

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.