

# FoodFacts

## NEWSLETTER

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Environmental Health Division

Special Report

*Foodfacts is designed to keep food employees, chefs, managers, and owners informed, connected, and engaged about current food safety news.*



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## Restaurants and Grocers Reopening After a Flood

Public Health - Madison & Dane is here to assist you in responding to flooding. **Your safety** is important during your cleanup efforts. Once this has been addressed, it is important to assess the **safety of your perishable foods**, especially after power outages. Contact your health inspector with any questions you may have during this process, and, as always, **"when in doubt, throw it out!"**

## Safety First When Responding to Flooding

Your **personal safety**, and the **safety of your employees** is important. When responding to flooding damage at your facility remember:

- If there is floodwater surrounding the building, **do not enter!** The building's foundation may be weak making entry unsafe.
- Before entering, make sure the gas and electricity is turned off.
- Check to see if there is a **gas leak**, a common occurrence after a flood.
- Consider the source of the floodwater and proceed with caution. The **floodwater may be contaminated** with chemicals and/or debris and it may not be safe to enter.
- Consider how long the floodwater has

been inside building. Has **mold or fungus** begun to grow?

- Floodwater can contaminate food, belongings, and equipment. **Discard all food** that came into contact with floodwaters including canned goods. **Clean and sanitize all contaminated equipment** before reopening.
- If on a private well and the wellhead was submerged, flood water may have contaminated the drinking water. **Have your water tested** for safety. In the meantime, purchase water until water supply is deemed safe.
- Take pictures to **document damage** for insurance purposes.

Refer to the following link for more information:

- [FDA Food and Water Safety During Power Outages](#)

## Restaurant Reopening After Flooding

Following a flood there are **potential health concerns** that must be addressed for your business to be able to reopen. The person-in-charge must conduct a **complete self-inspection** to be sure that normal operations can resume safely. Proper food safety, pest control, and equipment and building decontamination and sanitation must be taken into account.

- If there is damage, we are here to help. Contact your health inspector for assistance at **608-242-6515**.

Refer to the following FDA link for a complete self-inspection checklist:

- [FDA Response for Restaurants and Grocers](#)

## Keeping Refrigerated Foods Safe after Flood

To **preserve foods** after a power outage:

- Keep an appliance thermometer in the

refrigerator and freezer at all times to see if food is being stored at safe temperatures (41° F for the refrigerator; 0° F for the freezer). **Food must be maintained at 41° F or below at all times to be safe.**

- Refrigerated items should be safe as long as the power is out no more than 4 to 6 hours. **Discard any perishable food that has been above 41° F for more than 2 hours** (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers) and any food that has an unusual odor, color or texture.
- **Leave the cooler door closed;** every time you open it, cold air escapes causing the foods inside to reach unsafe temperatures.
- If it appears the power will be off more than six hours, **transfer refrigerated perishable foods to an insulated cooler** filled with ice or frozen gel packs or a refrigerated truck. Keep a thermometer in the cooler to be sure the food stays at 41° F or below.
- **Never taste food** to determine its safety. Some foods may look and smell fine, but if they have been above 41° F longer than two hours, bacteria able to cause **foodborne illness** can begin to multiply very rapidly. Some types of bacteria will produce toxins that are not destroyed by cooking and can possibly cause illness.
- When the power is restored, **allow time for the refrigerator to reach 41° F** or below before restocking.

**"When in doubt, throw it out!"**

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