



News for Immediate Release

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Agriculture Secretary Reminds Residents to Take Food Safety Precautions During Flooding, Power Outages

Harrisburg – In preparation for significant rainfall forecast for many areas of the state on Sept. 30, Agriculture Secretary Russell C. Redding today offered tips to keep food safe during flooding and power outages.

“During and after a power outage or flood, it is important to remember key food safety tips,” said Redding. “Simple steps like monitoring the temperature and condition of food can make the difference between safe food and dangerous food, and I encourage Pennsylvanians to follow basic food safety tips to ensure they remain safe.”

Redding offered the following tips to help families minimize the potential for food-borne illness due to power outages or flooding:

During flooding:

- Drink only bottled water if flooding has occurred.
- Thoroughly wash all metal pans, ceramic dishes and utensils that come in contact with flood water with hot soapy water and sanitize by boiling these items in clean water, or by immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water.

After flooding, discard:

- Home-canned foods that came in contact with flood waters.
- 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. Also, throw away preserves sealed with paraffin.
- Wooden cutting boards, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and pacifiers.

After flooding, save:

- Canned foods that did not come into contact with flood water.
- Commercially canned foods that came into contact with flood water and have been properly cleaned 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; placing on sides to dry (do not stack cans).

- Dishes and glassware if they are sanitized 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.
- When in doubt, throw it out.

During power outages:

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain cold temperatures. Each time the door is opened, 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).
- Food may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is 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 maintain 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 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.
- 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, contact the Bureau of Food Safety and Laboratory Services at 717-787-4315 or visit www.agriculture.state.pa.us and search "food safety."

September is National Preparedness Month. In light of the expected rainfall and possible flooding, families should take time to review emergency plans and check supplies in their family and car emergency kits. Free plan templates and kit checklists are available at www.ReadyPA.org.

In addition, anyone who plans to travel during the storms is reminded to never drive through standing water or around barricades intended to limit access to flooded roadways.

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