

News for Immediate Release

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Take Food Safety Precautions During Power Outages and Flooding

Harrisburg – Agriculture Secretary George Greig today reminded Pennsylvanians to take food safety precautions during flooding and power outages caused by Hurricane Sandy.

"During and after a power outage or flood, simple steps like monitoring the temperature and condition of food can make the difference between safe food and dangerous food," said Greig. "Pennsylvanians should follow basic food safety tips to ensure food is safe to eat."

"Remember: when in doubt, throw it out."

During flooding:

- Drink only bottled water.
- Thoroughly wash all metal pans, ceramic dishes and utensils exposed to flood water with hot soapy water. Products are safe to use if they have not come in contact with flood water.

Discard these items if submerged in floodwater:

- Home-canned foods;
- All foods in cardboard boxes, paper, foil, cellophane or cloth;
- Meat, poultry, eggs or fish;
- Spices, seasonings, extracts, flour, sugar, grain, coffee and other staples in canisters;
- Unopened jars with waxed cardboard seals, such as mayonnaise and salad dressing;
- Jarred reserves sealed with paraffin;
- Wooden cutting boards;
- Plastic utensils; and
- Baby bottle nipples and pacifiers.

Save these items if submerged in floodwater:

 Commercially canned foods that came into contact with flood water and have been properly cleaned -- Clean them by labeling cans with the name of food in permanent marker; removing labels; washing cans in water containing detergent; soaking cans for at least one minute in chlorine solution; rinsing in clean, cool water; and placing on sides to dry (do not stack cans). Dishes and glassware -- Sanitize by boiling in clean water or by immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water.

During power outages:

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain cold temperatures. Each time you open the door, temperatures rise significantly.
- Refrigerators will keep food safely cold for about four hours if unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half-full and the door remains closed).
- You can safely refreeze items that still contain ice crystals or are at 40 degrees or below.
- Never taste food to determine its safety.
- Use dry or block ice to keep refrigerators and freezers as cold as possible during prolonged power outages. Fifty pounds of dry ice should keep cold an 18-cubic-foot, full freezer for two days.
- If the power has been out for several days, check the temperature of the freezer with an appliance thermometer or food thermometer. If the food still contains ice crystals or is at 40 degrees or below, the food is safe.
- If there is no thermometer, check each package of food to determine its safety. If the food still contains ice crystals, the food is safe.
- Discard refrigerated perishable food such as meat, poultry, fish, soft cheeses, milk, eggs, leftovers and deli items after four hours without power.

For more information about food safety, and to see a searchable restaurant inspection database, contact the Bureau of Food Safety and Laboratory Services at 717-787-4315 or visit www.EatSafePA.com.

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