whistle blast may mean that all are to immediately stop what they are doing be quiet, line up, and listen for instructions which may be to go the safe room in case of a tornado or the outside assembly area in case of a fire. Saying “Go” loudly or blowing two loud whistle blasts means to follow those instructions immediately.

Regardless of the method, consistency decreases fear, confusion and the risk of a child being left behind.

“Ready To Go” File

- List of Emergency phone numbers
- Authorization for emergency medical care and transportation
- Address, directions (maps), and telephone numbers for designated meeting places
- Attendance sheets with up to date parent guardian emergency contact information
- Sign in/out forms
- Medication administration forms
- Incident/injury forms

The “Ready To Go” file is key in the preparation for a response. Be sure it is updated continually with new information and checked yearly to be sure it is up to date.

The chart on the next page lists examples of people you might have on your chart. This chart can be used as it is. Just fill in the information that applies to your facility and list additional names and numbers that you need in the blank spaces at the bottom of the chart. The “Ready To Go” file always goes with you.

Emergency Phone Numbers

Below is a sample Parent / Guardian Contact Information form. It is important to update this information any time there is a change and to confirm there has been no change annually.

Parent / Guardian Contact Information form

Informing Parents:

Below is a list of ways to keep parents informed of your plans.

- New parent orientation
 - Annual/biannual parent meetings
 - Program news letter
 - Demonstration Day

On the next page is a sample letter to parents explaining your emergency response plan. Feel free to adapt the document so it is best suited for your facility.

Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parent or Guardian,

In the event of an emergency situation that requires an evacuation of our child care facility one of the following plans will be used. Child Care providers and staff will make every attempt to contact you in such an event.

Please be sure to supply us with up to date emergency contact information including email and out of state contact information. Our Emergency Response Plan relies directly on your contribution of extra clothing, medication, and your preparation for an emergency situation. Please take the time to implement your own Family Plan.

Keep this information with you so that you will know how to contact and find us in the event of an evacuation.

1. If the emergency environment is confined to the immediate area of the child care facility, e.g. fire or toxic fumes and the children cannot stay on the premises, the children will be brought to _____, by _____ where they will remain accompanied by caregivers while family/guardian/emergency contacts are notified of the situation and arrangements are made for either the transporting home or care taking for the remainder of the emergency.

1. In the event of exposure to toxic materials or gases, and a physical examination is recommended, children will be transported by _____ to _____ where they will be examined by a health provider and family/guardian/emergency contacts will be notified.

2. If the emergency is more widespread and encompasses a larger area such as a neighborhood or several homes due to a non-confined environmental threat, e.g. toxic fumes from a spill, flood waters, brush fires, etc. and the children cannot remain in the area, the children will be brought to _____, by (method of transportation) _____ where they will remain accompanied by caregiver(s) while family/guardian/emergency contacts are notified and arrangements for transportation home or a continuation of care are made.

3. In the event of a major environmental hazard that necessitates a larger area evacuation such as several neighborhoods, a city/town or a geographical area, due to a large non-confined hazard, e.g. earthquake, hurricane, etc., children will be transported to a designated mass shelter by _____ where they will remain accompanied by caregiver(s) while family/guardian/emergency contacts are notified and arrangements are made for their pick up.

Staff will remain with and care for the children at all times during an event.

Attendance will be checked whenever children are moved. Staff will bring any necessary medications, supplies, and emergency records.

In the event that we receive different instructions from emergency personnel, every attempt will be made to contact you with the alterative plans.

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Medical Emergency:

Assess the situation and contact 911 if necessary. Notify the parents immediately. Document the date and circumstance regarding the medical emergency in the child's record.

Shelter-In-Place:

Is the response when it is safer to stay where you are than to try to relocate.

- Expected to be the most likely situation.
- May be advised for weather related situations, chemical spills and certain terrorist actions.

Close as many interior doors as possible. You need to make the building as safe as possible until help arrives or the emergency ends. Listen to your radio. Public safety officials will advise you what additional precautions are needed. Depending on the nature of the emergency, you may be advised to seal windows, doors, air vents and stay away from windows and doors. For example, you should listen for specific instructions to turn off the air conditioner/heating unit, and to seal vents, fireplaces, and kitchen/bathroom exhaust fans.

