

# Stamp Out Hunger – Postal Food Drive

## Frequently asked questions (and answers (2017 edition))

STAMP OUT HUNGER: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2017

Thank you for your interest and enthusiasm for the Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger® Food Drive! Here are some answers to some frequently asked questions (FAQs):

**When do I put out the food?** On the second Saturday of May, just set out your non-perishable food well before your letter carrier's normal pick-up time. The earlier the better! Note that he or she will be delivering and collecting mail as usual, on top of collecting food donations, so that pickup time could be slightly later than usual. Your letter carrier might also have helpers. A good rule of thumb is to have the bags by your mailbox by 9 a.m.

**What do you mean by “non-perishable food?”** The top requested non-perishable food items are: cereal, pasta, pasta sauce or spaghetti sauce, rice, canned fruits and vegetables, canned meals (such as soups, chili and pasta), 100% juice, peanut butter, macaroni & cheese, canned protein (tuna, chicken and turkey), beans (canned or dry). You also can donate healthy, low-sodium, low-sugar items such as beans, oatmeal and other whole grains, and canola or olive oil.

**Is there anything I shouldn't donate?** Please do not donate frozen food, homemade food or home-canned items. Please do not donate items that have expired or are in glass containers. In keeping with good food-handling and food-safety procedures, food that is opened, damaged, out of code or does not have the official ingredients included will be discarded by the food bank in the sorting process.

**I put food out and it wasn't picked up. Why not?** Letter carriers try to touch every single mail box in America during the Food Drive, but the fact is that we do admittedly miss some. The Food Drive takes place in more than 10,000 cities and towns across America. It's an effort to raise national awareness about the real, ongoing problem of hunger in every community, and it's a sincere attempt to use our unique delivery network to do something about it. Please note, though, that *participation is strictly voluntary*, and no system is perfect—oversights will occur. If your donation is not picked up, contact your local post office or simply place your donation by your mailbox on Monday instead. (Letter carriers will be picking up missed donations on Monday, too.) And of course, your local food banks and pantries will gratefully accept your

donation in person. In any case, we are deeply thankful for your generosity and are truly sorry for any inconvenience.

**Do I need to use a special bag?** No! No special bags are needed. Paper is sturdy and tends to hold more food, while plastic holds up better if it gets wet (in the rain, etc.). Cloth bags or boxes are also fine. So it's your choice. And most bags and boxes can be easily recycled. Your letter carrier will gladly take anything you leave out!

**I received a special Food Drive bag in the mail; do I have to use only that bag?** You can if you want to, but any old bag is just fine. (See above.)

**I hear that some people got special Food Drive bags in the mail but I didn't get one.**

**What gives?** A number of letter carrier locals have entered partnerships with sponsors to provide specially marked "Food Drive" bags that get mailed to customers. These sponsorships help defray the costs associated with making the bags and mailing them. Plus, some sponsors have also backed bag distributions as well in certain regions of the country. So bag distribution isn't national—at least not yet. And you can always use your own bags or boxes.

**Does every letter carrier take part in the Food Drive?** As much as we would like every letter carrier to take part—and a sizable majority of them do—some letter carriers as well as some post offices opt not to take part in the national Food Drive, for a variety of reasons. Note that letter carrier participation in the Food Drive is strictly voluntary.

**How do I know whether my local letter carrier or post office is taking part in the Food Drive?** Just call your local post office and ask to speak to your local food drive person.

**Can I donate pet food, too?** The Food Drive is primarily a people-food food drive, but if you also want to give pet food in addition to your regular donation, food banks may be able to distribute or direct it to pet shelters and organizations in the area that have a need.

**Can I donate baby food, too?** Yes, but please do not donate any form of individual baby food products (including formula, jarred vegetables and fruits, meals, snacks, infant cereal). Baby food may be donated by the case or pallet, but single item donations present potential contamination risks and special handling requirements.

**Can I donate toiletries or other personal care items, too?** The Food Drive is primarily, well, a food drive, but if you also want to give personal care items (such as diapers, laundry detergent, soap, toilet paper and household cleaning items) in addition to your regular donation, food banks may be able to distribute or put them to good use with organizations that also

provide help to those in need. Please note that not all food banks will be able to accept these items.

**Does my food donation stay local?** Yes—all food stays in your local community. It's not shipped off to some regional distribution center hundreds of miles away. If you want to know where your donation is going, call your local post office and ask to speak to your local food drive person.

**Are my donations tax-deductible?** Please contact your local food bank. The food drive person at your local post office should be able to help connect you.

**How can I help out (besides donating food)?** If you would like to volunteer with food distribution and sorting, or in any other capacity, call your local post office and ask to speak to the local food drive person there. Many food banks have a great need for volunteers on Food Drive Day as well as all throughout the year.