

# Food Safety After a Flood



## During power outages

- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.
- The refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) and the door remains closed.
- Discard refrigerated food such as meat, poultry, fish, soft cheeses, milk, eggs, leftovers and deli items if the food temperature is above 41°F for more than 4 hours.
- Food may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 41°F or below when checked with a food thermometer.
- Never taste a food to determine if it is safe!
- Obtain dry or block ice to keep your refrigerator and freezer as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a long period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic-foot full freezer for 2 days.
- If the power has been out for several days, check the temperature of the freezer with an appliance thermometer. If the appliance thermometer reads 41°F or below, the food is safe to refreeze.
- 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, the food is safe.

## Steps to follow after the flood

- Throw away any food if there is any chance that it has come into contact with flood water. Discard wooden cutting boards, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and pacifiers.
- Thoroughly wash all metal pans, dishes and utensils that came in contact with flood water with hot soapy water. Disinfect with a solution of 1 teaspoon of regular unscented household bleach per gallon of clean water.
- Undamaged, commercially prepared foods in all-metal cans can be saved if they do not have a flip-top lid. The cans should be cleaned and disinfected with a solution of 1 teaspoon of regular unscented household bleach per gallon of clean water.
- Use bottled water that has not been in flood waters. If bottled water is not available, tap water can be boiled for safety.