Steps to take when sheltering-in-place:

- Bring all children, staff, and visitor inside.
- Have the "Ready To-Go" files with you.
- The designated safe area in your building will change according to the type of event occurring. For example, in the event of a tornado the safest place to be is the lowest interior space with few or no windows. However, during an ice storm you should lock the doors and windows (many seal tighter when locked) to conserve the heat, but you may use a larger portion of the center. Close off non-essential rooms such as storage areas, laundry rooms, etc.
- Contact parents with the status of their children and the program plans. Be sure to reassure parents that their children will be cared for by staff until they are reunited.
- Listen to your radio for further instruction.
- Do not leave the building until told to do so by public safety officials.

Be sure to plan ahead on how to contact parents (phone, email, group text).

Lock Down

Lock down may be the chosen response to a potentially violent situation such as an intruder, a non-custodial parent, parent/guardian under the influence of a substance, or a hostage situation. An intruder can be defined as any visitor who through manner or action poses a perceived threat to the children or employees. If at any time you are dealing with a person who makes you fear for your safety or the safety of others, immediately contact 911.

Preparations:

In preparation for a situation, check all doors before occurrence to make sure they can be locked and unlocked from the inside. Establish a program wide method of communication by determining a lock down code (whistle blast, "the birthday party is delayed", "the office phone is broken") that alerts staff whether they are in their classroom or on the playground. The code needs to be familiar to the staff but not obvious enough to make an intruder suspicious, without causing anxiety to the children. This may be a verbal code or a hand code given to a staff member.

Steps to take during a lock down situation:

- Lock down code to all staff.
- Staff should quickly check halls, restrooms, etc, nearest their classrooms to get children in classrooms or secured where they are.

Next steps will vary according to where the threat is coming from. If there is a person with a weapon in the parking lot, you need to:

- Stay away from exterior windows.
- Move to the halls or your safe room.

If there is an intruder in the building you should stay in your rooms, out of site from the hallway.

- Choose the safest place within the room.
- Turn off lights.
- Do head count to make sure that all children are in the room or otherwise accounted for.
- Do a planned quiet activity such as a favorite story to help keep the children calm. Sit quietly with the children.
- Do not leave the classroom until the all clear signal has been given or you are directed to do so by emergency response personnel.
- Close and lock all doors, be sure to cover all windows and doors if possible.

Always inform parents of a lock down whether it is practice or real.

Evacuation:

Evacuation is the act of leaving the premises. In the event of an “Immediate Area Threat” such as a fire in the building, you will be aware of the need to evacuate.

In other instances, you will receive instructions from emergency personnel, often through the media. Creating an accurate floor plan, large and bold enough to read, and posting it in all classrooms and common areas indicating the primary and secondary route of evacuation from that room and the building will save time and make for a smooth evacuation during an emergency. The floor plan should also indicate the location of the fire alarm/pull boxes, fire extinguishers; the pre-determined interior safe room and the exterior assembly areas (predetermined meeting location). Exterior assembly areas should allow for the occupants to evacuate the area without passing close to the building that houses the program.

The same terminology and procedures should be used to prepare the children for action in all situations, whether going to an internal safe area during a tornado warning or evacuating the building due to a fire (using words such as “Ready” and “Go”). This teaches the children and staff to stop what they are doing, line up, be quiet, and listen for instructions on “Ready” and to follow those instructions on “Go.” A procedure such as lining up with a specific partner or holding a knot in a long rope should be followed in all drills. Following a familiar procedure reduces the risk of panic and leaving a child behind.

When choosing evacuation sites keep in mind children and staff with special needs such as vision, hearing, mobility, and emotional/mental impairments. Accommodations for those with special needs will need to be in place. Possible evacuation sites to investigate may include churches, malls, community centers, schools, senior citizens buildings, recreation centers, neighbors, relatives, etc.

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Be sure to contact your evacuation sites annually.

Plans need to be in place for three different types of evacuation:

- **Immediate Area Threat** (fire, bomb threat, major building problem) Leave the building and gather at the pre-determined assembly area. Pick a safe place to await pick-up by parents. Think this out. Will the location be safe in all circumstances; i.e. rain, snow, fire, etc.? Account for all children, staff, and visitors. Always take your “Ready To Go” file and emergency supplies with you.
- **Widespread Threat** (chemical spill widespread/brush fire, bomb threat) You will be notified by emergency personnel, via the media or individually to leave the building and neighborhood to a pre-arranged site. Gather at your assembly area to access transportation to your site.
- **Mass Evacuation** (declared state of emergency and ordered evacuation) You may be directed to a mass shelter determined by emergency personnel or to a location outside of the affected area which is previously designated by you.

