# FOOD SAFETY TIPS: AFTER A POWER OUTAGE

When the power goes out, food can spoil. The following recommendations from the Maryland Department of Health Office of Food Control can reduce illness following a power outage or flood.

## IS THE FOOD IN MY REFRIGERATOR SAFE?

- Perishable food can spoil if they are not refrigerated or frozen properly. **Food items with a temperature above 40°F for two hours should be thrown away**
  - This includes meat, milk, yogurt, eggs, mayonnaise, cream dressings, pasta, and desserts
- Some food can be kept for a *limited time* without refrigeration
  - This includes hard processed cheese (cheddar, swiss, provolone, romano, and parmesan), butter and margarine, opened canned fruits and fruit juice, peanut butter, jelly and jam, mustard and vinegar-based dressings, bread (rolls, muffins, bagels, waffles), herbs, spices, and raw vegetables
- Food may be re-frozen if it still contains ice crystals and feels cold and hard to the touch
  - This includes meat, seafood, juice, casserole, egg products, cheese, vegetables, pastries, and frozen meals

## FOOD SAFETY FOLLOWING A STORM

- Throw out food that touches flood waters, **including canned goods.** Check cans for swelling, leakage, punctures, holes, fractures, extensive deep rusting, or crushing/denting
- Wash all metal pans, ceramic dishes, and utensils (including can openers) with hot soapy water after contact with flood water. Sanitize them by boiling in clean water or immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution with 1 tablespoon of unscented liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of drinking water
  - Throw out wooden cutting boards, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples, and pacifiers if they come in contact with flood water. They cannot be safely cleaned
  - Thoroughly wash counter-tops with soap and hot water. Rinse and sanitize with bleach mixture. Air dry

## PREVENTING FOODBORNE ILLNESS

- Throw out spoiled foods in double plastic bags closed with ties. Put them in animal- and bird-proof trash cans
- As a rule: an unopened, well-functioning freezer half full can keep foods safely for up to 24 hours. A fully stocked, unopened freezer can keep foods safely for 48 hours
- Use common sense. Do not taste foods to see if they are spoiled. **If in doubt, <u>throw it out</u>**

## MORE INFORMATION

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