



## After the Storm: Food Safety

### Lake County Factsheet #FCSH2002

**Lori Johnson, Family & Consumer Science Agent**

Anytime storms occur power outages are possible. Power can be out hours and possibly last days. It is important to take the proper steps in keeping track of time and temperature before the food is consumed to prevent foodborne illness. The order in which you use food matters. Start with perishable foods from the refrigerator and then move to frozen foods.

#### Refrigerator

In general, if kept closed, food that is in the refrigerator can maintain temperature for about 4 hours. Temperature is key in preventing illness if your refrigerator reaches above 41°F for more than 2 hours throw away all food items. If you have been away from your home during the duration the power was out or are not sure if your food is safe its best to throw it away.

#### Freezer

In general, if kept closed, food that is in a full freezer can maintain temperature for about 48 hours, for a half freezer 24 hours. The same rules apply as listed above if the temperature reaches 41°F for more than 2 hours throw away food items.

#### Flood Water Exposure

Any foods that have been exposed to flood waters should be thrown away, there is not a safe way to clean. This includes all fresh fruits and vegetables, other fresh foods, and dry foods that have gotten wet. Commercially canned, home-canned and even glass containers can also be exposed and should not be consumed.

#### Water

If a boil water advisory is issued, all water used for drinking, handwashing, washing produce, and cleaning dishes must be purified. If the power is on water can be boiled for at least 1 minute and cooled before placing in a clean, tightly capped container. For cloudy water boil for at least 3-4 minutes. Water purification kits can be purchased but are most practical for small amounts of water.

#### Food Preparation

If exposed to flood waters inspect food preparation areas and cooking equipment. Before using make sure they are properly cleaned and sanitized. For items that can fit into a sink wash with soap and safe water. To sanitize, cover items in clean water and bring to a rolling boil for 1 minute, allow to cool and air dry. Any area that comes in contact with food, which includes counters, equipment, and inside refrigerators should be cleaned and sanitized. A solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water can be used to sanitize.