

## **Keeping Food Safe after 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](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/keeping_food_Safe_during_an_emergency/index.asp)