



Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by East Texas Food Bank

Feeding America is the nation’s largest domestic hunger-relief organization, serving an estimated 25 million low-income Americans each year through its network of 205 food banks and their 63,000 charitable feeding agencies, including food pantries, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters.

The current recession and the rise in unemployment are having a profound effect on the nation’s food banks. In early September 2009, Feeding America conducted a brief survey of food bank members to learn more about the challenges faced by food banks, their member agencies, and clients served. A total of 176 food banks participated in the survey. What we found was that 99% of all participating food banks reported increases in demand for emergency food assistance over the last year. The average increase in demand across the network from Summer 2008 to Summer 2009 was 30%. However, the increase in need for services over the last year varies across the nation, ranging from 5% in some areas to more than 150% in others. Local economic circumstances, such as plant closings, can have a significant impact on need but it is also clear that high unemployment across the nation – which reached 9.7% in August – is a critical factor in the rising need for emergency food.

It’s becoming increasingly more difficult for many food banks and their agencies to meet the needs of their clients, especially when new clients arrive all the time. Despite the fact that the nation’s food banks delivered 2.63 billion pounds of food between July 2008 and June 2009 – an increase of 21.4% over the prior year --many are struggling to meet this increase in demand.

Here is a snapshot of what East Texas Food Bank has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.

Estimated increase in demand or need for emergency food assistance:	The East Texas Food Bank served 11% more people in May 2009 compared to the same time last year.
Local factors impacting changes in demand:	The East Texas Food Bank and its more than 200 partner agencies are providing more food to its existing clientele. However, the number of clients asking for food for the first time has increased 44% since the same time last year (May 2009 vs. May 2008).



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Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:	Unemployment
Client trends include:	More requests from existing clients More first-time users
The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to reduce the amount of food available per person or household:	Rarely

Additional Comments:

East Texas is experiencing several plant closures and layoffs.

Here's a link to a story about a successful entrepreneur who went from being a volunteer/donor to a recipient <http://www.kltv.com/Global/story.asp?s=10666218>. One of our flagship agencies in Lufkin, TX is reporting that they are seeing 20 first timers every day and they saw 70 first timers yesterday. These daily increases are being driven by job layoffs from Lufkin Industries, restaurants and retail stores, and small business closings.

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