

PARAMUS HEALTH DEPARTMENT

KEEPING FOOD SAFE AFTER A NATURAL DISASTER

(FLOODS, HURRICANE, FIRE AND POWER OUTAGE)

Food may not be safe to eat during and after an emergency. The Paramus Health Department can make specific recommendations regarding the safety of food subject to possible contamination due to a natural disaster.

- Throw away food that may have come in contact with flood or storm water. Including fresh fruit and vegetables, foods in cardboard boxes or paper cartons and foods in bags, such as rice and flour.
- Food containers with screw-caps, snap lids, crimped caps, twist caps, flip tops, should be discarded if they have come in contact with flood water because they can not be disinfected.
- Discard cardboard juice, milk, baby formula boxes if they have come in contact with flood water.
- Discard any foods in damaged cans. Can damage is shown by swelling, leaking, punctures, holes, fractures, extensive deep rusting or denting.
- A thorough wash and sanitizing of all equipment must be done, including utensils, dishes, counter tops, floors after the flood water has receded.
- If a well has been flooded, the water should be disinfected and tested after flood water recedes.
- Discard any food that has been near a fire. Food exposed to fire can be damaged by the heat of the fire, smoke fumes and chemicals used to fight the fire. Food in cans or jars may appear to be safe, but the heat from a fire can activate food spoilage bacteria.

POWER OUTAGES

In the event of a power failure, frozen or refrigerated foods warmed to above refrigerated temperatures of 41 degrees F. for 2 or 3 hours may not be safe to eat.

FROZEN FOODS

Without power, a full freezer will keep everything frozen for about two days.

If power will be coming back on fairly soon, you can make the food last longer by keeping the door shut as much as possible.

If power will be off for an extended period of time, arrangements should be made to quickly transfer food to another location.

Once frozen foods are thawed out completely, the foods should be cooked, eaten immediately or discarded.

Partially thawed frozen foods with ice crystals may be safely refrozen.

All stuffed poultry must be discarded.

REFRIGERATED FOODS

Without power, the refrigerator will keep foods cold for approximated 4-6 hours if the door remains shut.

Discard perishable foods like eggs, meat, fish or milk that have been above 41 degrees F. for more than 2 hours.

dry ice can be placed in a freezer to keep temperatures below freezing. Allow 2-3 lbs of dry ice per cubic foot of space.

dry ice can cause burns, so don't handle it with bare hands.

dry ice can be purchased at:

Scully's Ice, Hawthorne, 973-423-0053
Tullo Ice, Hasbrouck Heights, 201-288-0466,
Artic Ice, Garfield, 973-772-7000
Carlstadt Ice, Carlstadt, 201-438-4313.

Sources: United States Department of Agriculture
Center of Disease Control
New Jersey Department of Health and Human Services