Take With You:

- Attendance Sheets
- “Ready To Go” File
- Medications
- Center’s Emergency Kit
- Room/Children’s grab and go packs

Always have your attendance sheets with you and account for all children, staff and visitors when arriving at the assembly area, before leaving for your evacuation site and upon arrival at the evacuation site. Know which staff member is responsible for each child. Do periodic drills, transporting all supplies and children in the manner planned, until children and staff are comfortable with the process.

Informing Parents:

Parents need to be informed of your plans in writing. Fill in your evacuation sites in the sample letter to parents.

If time permits, leave a notice on your door to tell parents where their children can be picked up. If you have the capability, change your voice mail remotely to relay information about where the children are, that they are safe, and that they are being cared for by the staff. Be sure to call parents as soon as you are able and remember, you may be directed to another site by emergency personnel.

Consider these questions:

- How will you transport non-walkers?
- How will you transport the children if you must leave the immediate area?
- Where are the child care program’s emergency supplies and who will transport them?
- Where are the emergency supplies (grab and go bag) for individual children and how and who will transport them?
- Who will have the attendance sheets and “Ready To Go” file?
- Who will do the final search of the building to look for anybody left behind?
- Who will have medications?
- Who will have the cell phone and radio?
- Is the evacuation site stocked or do you need to bring all supplies?
- How do you obtain entrance to the evacuation site? Child care centers are

opened on most Federal Holidays while schools, government buildings and many businesses are not. Prepare and plan ahead. Locate evacuation sites in your immediate area, outside your neighborhood and out of your city and possibly state.

Roles and Responsibilities:

In an emergency situation, people feel more secure and respond better when they have been prepared for what is expected of them. Identifying and assigning specific roles and conducting practice drills will help you and your staff become more comfortable with emergency response duties. Assigning and practicing specific responsibilities decreases confusion and panic during an emergency, thereby reducing the risk of error.

Each staff member will have responsibilities in all types of emergencies and will be involved in preparation, maintenance, and operation of the ERP. Keep your chain of command current and change as little as possible in your chain of command for emergency situations. List the roles and responsibilities in an emergency situation. Share and discuss the roles with your staff so there are fewer surprises during an emergency. Each staff member should know their primary and back up responsibilities and be familiar with the procedures. One person may fill many roles but all roles must have an alternate person assigned, if there is a second person, in case the primary person is unavailable.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Who will provide first aid?
- Who will carry medications if the children are moved?
- Who will carry the first aid kit?
- Who will carry emergency information on each child?
- Who will call for help?
- Who will carry the cellular phone?
- Who will carry the emergency kits?
- Which groups of children go with which staff?
- Who transports attendance lists and makes sure that everyone is out of the building?
- Who and how will emergency supplies be transported? Maintain an accurate attendance list at all times to include the children, staff, parents and visitors who are in the building. Always know where the children are in the building (art room, computer room, library, etc.). Do not put children, staff, visitors, or emergency response personnel at risk by not knowing who is in your building and where they are.

Family Child Care Providers:

Don't let this feel too overwhelming if you are answering "me" to every one of these questions. You also manage to change all the diapers, give all the hugs and take care of these children every day.

The Family Emergency Plan of a family child care provider is inseparable from the programs emergency plan.

Who?

What?

When?

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Family child care programs may have one or two people to assume all roles and responsibilities, including staff and family members. The provider is, however, planning for fewer children. A bonus for the family child care provider is that by completing an emergency response plan for the program the provider is also completing his/her individual family response plan. It may be helpful for two or more family care providers to team up to share ideas and discuss their plans.

Emergency Response Plan Manager (ERPM)

The duties of the ERPM may include:

- ERP Preparation and timely completion of the ERP,
- Employee training, and
- Encouraging staff to complete their own family emergency plans.

