

GUIDANCE

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services Consumer and Environmental Health Services Food and Drug Safety Program (609) 588-3123

Keeping Food Safe after a Natural Disaster or Power Outage

Food may not be safe to eat during and after an emergency. The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services or your local health department can make specific recommendations regarding the safety of food subject to possible contamination due to a natural disaster or power outage.

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.
- 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.
- 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. Re 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.

Store food safely.

- While the power is out, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- Add block ice or dry ice to your refrigerator if the electricity is expected to be off longer than 4 hours. Wear heavy gloves when handling ice.

Handle food safely.

- If there is no water available for hand washing, use alcohol based hand sanitizers.

Related Resources:

- **USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline: 1-888-MPHotline.**
Available for consumers questions and concerns about food safety.
- USDA Alert: Keeping Food Safe During Flooding and Power Outages
<http://www.usda.gov/2005/08/0340.xml>
- Hand Hygiene in Emergency Situations
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/handwashing.asp>
- Keeping Food Safe in an Emergency, U.S. Department of Agriculture
http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/keeping_food_Safe_during_an_emergency/index.asp
- Consumer Advice: Disaster Assistance with Food
<http://www.foodsafety.gov/%7Efsg/fsgdisas.html>
- Food Safety Information for Hurricane Aftermath, FDA
<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/fsdisas.html>