

## OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

### FOODS AFFECTED BY FLOODING

Practicing safe food-handling is an important part of everyday life, but is especially important in emergency situations. Be sure to carefully inspect all food items and do not eat any food you think may not be safe. Spoiled food may not look contaminated. **Remember, when in doubt, throw it out.**

#### Tips to keep food safe during a power outage

When handling refrigerated and frozen food after a power failure discard any thawed food that has been at room temperature for two or more hours, and any food that has an obvious unusual colour or odour.

- A full freezer will keep food frozen for about 48 hours. Similarly, a half-full freezer will keep food frozen for about 24 hours.
- An unopened refrigerator will keep food cool for approximately 4 to 6 hours.
- Perishable foods that have been above 4 deg. C (40 deg. F) for less than 2 hours may be eaten immediately, or cooked and eaten immediately.
- Blocks of ice can be used to help keep the temperature of refrigerators and freezers to a safe level. Ensure ice is from a safe source.
- Partial thawing and refreezing may reduce the quality of some food, but it will remain safe to eat. Do not refreeze food unless the food still contains ice crystals or feels 'refrigerator cold' (4 deg. C or 40 deg. F).
- If you know the power will be out for longer than 48 hours, you may move perishable food to another location that has a properly functioning refrigerator and/or freezer.
- Do not put frozen (or any) food outside, even during winter, unless protected in a cooler with ice. If it's a sunny day, find a shaded spot if necessary.

#### Tips on packaged foods

Foods that have damaged packaging, such as packages that are crushed, dented or have deep rusting, as well as packages that have holes, leakage, punctures or swelling, should be discarded.

- Only undamaged, commercially-prepared foods in sealed, unopened, airtight, waterproof cans, jars or pouches are entirely safe to use. Be sure to carefully inspect, and clean and disinfect before use by following these procedures:
  - If possible, remove the labels on cans or pouches since they could have come into contact with dirt or bacteria. Be sure to re-label your cans or pouches, including the "best before" date, with a permanent marker.
  - After labels are removed, cans can be washed, rinsed and then disinfected by emerging in a mild bleach solution for 2 minutes - 5 ml (or 1 tsp) of bleach per 750 ml (or 3 cups) of water.
  - Air-dry all cleaned food cans, jars and pouches to prevent potential contamination when the containers are opened.

#### When to throw out food

Do not eat any food that may have come into contact with animal waste, chemicals, floodwater, snow and ice, and soil and dirt.

Baby formula containers, cardboard juice containers, home- canned foods and milk containers that have come into contact with floodwater or hazardous material, should be thrown away.

### **Wash, rinse and sanitize**

- Food preparation equipment, surfaces, dishes and utensils should be washed, rinsed, and then disinfected with a mild bleach solution for 2 minutes - 5 ml (or 1 tsp) of bleach per 750 ml (or 3 cups) of water.
- It is important to allow equipment, surfaces, dishes and utensils to air dry thoroughly before storing.
- After following these steps, utensils used for infant feeding must be boiled for 2 minutes before use.