

Identifying and Handling Spoiled/Unsafe Food and Drinks after a Disaster

Food and drink spoilage during storms and other disasters is common. If there is a power loss or a flood, you need to check each item to determine whether it is safe to consume. **Do not taste any food or drink you think is spoiled!**

Items To Toss

The consumables listed below are unsafe to eat or drink and should be thrown away:

- ◆ food (even canned goods) and drinks that have been in contact with floodwater
- ◆ meat, poultry, fish, seafood, eggs, milk, soft cheese, refrigerator rolls and biscuits, leftovers and other potentially hazardous foods that have been above 40 degrees F for 2 hours or longer
- ◆ food that has an unusual odor, color or texture
- ◆ cans of food that are bulging, opened, dented or damaged
- ◆ all home-canned food or drinks that have been in contact with floodwater
- ◆ food or drinks in containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped caps (like soft drink bottles), twist caps or flip tops that have come in contact with floodwater.

Disposing of Unsafe Food

How you dispose of unsafe food depends on your garbage collection service. If your garbage collection service is in operation, you do the following:

- ◆ Wrap the unsafe food tightly in plastic wrap or aluminum foil and place it in a container with a tight-fitting lid.
- ◆ Store the container in an area away from people and animals until it can be collected by local garbage collection services.

If your garbage collection service is not in operation:

- ◆ Unsafe or spoiled food should be buried.
- ◆ To prevent animals from finding and digging up spoiled food, bury it at least 4 feet deep.
- ◆ To minimize health risks, bury unsafe food in an area that will not be disturbed in the near future and is away from the nearest water well

or other open water source (creek, stream or pond).

- If it is not possible to bury the food, you may burn it. Contact local law enforcement officials to make sure you are following county burning laws.

References

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. *Disposal of domestic or exotic livestock carcasses*. TCEQ publication RG-419, November 2004.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Keep Food and Water Safe after a Natural Disaster or Power Outage*. September 2005.

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