

Case Study

Food Ministry Sets The Bar High, Keeping Food Fresh During 'Last Mile' Delivery.

Challenge

Valley Baptist Mission Education Center (VBMEC), in the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas, acts as the region's "last mile" hub for the USDA's Farmers to Families Food Box Program. As these food boxes contain perishable grocery items, there is a requirement to maintain the cold chain. VBMEC is no stranger to supporting their local communities, however this level of food distribution is usually reserved for fully equipped distribution and logistics companies. Forklifts, loading ramps, refrigerated storage and temperature controlled vehicles are not resources they have at all – let alone readily available. Because these necessary tools are not provided by the USDA, VBMEC would have to make substantial financial investments in order to successfully manage the last mile. Furthermore, the timing in which truckloads of food boxes are being delivered are inconsistent, often leaving minimal time to communicate with local faith based organizations to inform them that food boxes are going to be available. Without any refrigerated warehouse space this increases the risk of perfectly fresh product becoming spoiled and unsafe to consume.

Solution

VBMEC leadership set forth to secure the proper equipment, personnel, space and logistics capabilities needed to execute the last mile successfully. They utilized two retreat centers in Harlingen and Mission – both of which had to cancel all scheduled mission groups due to the pandemic. Forklifts were acquired to handle pallets safely and efficiently. They invested in six 53' refrigerated trailers



Industry:
Food



Application:
Pallets



Location
Rio Grade Valley, TX



Challenge:
Establish process to maintain cold chain throughout "last mile"



Solution:
QFoil Thermal
Pallet Covers &
Temperature
Controlled Storage
Trailers

Solution, cont.

to act as onsite cold storage. The mechanical units they purchased are hybrid – which allows them to run on electricity. VBMEC then needed to find a cold chain solution for the in-transit portion, where refrigerated vehicles were not an option. They turned to QProducts & Services for support and began utilizing their reflective, thermal pallet covers to minimize temperature fluctuation when each pallet was exposed to heat and direct sunlight. Upon pickup of all pallets, VBMEC provides a brief training session on why these thermal covers are being used – and how to properly handle them when handing out individual food boxes to ensure the cold chain is maintained. Another important investment made was a software program that allowed them to streamline communication to local churches when food boxes were available. When accepting the opportunity to participate in this program, VBMEC made a commitment to its community members by establishing a process to ensure all food boxes would remain fresh throughout the last mile.

Results

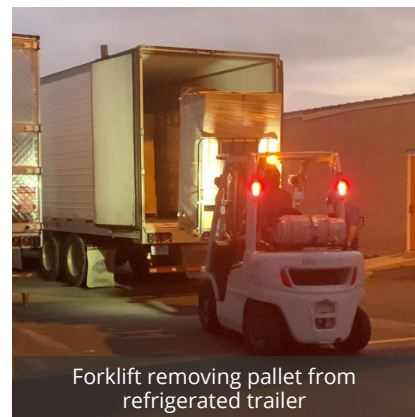
By connecting with other faith based organizations in the Rio Grande Valley, VBMEC was able to plan and execute a full-scale distribution network delivering to highly populated and poverty-stricken areas. Valley Baptist Mission received high praise from top officials at the USDA who visited the Rio Grande Valley to witness how well last mile delivery was being handled. VBMEC has shown to be the Farmers to Families Food Box Program's prime example of how to execute last mile delivery efforts and ensure families in need receive the freshest food possible. More importantly, they are making a large impact on the community. As of October 2020, they have distributed more than 800,000 fresh food boxes to families in need!



Church Volunteers ready to deliver food boxes to families



Food boxes loaded into family vehicle



Forklift removing pallet from refrigerated trailer