

# MSU-ES Dawg Tracks



*Disaster Response: Information on Food/Water Safety  
September 2008*



We live in Mississippi, and if you don't like the weather, hang around for 6 or 8 hours and it will change. Some of the changes we are okay with, but others can wreak havoc and famine on whatever area it happens to hit. Thus, we need to be ready and prepared, in case one of the latter incidents comes our way.

## **BE PREPARED –**

- Make sure that you have appliance thermometers in your refrigerator and freezer. This way you can tell if food is safe in a power outage.
- You should maintain a freezer temperature of 0 degrees F. Refrigerator temperature should be below 40 degrees F.
- Use space in the freezer to freeze containers of water to aid in protecting food in a power outage, and also if you get into a water contamination situation, you have a supply of drinking water from the melting ice.
- Freeze leftover items, meat, poultry and milk that you might need immediately.
- Arrange items in the freezer as close together as possible. This will help to keep the items colder longer.
- Have coolers on hand to keep refrigerator foods cold if you have a power outage of more than four hours. Purchase or make ice cubes for use in the coolers. Freeze gel packs ahead of time for use in coolers as well.
- If you plan ahead and have a source for block ice and dry ice, this gives you extra protection.
- Store canned goods and perishables on shelves high enough to protect them in case of flooding.
- Maintain an ample supply (ample depends on the size or number of occupants in the household) of bottled water and store it where it won't be susceptible to flooding.

## **IF YOU EXPERIENCE A POWER OUTAGE –**

- Keep the freezer and refrigerator doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature. An unopened refrigerator will keep food for about four hours. A full freezer will keep temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours when ½ full) if the door remains closed. Buy dry or block ice to keep the refrigerator cold as possible for as long as possible. 50 lbs. of dry ice should hold an 18 cubic foot freezer fully stocked for two days.
- If you plan to eat refrigerated or frozen meat, poultry, fish or eggs while they are still at safe temperatures, it's important that the foods are thoroughly cooked to the proper temperature to assure that any food borne bacteria that may be present is destroyed.

- Wash fruits and vegetables with water from a safe source before eating.
- For infants, if possible, use prepared, canned baby formula that requires no water. If you use concentrated or powdered formulas, use bottled water if the local source is contaminated.

## **WHEN POWER IS RESTORED –**

- Determine the safety of your food. If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, check the temperature when the power comes back on. If the thermometer reads 40 degrees or below, the food is safe and can be refrozen. If there was no thermometer in the freezer, then you will need to check each package of food to determine its safety. Don't rely on appearance or odor. If the food still contains ice crystals or is 40 degrees or below, it will be safe to refreeze or to cook.
- Refrigerated food should be safe as long as the power was out no more than four hours. Again, keep the door closed as much as possible. Discard any foods such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk and eggs that are not kept refrigerated for at least two hours and at a temperature above 40 degrees.
- Perishable foods such as meat, seafood, poultry, milk and eggs that are not kept frozen may cause illness if they are consumed, even when they are thoroughly cooked.

## **IF FLOODING OCCURS –**

### **Water Safety:**

- ~ Use bottled water that hasn't been exposed to flood waters
- ~ If bottled water isn't available, prepare to boil water. If it is cloudy, filter it through a clean cloth before boiling. Boil water for one minute, allow it to cool and pour into containers.
- ~ If boiling isn't an option, you can disinfect it with household bleach by adding 1/8 teaspoon or eight drops for each gallon of water. Stir it and let it set for at least 30 minutes before consuming.
- ~ If you have a well that was flooded, test the water before using it. If you suspect contamination, notify the local health department or local agriculture extension director for advice.

### **Food Safety:**

- ~ Do not eat any foods that have had flood water contact.
- ~ Discard all foods not in waterproof containers that have been exposed to the flood water. Cardboard and damaged can goods should be discarded as well.
- ~ Foods in all metal cans can be salvaged by removing labels that could have gotten contaminated and washing the cans to prevent contamination when opening for use.
- ~ Wash all kitchen utensils and counter tops with hot soapy water, then sanitize them with 1 tablespoon of household bleach for 15 minutes.

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*Excerpts: www.cfsan.fda.gov*

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*WHEN IN DOUBT-CHECK IT OUT!!*

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**\* SAFETY \* - DID IT- DONE IT  
DOING IT TOMORROW!**