Staying Prepared

- Conduct regularly scheduled practice drills for Shelter In Place, Lock Down, and Evacuation. Discuss what worked and what did not work immediately after the drills. Brainstorm for solutions.
- Sustain all plans, supplies, emergency cards for children and staff,
- Stay informed about new practices in emergency management,
- Review and update the ERP on a regular basis, and
- Keep families informed about the centers ERP via a yearly meeting, the admission packet and the centers newsletter.

Emergency planning is an ongoing team effort. The planner must be adept at requesting input, delegating duties and monitoring tasks for completion.

Emergency Response Director (ERD)

Duties of the ERD may include:

During an Emergency

- Identifying an emergency and choosing the response required,
- Calmly circulating accurate information to the staff and parents,
- Providing clear, concise and calm directions based on existing procedures,
- Notifying local emergency responders of the situation and keeping them informed,
- Knowing how to manually override entry/security systems, and
- Locating and knowing how to use emergency supplies (e.g., radios, cell phones, operating heating, ventilation, and air conditioning units (HVAC), etc).

Emergency Response Assistant (ERA)

Duties of the ERA's may include:

During an Emergency

- Providing back up for the ERD,
- Ensuring the safety of children and staff in their designated area,
- Providing calm, clear, and concise, direction based on existing procedures, and
- Ensuring that all areas of the center (closets, bathrooms, cabinets, etc.) are search for children left behind in the case of evacuation. Doors are to be closed but not locked once a room is searched. The ERA's should be trained in the basics of emergency management as they must be prepared to act independently if they cannot quickly communicate with the ERD.

First Aid Coordinator

Duties of the First Aid Coordinator may include:

During an Emergency

- Assisting people with medical needs,
- Evaluating the need for professional help and making sure it is summoned, and
- Carrying first aid supplies during an evacuation and supervising their use.

Staying Prepared

- Monitor the first aid supplies,
- Be aware of the medical conditions of children and staff and any special requirements for the children or staff,
- Ensure that there is at least a three day supply of maintenance medications for those needing them (diabetes, asthma, ADHD, reflux), and
- Make sure that permission to treat in a medical emergency has been obtained for all children.

The person and alternate assigned this role need to be first aid/CPR certified.

Emergency Communication Coordinator (ECC)

Duties of the ECC may include:

- Emergency Response Plan

During an Emergency

- Establish and maintain contact with those who can provide assistance and information through telephone, cell phone, hand radios, television, and the Internet,
- Change center voice mail to reflect current status.

Staying Prepared

- Ensure that a cell phone remains charged.
- Make sure radios have extra, fresh batteries (consider a radio that automatically alerts you with a visual and auditory signal when a weather or other emergency occurs in your area).
- Ensure availability of a telephone that does not depend on electricity or batteries (land line).
- Clarify information to be given to families with ERD.
- Ensure that contact information for the children and staff is updated on at least a yearly basis (this is to include a contact distant enough that it is unlikely they would be affected by the same emergency and who would be available to receive and relay family information).
- Establish a system for group emailing and texting to parents/guardians.

Utilities

- Listen to instructions from emergency personnel.
- Know where your heating, ventilation and air conditioning main shut offs are and how to operate them.
- Know where your main water, gas and electrical shut offs are and how to shut them down.

Consider putting a card with instructions next to the shut offs. If a tool is required to shut off a unit tape the tool to a surface near the shut off. Seek instruction from your utility company if you are unsure of what is what in your location.

Never turn your gas back on yourself.

Disaster Supply Kit

Following a disaster, rescue/relief workers will be on the scene but they cannot get to everybody at the same time. It may take hours or up to several days for assistance to reach you. You need to be organized and prepared to care for yourself and the children in your care until assistance arrives.

You can best do this by preparing a Disaster Supplies Kit. This is not such an overwhelming task when you realize that you already have many of the supplies and that your purpose is to gather them together and have them readily available and easily transportable. Once you have assembled the kits, a specific person should be responsible for monitoring it for completeness on a specified schedule. This person should monitor expiration dates and set up a system to ensure that items are used and replaced before the products expire.

Meet with staff and obtain their input on storage solutions, supply transport, and evacuation procedures. Where you store and how you transport your emergency supplies (whether to a safe location within the building or to an evacuation site) can be tailored to fit the needs of your individual program. The staff in each room may be responsible for maintaining their room's supplies. During an evacuation each room may be responsible for transporting their own supplies. In home child care programs and small centers, supplies may be kept in one central location.

