

# Food and Water Safety After a Disaster or Power Outage

## Food

Food may not be safe to eat during and after an emergency. Safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene includes bottled, boiled, or treated water.

### 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 perishable foods (including meat, poultry, fish, eggs and leftovers) that have been above 40 degrees Fahrenheit (F) for 2 hours or more.
- 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, removed 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. Include the expiration date.
- **Check with the Public Works Department for the location of waste receptacles to be used for the disposal of spoiled or unsafe food items (do not set these items by the curb for pickup)**

### 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.

### Clean and sanitize food-contact surfaces.

CDD recommends 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.

## Water

Water may not be safe to drink, clean with, or bathe in after an emergency such as a flood. During and after a disaster, water can become contaminated with microorganisms, such as bacteria, sewage, agricultural or industrial waste, chemicals, and other substances that can cause illness or death. This fact sheet offers the following guidance to help you make sure water is safe to use.

- Listen to and follow public announcements. Local authorities will tell you if tap water is safe to drink or to use for cooking or bathing. If the water is not safe to use, use bottled water or boil to disinfect water for cooking, cleaning, or bathing.
- Use only bottled, boiled, or treated water for drinking, cooking or preparing food, washing dishes, cleaning, brushing your teeth, washing your hands, making ice, and bathing until your water supply is tested and found safe. If your water supply is limited, you can use alcohol-based hand sanitizer for washing your hands.
- Boiling water, when practical, is the preferred way to kill harmful bacterial and parasites. Bringing water to a rolling boil for 1 minute will kill most organisms. Boiling will not remove chemical contaminants. If you suspect or are informed that water is contaminated with chemicals, seek another source of water, such as bottled water.
- If you can't boil water, you can treat water with chlorine tablets, iodine tablets, or unscented household chlorine bleach (5.25% sodium hypochlorite). If you use chlorine tablets or iodine tablets, follow the directions that come with the tablets. If you use household chlorine bleach, add 1/8 teaspoon (~0.75 milliliter [mL]) of bleach per gallon of water if the water is clear. For cloudy water, add 1/4 teaspoon (~1.50 mL) of bleach per gallon. Mix the solution thoroughly and let it stand for about 30 minutes before using it. Treating water with chlorine tablets, iodine tablets, or liquid bleach will not kill many parasitic organisms. Boiling is the best way to kill these organisms.
- Flooded, private water wells will need to be tested and disinfected after flood waters recede. If you suspect that your well may be contaminated, contact the health department at 319.352.0332 for assistance. Free water test kits are available on a limited basis.
- Practice basic hygiene. Wash your hands with soap and bottled water or warm water that has been boiled or disinfected. Wash your hands before preparing food or eating, after toilet use, after participating in cleanup-up activities, and after handling articles contaminated with floodwater or sewage. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to wash your hands if you have a limited supply of clean water.