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DOH REMINDS RESIDENTS TO PRACTICE FOOD SAFETY AFTER HURRICANE MICHAEL



Contact:

Communications Office

NewsMedia@flhealth.gov

[\(850\) 245-4111](tel:(850)245-4111)

Tallahassee, Fla.—As Floridians continue to recover from Hurricane Michael, it is important to practice food and water safety to avoid foodborne illness. The department urges extreme caution in consuming potentially contaminated food and water and urges residents to discard or avoid consuming items you are unsure about.

After a power outage, refrigerated food will only remain safe to consume for 4 hours, and foods in the freezer will go bad after 48 hours. Thawed and refrigerated foods should be thrown out after 4 hours, and frozen foods should be thrown out after 48 hours.

The department also offers these tips to avoid foodborne illness:

- People should not eat any food that may have come into contact with contaminated water from floods or tidal surges.
- Commercially prepared cans of food should not be eaten if there is a bulging or opening on the can or screw caps, soda bottle tops or twist-caps.
- Undamaged, commercially canned foods can be saved if labels are removed and cans are disinfected in a bleach solution. Use 1/4 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water; re-label the cans including expiration date and type of food. Assume that home-canned food is unsafe.
- Do not eat food packed in plastic, paper, cardboard, cloth and similar containers that have been water damaged.
- Discard food and beverage containers with screw-caps, snap lids, crimped caps (soda bottles), twist caps, flip tops, and home canned foods, if they have come in contact with flood water. These containers cannot be disinfected.
- Infants should preferably be breast fed or fed only pre-mixed canned baby formula. Do not use powdered formulas prepared with untreated water, use boiled water or bottled water instead.

Heavy rainfall, especially if accompanied by a tidal surge or flooding, can contaminate your water supply. Consuming water that is contaminated can cause gastrointestinal illness. Individuals cannot assume that a water supply in the storm affected area is safe to drink. Your area may be under a Boil Water Notice. These notices are posted on the department's [website](#).

WATER FOR DRINKING AND COOKING:

Safe sources of drinking water include bottled, disinfected, or both boiled and cooled water. Here are some general rules on using water for drinking and cooking:

- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, or make ice. Use only safe drinking water.
- If you use bottled water, know where it came from. Drink only commercially-available bottled, boiled, or disinfected water until your supply is tested and deemed safe. Otherwise, water should be disinfected or both boiled and cooled before use.
- Boiling water kills harmful bacteria and parasites. Bringing water to a rolling boil for 1 minute will kill infectious organisms (germs).
- Water can be disinfected by adding 8 drops of plain unscented household bleach (4 to 6% strength), which is about 1/8 tsp or a dime sized puddle, per gallon of water. If a higher strength bleach is used (8.25% strength), only add 7 drops of bleach. Mix the solution and let it stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cloudy after 30 minutes, repeat the procedure once. Iodine or other disinfection tablets (available at many sporting goods departments and stores) may also be used.
- Containers for water should be rinsed with a bleach solution of one tablespoon of bleach per gallon of water before reusing them. Use water storage tanks and other types of containers with caution. For example, fire truck storage tanks as well as previously used cans or bottles may be contaminated with microbes or chemicals. Do not rely on unverified methods for decontaminating water.

For further information, please contact your local county health department or visit www.floridahealth.gov or www.FloridaDisaster.org.

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