



St. Mary's County Health Department

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Prevention Tips to Avoid Illness from Spoiled Foods

Leonardtown, MD (August 25, 2011)—with the approach of Hurricane Irene power outages and flooding are a real possibility. The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) realize that food spoilage could become an issue. In order to decrease the chances of illness the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Office of Food Control makes the following recommendations:

- Perishable foods without refrigeration (and from the freezer) that have a temperature above 41 degrees Fahrenheit for greater than 4 hours should be discarded; this includes meats, milk, yogurt, eggs, mayonnaise and cream dressings, pasta and deserts.
- Food Items that can be kept for a **limited time** without refrigeration include: hard process cheeses (Cheddar, Swiss, Provolone, Romano and Parmesan); Butter and Margarine; Opened canned fruits and fruit juices; Peanut butter, jellies, jams; Mustard and vinegar based dressings; Bread products like rolls, muffins, bagels, waffles; and herbs, spices and raw vegetables.
- It is okay to refreeze foods **if**, the item still contains ice crystals and feels cold and hard to the touch. This includes: meats, seafood products, juices, casseroles, egg products, cheeses, vegetables, pastries and frozen meals.
- Discard all foods that come in contact with floodwaters **including canned goods**. Thoroughly wash all kitchen utensils, pots, plates, etc. after contact with flood water with hot soapy water and sanitize them by boiling in clean water or immersing them in a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water for 15 minutes.
- When discarding spoiled foods place them in double plastic bags closed with ties. Place in animal and bird proof trash cans.
- As a rule an unopened, well functioning freezer half full will keep foods safely for up to 24 hours. A fully stocked freezer, unopened can keep foods safely for 48 hours.
- Use common sense when dealing with the issue of possible food spoilage;

Do not taste foods to see if they are spoiled - If in doubt, throw it out.

In the interests of public health, County and State Health Officials will be making random checks on retail facilities in the affected areas to ensure that the above guidelines are being followed

Source: DHMH Press Release (September 18, 2003)