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Food Safety Tips – After the Storm

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Office of Food Control recommends the following food safety tips for residents that lost power and experienced flooding:

- Perishable foods without refrigeration that have a temperature of 40 degrees Fahrenheit and above for two hours should be discarded; this includes meats, milk, yogurt, eggs, mayonnaise and cream dressings, pastas, and deserts.
- Food items that can be kept for a *limited time* without refrigeration include: hard process cheeses (Cheddar, Swiss, Provolone, Romano and Parmesan); butter and margarine; opened canned fruits and fruit juices; peanut butter, jellies, jams; mustard and vinegar based dressings; bread products like rolls, muffins, bagels, waffles; and herbs, spices and raw vegetables.
- Discard all foods that come in contact with floodwaters **including canned goods**. Thoroughly wash all kitchen utensils, pots, plates, etc., with hot soapy water and sanitize them by boiling in clean water or immersing them in a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water for 15 minutes.
- Place all discarded spoiled foods in double plastic bags closed with ties. Place in animal and bird proof trash cans.
- As a rule an unopened, well functioning freezer half full will keep foods safely for up to 24 hours. A fully stocked freezer, unopened can keep foods safely for 48 hours.
- Boil water vigorously for three minutes (at altitudes above one mile), to kill any disease-causing microorganisms present in water. The flat taste of boiled water can be improved by pouring it back and forth from one container to another (called aeration), by allowing it to stand for a few hours, or by adding a small pinch of salt for each quart of water boiled.
- Use common sense when dealing with the issue of possible food spoilage: **Do not taste foods to see if they are spoiled --- If in doubt throw it out.**

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