



## KEEP YOUR FOOD SAFE AFTER A NATURAL DISASTER

Did you know that a flood, fire, natural disaster, or the loss of power from high winds, snow, or ice could jeopardize the safety of your food? Knowing how to determine if food is safe and how to keep food safe will help minimize the potential loss of food and reduce the risk of foodborne illness. This fact sheet will help you make the right decisions for keeping your family safe during an emergency.

### Food Safety and Power Outages

- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature. Each time the door is opened, a significant amount of refrigeration is lost.

- A refrigerator keeps food safely cold for about four hours if it is unopened. A full freezer holds the temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full and the door remains closed.)



- Food may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 40° F or below.
- **Never taste a food to determine its safety!**



- Use dry or block ice to keep your refrigerator and freezer as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic-foot full freezer for two days.

- If the power has been out for several days, check the temperature of the freezer with a food or appliance thermometer. If the food is at 40° Fahrenheit or below, then the food is safe.



- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, check each package of food to determine its safety. If the food still contains ice crystals, then the food is safe.

- **Discard** refrigerated perishable food such as meat, poultry, fish, soft cheeses, milk, eggs, leftovers and deli items after **four hours** without power.



### Food Safety after a Flood

**Food may not be safe to eat during and after an emergency. Identify and throw away food that may not be safe to eat.**

- Throw away food that may have come in contact with flood or storm water.
- Throw away food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture.
- Throw away perishable foods (including meat, poultry, fish, eggs and leftovers) that have been above 40 degrees Fahrenheit (F) for 2 hours or more.
- Thawed food that contains ice crystals or is 40 degree F or below can be refrozen or cooked.
- Throw away canned foods that are bulging, opened, or damaged.
- **When in Doubt, Throw it Out!**

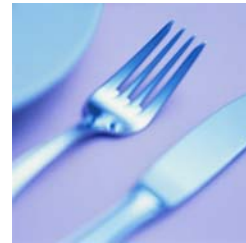


- Food containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped caps (soda pop bottles), twist caps, flip tops, snap-open, and home canned foods should be discarded if they have come into contact with floodwater because they cannot be disinfected.
- Canned foods that *did not* come in contact with flood waters can be saved. If cans have come in contact with floodwater or storm water, remove the labels, wash the cans, and dip them in a solution of 1 cup of bleach in 5 gallons of water. Label the cans with a marker.
- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, wash your hands, make ice, or make baby formula.
- Breastfed infants should continue breastfeeding. For formula-fed infants, use ready-to-feed formula if possible. If using ready-to-feed formula is not possible, it is best to use bottled water to prepare powdered or concentrated formula. If bottled water is not available, use boiled water.
- If you prepare formula with boiled water, let the formula cool sufficiently before giving it to an infant.
- Clean feeding bottles and nipples with bottled, boiled, or treated water before each use.
- Wash your hands before preparing formula and feeding an infant. You can use alcohol-based hand sanitizer for washing your hands if the water supply is limited.



## Clean and Sanitize

Metal pans, ceramic dishes, and metal utensils that came in contact with flood waters can be treated by washing with hot soapy water **AND** sanitizing by either (a) boiling in clean water or (b) immersing for 15 minutes in a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water.



Centers for Disease Control recommend discarding wooden cutting boards, baby bottle nipples, and pacifiers. These items cannot be properly sanitized if they have come into contact with contaminated flood waters. Clean and sanitize food-contact surfaces in a four-step process.

1. Wash with soap and warm, clean water.
2. Rinse with clean water.
3. Sanitize by immersing for 1 minute in a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach (5.25%, unscented) per gallon of clean water.
4. Allow to air dry.



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