

## DISASTER QUICK TIPS: BASIC FOOD SAFETY

### Do not eat unsafe food

Food is usually safe unless it touched floodwater or was not kept cold.

Throw out food or drink if:

- It is likely to spoil;
- Has an odd odor, color, or feel;
- It touched floodwater and is not in a waterproof package;
- It has a screw cap or “pop top”
- Its can is rusted, swollen, leaking or badly creased or dented.

Cans that aren't damaged may be saved. First:

- Take label off;
- Wash with soap and clean water;
- Sanitize with a mix of 1 tablespoon bleach in a gallon of safe water;
- Write the product name and expiration date on the can.  
When in doubt, throw it out!

### Keep cold foods cold

Throw out refrigerated or frozen food if it has been:

- Above 41° F for 4 hours or more;  
or
- Thawed for 2 hours or more.

*Note: MDH has detailed fact sheets on these topics. See back page.*

If you lose power, a refrigerator will keep food cool for 4-6 hours if you keep it closed. Food will stay frozen for one day in a freezer that is half-full and kept closed; or up to 2 days if it is full.

### Use safe water

Only use safe water for drinking, cooking, making ice or baby formula, washing hands and dishes. If your water well has been flooded, water is most likely not safe.

### Clean hands and surfaces

Clean all hard surfaces such as countertops, sinks, dishes, utensils and other items that hold food.

Do all four steps to clean surfaces:

1. Use soap and warm, safe water;
2. Rinse with safe water;
3. Soak 1 minute with a mix of 1 Tablespoon household bleach per gallon of safe water;
4. Wipe countertops and soak dishes and utensils with this bleach mix;
5. Allow to air dry.

**Before touching food, wash hands well. Scrub hands with soap and safe water.**



**MDH Environmental Health Contacts:****Asbestos**

Asbestos and Lead Compliance: 651-201-4620

Web Site: [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/asbestos](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/asbestos)

**Carbon Monoxide and Mold**

MDH Indoor Air Quality: 651-201-4601 or 800-798-9050

Email: [health.indoorair@state.mn.us](mailto:health.indoorair@state.mn.us)

Web Site: [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/air](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/air)

**Cleaning Up and Food Safety**

MDH Food, Beverage and Lodging: 651-201-4500

Email: [health.foodlodging@state.mn.us](mailto:health.foodlodging@state.mn.us)

Web Site: [www.health.state.mn.us/foodsafety](http://www.health.state.mn.us/foodsafety)

**Drinking Water****Public Water**

MDH Drinking Water Protection: 651-201-4700

Email: [health.drinkingwater@state.mn.us](mailto:health.drinkingwater@state.mn.us)

Web Site: [www.health.state.mn.us/water](http://www.health.state.mn.us/water)

**Wells and Well Water**

MDH Well Management: 651-201-4600 or 1-800-383-9808

Email: [health.wells@state.mn.us](mailto:health.wells@state.mn.us)

Web Site: [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells)

**MDH Environmental Health Division Emergency Program Contacts:**

[www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/contactus.htm](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/contactus.htm)

**MDH Environmental Health Flood information Web site:**

[www.health.state.mn.us/floods](http://www.health.state.mn.us/floods)

If you require this document in another format such as large print, Braille, or cassette tape, contact 651-201-5000 or 1-800-657-3908.  
For deaf or hard of hearing TTY: 651-201-5797



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