



Unmet Need for Cold Storage Equipment Report 2024

Introduction

Pursuant to the Chapter 101 of the laws of 2022, on or before the first day of December each year, the Commissioner of Health shall annually provide a summary of findings to the Governor and the Legislature on the unmet need for cold storage equipment for the emergency food organizations of the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP).

The HPNAP provides emergency food relief and nutrition services to food insecure populations in New York State (NYS). In State fiscal year 2023, approximately 400 million emergency meals were provided through a network of about 2,700 Emergency Food Providers, which include food pantries, soup kitchens and emergency shelters. HPNAP funding supports 44 grant contracts with the ten Regional Food Banks and 34 direct service providers that support the State's Emergency Food Providers network. During the COVID-19 pandemic, New York State experienced a surge in the demand for emergency food resources, which significantly increased the need for additional refrigerator and freezer cold storage equipment among Emergency Food Providers

The first survey of cold storage needs was informally completed in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the second survey was completed in 2021 after the introduction of this legislation requiring an annual survey and report. Beginning in 2023, the Division of Nutrition's HPNAP and Evaluation, Research, and Surveillance Unit (ERSU) collaborated to conduct a survey to fulfill this legislative requirement. The results of the Cold Storage Equipment survey conducted in August of 2024 are reported below.

Survey Methods

An electronic survey was deployed in August 2024 to over 2,700 active Emergency Food Providers in NYS, and the ten Regional Food Banks. Multiple reminders were sent to Emergency Food Providers to complete the survey within one month of receipt. In total, 2,244 Emergency Food Providers received the survey and 1,041 responded.

Results

Food Pantries, Soup Kitchens and Emergency Shelter Survey Responses

With approximately 51 percent of all Emergency Food Providers responding to the survey, the responses received were found to be a representative sample. Therefore, the data can be used to predict the overall State need. Additionally, while the response rate was lower than in previous years, the distribution of types of sites and locations that responded to the survey are comparable to last year.

We saw increases in the percentage of responding agencies who needed refrigerators and those who needed freezers. Nearly 75% of responding organizations reported having at least one refrigerator or freezer that is more than 6 years old, an indicator of an impending need to purchase new cold storage equipment. This is an increase from last year, where 70% of responding organizations reported having at least one refrigerator or freezer that is more than 6 years old. See Table 1 for a breakdown of pantries indicating each need and those pantries that have a refrigerator or freezer older than 6 years.

Table 1: How many responding food pantries, emergency shelters, and soup kitchens need refrigerators and/or freezers in 2024?

	Count	Percent 2024	Percent 2023
Need a Refrigerator	585/1041	56% of responding providers	54% of responding providers
<i>Need 2 or more refrigerators</i>	<i>253/585</i>	<i>43% of responding providers indicating need</i>	<i>42% of responding providers indicating need</i>
Need a Freezer	551/1041	52% of responding providers	50% of responding providers
<i>Need 2 or more freezers</i>	<i>247/551</i>	<i>45% of responding providers indicating need</i>	<i>50% of responding providers indicating need</i>
At least one refrigerator or freezer that is more than 6 years old	763/1041	75% of responding providers	70% of responding providers

Table 2 showcases the anticipated cost of new refrigerators as reported by food pantries, emergency shelters, and soup kitchens.

Table 2: Anticipated refrigerator cost for food pantries, emergency shelters, and soup kitchens (due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100).

Anticipated cost	Frequency	Percent
Less than \$999	58	10%
\$1,000 to \$3,000	240	40%
\$3,001 to \$6,000	162	27%
\$6,001 to \$10,000	74	12%
\$10,001 to \$15,000	27	4%
\$15,001 to \$21,000	9	1%
\$21,001 to \$28,000	7	1%
More than \$28,001	24	4%

The cost to meet the full need of the 601 responding agencies for refrigerators is approximately \$3.7-\$6.2 million. Extrapolating this data to all 2700 Emergency Food Providers, the total cost would be approximately \$8.04-\$13.2 million. This far exceeds the previous report, which indicated the total estimated cost for all 2700 Emergency Food Providers would be approximately \$3.8-\$6.5 million.

Table 3: Anticipated freezer costs for food pantries, emergency shelters, and soup kitchens (due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100).

Anticipated cost	Frequency	Percent
Less than \$999	41	7%
\$1,000 to \$3,000	246	40%
\$3,001 to \$6,000	156	26%
\$6,001 to \$10,000	85	14%
\$10,001 to \$15,000	35	6%
\$15,001 to \$21,000	18	3%
\$21,001 to \$28,000	8	1%
More than \$28,001	20	3%

The cost to meet the full need of the 609 responding agencies for freezers is approximately \$4.04-\$6.1 million. Extrapolating this data to all 2700 Emergency Food Providers, the total cost would be approximately \$8.5-\$12.9 million. This is similar to the previous report, which indicated the total cost would be approximately \$4.0-\$6.7 million.

Regional Food Bank Survey Responses

Seven of the nine responding food banks had at least one refrigerator or freezer that is more than 10 years old. All nine responding food banks indicated they had at least one refrigerator or freezer that is more than 6 years old, an indicator of an impending need to purchase new cold storage equipment. The cost to meet the refrigeration and freezer needs outlined by the food banks is estimated at between \$426,000 and \$440,000, which is double the cost predicted last year.

The same number of food banks responded this year as last year, making our results comparable. The number of food banks indicating they would need a new refrigerator (5 increased to 6) and/or freezer (3 increased to 5) increased from last year.

Table 4: How many food banks need refrigerators and/or freezers? (Nine of the ten food banks surveyed completed the survey)

	Frequency 2024	Frequency 2023	Percent 2024	Percent 2023
Need a refrigerator	6/9	5/9	66% of all food banks	56% of all food banks
<i>Need 2 or more refrigerators</i>	4/6	5/5	<i>67% of food banks indicating need</i>	<i>100% of food banks indicating need</i>
Need a freezer	5/9	3/9	56% of all food banks	33% of all food banks
<i>Need 2 or more freezers</i>	3/5	2/3	<i>60% of food banks indicating need</i>	<i>67% of food banks indicating need</i>

Notably, the cost reported to replace refrigerators and freezers increased from Federal Fiscal Year 2023, with the majority of food banks reporting they would need more than \$28,001 for both new refrigerators and freezers.

Table 5: Anticipated refrigeration and freezer costs for food banks.

	Refrigerators		Freezer	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
\$6,001 to \$10,000	1	1	1	1
\$10,001 to \$15,000	-	-	-	-
\$15,001 to \$21,000	-	-	-	-
\$21,001 to \$28,000	-	1	-	-
More than \$28,001	5	3	4	2

Conclusion

These findings from the 2024 Cold Storage Survey of Emergency Food Organizations identify future needs for refrigerators and freezers across most Emergency Food Providers. If we accept that: 1) refrigerators and freezers may need to be replaced after 6 years; 2) data from 1,041 respondents out of approximately total 2,244 Emergency Food Providers (51 percent) can be reliably extrapolated to represent the entire population; and 3) respondent estimates as to how much their replacement refrigerators/freezers would cost, then this report estimates that \$17 to \$26.6 million would be needed for cold storage to maintain emergency food service operations in 2025 and beyond.

If you have any questions, please contact 518-402-7333 or HPNAP@health.ny.gov.
Thank you.