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Community Reminded That Food Safety is Everyone's Business

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THAW FOOD THE SAFE WAY

Improper thawing allows bacteria to grow quickly on food.

SAFE METHODS:

- In the refrigerator (on the bottom shelf)
- Under cold running water
- In the microwave (cook immediately after)
- As a part of the cooking process

NEVER:

- Thaw food on the counter at room temperature
- Leave meat, poultry, or seafood out for hours
- Use warm or hot water to speed up thawing

The outer layer of food can enter the **danger zone (41°F–140°F / 5°C–60°C)** while the inside is still frozen—allowing harmful

The Ministry of Health and Social Development, joins the global community in observing World Food Safety Day on June 7, under the theme "Food Safety: Science in Action."

Acting Deputy Chief Environmental Health Officer Mrs. Shamelle Thomas said that World Food Safety Day serves as an important reminder that food safety is everyone's responsibility. "From production and preparation to storage and consumption, every step in the food chain plays a vital role in protecting public health and preventing foodborne illnesses," she said.

Food safety is essential to maintaining good health, supporting economic development, and ensuring food security. Unsafe food containing harmful bacteria, viruses, parasites, or chemical substances can cause more than 200 diseases, ranging from diarrhea to more serious health conditions. Mrs. Thomas noted that by adopting safe food handling practices, individuals and businesses can significantly reduce the risk of illness and contribute to healthier communities.

According to Mrs. Thomas, the Division continues to work closely with food businesses, vendors, institutions, and the public to promote food safety standards throughout the Virgin Islands. Through inspections, education, monitoring, and regulatory enforcement, Environmental Health Officers play a critical role in safeguarding the food supply and protecting consumers.

As part of the observance, residents are encouraged to practice the World Health Organization's Five Keys to Safer Food:

- Keep clean.
- Separate raw and cooked foods.
- Cook food thoroughly.
- Keep food at safe temperatures.
- Use safe water and raw materials.

Consumers are also reminded to wash fruits and vegetables before consumption, store perishable foods appropriately, check expiration dates, and maintain proper hygiene when preparing meals.

Businesses involved in the preparation, storage, distribution, and sale of food are encouraged to remain vigilant in adhering to food safety regulations and best practices. “Food safety is not only a legal obligation but a shared commitment to protecting the health and wellbeing of the public,” Mrs. Thomas shared.

As the Territory observes World Food Safety Day 2026, the Environmental Health Division encourages all residents to play their part in promoting safe food practices at home, at work, and within the wider community.

“Food safety is a shared responsibility. Together, we can protect health, prevent illness, and build a safer, healthier Virgin Islands,” Mrs. Thomas concluded.

The Ministry of Health and Social Development remains committed to protecting and promoting the health and social well-being of the people of the Virgin Islands through effective policies, sustainable programmes and strategic partnerships that support a safe, healthy, and resilient society.

For Additional Information Contact:

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