



MIDDLESEX COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FACT SHEET

Food Safety after Hurricane Irene

The Middlesex County Office of Public Health urges all residents to throw away any food that may have come in contact with flood or storm waters. Individuals that have suffered power outages should keep their refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.

Residents are urged to dispose of any perishable food that may have been above 40 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) for two hours or more.

- ✓ Food will stay cold in the refrigerator for about 4 hours if it is unopened.
- ✓ A full freezer will keep the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed.

Thawed food that contains ice crystals or is 40°F or below can be refrozen or cooked. However, it's important that each item is thoroughly cooked to the proper temperature to assure that any foodborne bacteria that may be present are destroyed.

Below are some additional food safety tips to prevent illness during power outages, flooding and hurricane conditions:

- Discard any food that is not in a waterproof container if there is any chance that it has come into contact with flood water. Food containers that are not waterproof include those with screw-off caps, snap lids and pull tops.
- Discard cardboard juice/milk/baby formula boxes and home canned foods if they have come in contact with flood water, because they cannot be effectively cleaned and sanitized.
- Inspect canned foods and discard any food in damaged cans. Can damage is shown by swelling, leakage, punctures, holes, fractures, extensive deep rusting, or crushing/denting severe enough to prevent normal stacking or opening with a manual, wheel-type can opener.
- Check to ensure that the freezer temperature is at or below 0°F and the refrigerator is at or below 40°F.
- Wash fruits and vegetables with water from a safe source before eating.
- For infants, if using formula, try to use prepared, canned baby formula that requires no added water. When using concentrated or powdered formulas, prepare with bottled water if the local water source is potentially contaminated.

For additional information on food safety and power outages, please visit

<http://www.nj.gov/health/er/natural.shtml>
<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/recovery.asp>.

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