

LOS ANGELES REGIONAL



Fighting Hunger. Giving Hope.

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FOOD PANTRY DEMAND INCREASES 41 PERCENT IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Demand outpaces supply as rising food costs, slowing economy force growing numbers of LA County residents to seek food assistance

LOS ANGELES, Calif. – The Los Angeles Regional Foodbank, which supplies food pantries all over the County, has increased its distribution by 33 percent compared to last year, in an effort to keep up with the growing demand. Local charities are seeing a 41 percent increase in demand as more families are forced to seek help due to the slowing economy and rising food prices, rent and other basic expenses.

Rising food prices will impact holiday celebrations for many families this season. According to the American Farm Bureau, a typical Thanksgiving dinner has increased by nearly 17 percent since 2006.

“More people are reaching out for help, including many middle-class families who are experiencing tough times because of the declining economy,” said Michael Flood, President and CEO of the Foodbank. “Our challenge is helping local pantries to continue serving the growing number of people seeking assistance.”

Because the increased demand for food assistance is outstripping the supply of food, several food pantries have reduced the size of their food packages in an effort to keep up with the growing need. Lately, many pantries have reached their maximum household distribution, forcing families and individuals to find another pantry for assistance.

“Last September, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health released a report showing that the number of county residents experiencing food insecurity had increased significantly since 2003,” said Dr. Jonathan E. Fielding, Director of Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and the County Health Officer. “Recent economic events are further increasing the pressure on many individuals and families, making it difficult for people to put food on the table. In these difficult times, public and charitable programs play a critical role assisting LA County residents by providing access to

nutritional food. All those who can support these types of food distribution programs are encouraged to do so."

The Foodbank, which provides food to 875 charitable agency sites throughout Los Angeles County and distributes the *equivalent* of 560,000 meals per week, will kick off its 35th Annual Holiday Food Drive this Thursday. There are a number of ways people can help fight hunger in Los Angeles County:

- Drop off food donations to our Foodbank Drive Thru
- Visit any of the LA County Smart & Final stores through Dec. 31 to give a monetary donation
- Participate in the Albertson's Turkey Bucks program Nov. 1-Dec. 19
- Visit our web site at www.lafoodbank.org and register for a virtual food drive

Food Policy Brief available at <http://www.lafoodbank.org/stats.htm>

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*The **Los Angeles Regional Foodbank** is a non-profit, charitable organization established in 1973 and is one of the largest food banks in the United States. Through a network of 875 charitable agency sites, the Foodbank supplies enough food for over 500,000 meals each week in Los Angeles County. The Foodbank is affiliated with Feeding America (formerly America's Second Harvest). For more information, visit <http://www.lafoodbank.org>.*