You may choose to have each adult and child over five have a back pack (grab and go pack). The children carry their personal items such as clothing, a family picture, and a favorite toy and water. The staff carries their personal items plus the remainder of the supplies designated to their group. Other methods include a rolling duffel bag, rolling trash cans, or a cooler with wheels..

Your ERP should reflect the different procedures that you will follow in your program and it may vary from room to room or age group to age group.

A fun project for the children:

Organize a project for the children to tie-dye or paint on brightly colored shirts and/or bandanas. The center name and address could be stamped on each article for quick identification. This item of clothing can be stored with the emergency kits and will help you keep track of your children.

The list of supplies is meant to help you organize your thoughts and supplies. You already have most of what is on the lists. You need to organize them and have them together and readily available to you and transportable. It may also be necessary for you to prioritize your supplies depending on the need of your specific children. The medical needs of a child are of course a priority (medications, medical equipment, blankets) Infant formula and water are of higher priority than food.

FCCs and small centers may choose to have all supplies in a central location. Large centers may choose to have certain center related supplies in a central location (radio, cell phone, tools, can opener, money, water) and others in rooms (ready to go files, first aid kits, children's clothing, flashlights, formula, water).

First Aid Kit

Suggested supplies:

- 1" wide hypoallergenic adhesive tape,
- assorted sizes of band-aids,
- 2 rolls of cling gauze,
- cotton balls,
- disposable protective gloves,
- 2" wide gauze pads,
- thick gauze pads or sanitary napkins,
- ice pack or chemical ice pack,
- pump type non-perfumed soap,
- operating flash light,
- safety pins,
- scissors,
- triangle type sling,
- oral thermometer or fever strip,
- tweezers, and disposable washcloths for cleansing wounds.
- Pain medication/fever reducer
- Extra supply of critical medications such as insulin, epipens, asthma and seizure medications

Child Appropriate Items

If you must evacuate the center, toys, books, and games to occupy the children will be essential. A MP3 player with earphone and speakers will serve to provide music, and books on tape. Small travel size games, cards, handheld games and regular books may serve well for the over 6 group. The younger group may enjoy a felt box filled with many felt shapes used to tell stories and coloring books and crayons.

Consider reading or telling a favorite story and then acting out the story with the children. Preparing a list of games and songs ahead of time will help staff to remain calm during an emergency and focus on the needs of the children.

General Supplies

Suggested items:

- Three day supply of non-perishable food (including infant food)
- Three day supply of drinkable water
- Infant formula and bottles
- One complete change of season appropriate clothing (include sturdy walking shoes)
- Extra blankets
- Item that would make the children in your care readily recognizable (brightly colored shirts or bandanas)
- "Ready To Go" file
- Money in a water proof container (small denomination and change),
- Pen and paper,
- Radio (battery powered),
- Flashlight and extra bulb,
- Extra batteries,
- Charged cell phone,
- Whistle,
- Vehicle Keys (Consider making an extra copy for your evacuation kit),
- Matches in a waterproof container,

- Telephone that does not require electricity,
- Tools (hammer, screwdriver, pliers with wire cutter),
- Plastic sheeting (pre-cut),
- Duct tape,
- Manual can opener,
- Disposable bowls and utensil,
- Plastic bags (sealable and un-sealable),
- Household bleach (small bottle in evacuation kit),
- Wet towelettes,
- Antiseptic wipes,
- Hand sanitizer,
- Toilet paper,
- Diapers and wipes,
- Non-latex gloves, and
- Scissors.
- Special Medications
- Special equipment
- Pain/fever reducer medications

You will need the same documentation for medications to be given in an emergency as at any other time.

Water

- Top priority
- Should not be limited
- One gallon per person per day
- Purchased bottled water or tap water
- Monitor expiration dates
- Most space consuming

Foods high in fat, protein, and salt increase thirst. Eat canned foods with high liquid content. Reduce activity and stay cool.

Non-perishable Foods

- Powdered or concentrated infant formula will require extra water.
- Take food allergies into account when acquiring foods.
- Always check the expiration date or “best if used by” date before purchasing.
- Keep food covered in a cool, dry spot at all times.