



Waupaca County

Department of Health and Human Services

Health Services Division | Environmental Health Unit

FOOD SAFETY DURING FLOODS

THE FLOOD IS COMING

- If possible flooding is predicted for your area, take steps to minimize damage now.
- Put refrigerator and freezer on cement blocks.
- Move canned goods out of the basement or to higher shelves.
- Turn your refrigerator and freezer to the coldest settings in anticipation of power failure (colder foods keep longer during power outages).
- Move fresh and packaged foods to higher areas.

THE FLOOD IS OVER

When flooding has occurred, food safety begins. Never take a chance with food that may have been contaminated. Foodborne bacteria often cannot be detected by taste, smell, or appearance. **If in doubt - throw it out!** Flood water often contains sewage from municipal systems, septic tanks, lagoons and pastures. It may not be easy to determine if the water in your home is tainted. Therefore, it is best to assume that the water contains sewage and take the proper precautions.

REFRIGERATORS AND FREEZERS

Without power, with the appliance door closed tightly, a fully packed freezer can only keep food properly cooled for two days, and a half-full freezer for one day.

Discard all foods that may have been contaminated by flood waters or by raw meat juices.

Foods kept over 2 hours at temperatures above 40 degrees F should be discarded. These include:

- Raw or cooked meat, poultry and seafood
- Milk and dairy products
- Cooked pasta and pasta salads
- Eggs

ITEMS TO KEEP

In emergency conditions, the following foods should keep at room temperatures for a few days. However, **if in doubt-throw it out!**

- Butter and margarine
- Dried fruits
- Opened jars of salad dressing, peanut butter, jelly, relish, taco sauce, barbecue sauce, mustard, ketchup and olives
- Hard and processed cheese
- Bread, rolls, cakes and muffins

When power has been restored, check the freezer for uncontaminated foods which still contain ice crystals (indicating that they are still partially frozen). These foods can usually be refrozen.

FRESH FOODS AND HOME VEGETABLE GARDENS

- Any fresh foods that might have come in contact with flood waters should be discarded, no matter how delicious they appear.
- All fresh garden produce and items still growing in your garden should be discarded. Harmful bacteria from sewage often cannot be washed off and can even be taken into the plant through the vegetable skin

PACKAGED FOODS

The following items should always be discarded:

- Containers of nuts, spices, seasonings and flavorings
- Canisters or bags of grains, sugars, salt, coffee and tea
- Foods packaged in paper, plastic, cloth, fiber or cardboard boxes
- Plastic bags of food (even if boxes and containers inside the bags seem dry)
- Bags/boxes of pasta, cereals, rice, dried milk, crackers, cookies or mixes
- Bottle food in screw-topped or crimp-topped jars that have been touched by flood waters, even when the jars have not been opened
- Unopened jars with waxed cardboard seals, such as mayonnaise and salad dressings.
- Home-canned foods in glass jars, including jams, jellies, honey, molasses, syrups, fruits, pickles. (There is no lid in use on glass food containers that will keep out water if the container is immersed.)

METAL CANNED FOODS

Discard any canned items that are dented or rusted. Any remaining food cans need to be treated in the following manner:

- ✓ Write the food name on the container top with a permanent marker.
- ✓ Remove the paper label.
- ✓ Wash the cans in a strong detergent solution with a scrub brush, removing all silt.
- ✓ Completely immerse scrubbed containers in a lukewarm solution of water and chlorine laundry bleach for one minute. (Check your bleach bottle's instructions for mixing solutions for disinfectant use or see enclosed chart.)
- ✓ Remove containers from the chlorine sanitizing solution. Place cans on a disinfected surface and air-dry before opening.
- ✓ Re-label with permanent marker, if necessary. Use as soon as possible, because containers may rust. If rusted, discard.

DISHES AND UTENSILS

Discard:

- Wooden spoons
- Plastic utensils
- Baby bottle nipples and pacifiers
- Glass, ceramic dishes, china dishes, metal cookwares, glass cookware, glass baby bottles and empty canning jars can be saved by:
 - Thoroughly washing the item in a strong detergent solution.
 - Disinfect china and glass dishes in a chlorine disinfectant solution.
 - Disinfect metal pots, pans and utensils by boiling in water for 10 minutes. Let items air dry, do not use dish towels.

Do not wash dishes in dishwasher unless the water is safe to drink and the sewer line works.

DISINFECTING

Chlorine Bleach And Water

Household bleaches contain from 2 to 6 percent chlorine.

The amount of bleach to mix with water depends on the percent of chlorine the bleach contains. Adding more chlorine than specified will not improve its sanitizing effectiveness.

Check the bottle label and follow these guidelines:

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Waupaca County Health Services 715-258-6300

USDA Hotline at 1-800-535-4555

For 2 percent chlorine, add two teaspoons of bleach per quart of water, or 2 tablespoons bleach per gallon of water.

For 4 percent chlorine, add one teaspoon of bleach per quart of water, or 1 tablespoon of bleach per gallon of water.

For 6 percent chlorine, add 1/2 teaspoon of bleach per quart of water, or 2 teaspoons bleach per gallon of water.