

Post Disaster Food Protection Guidelines

Proper food handling techniques during or after a disaster will reduce the possibility of food contamination and disease.

RAW FOODS:

1. Do not use **beef** if it has an odor or is slimy to the touch.
2. Do not use **pork** if it has an odor where the inner flesh meets the inner bone.
3. Do not use **fish** if there is an odor, if it has gray or greenish gills or sunken eyes.
4. Do not use **fruits** and **vegetables** that have come into contact with flood waters, water or chemicals from extinguishing a fire, airborne chemicals or putrid air from an industrial accident as in an ammonia leak in a refrigerating unit.

PROCESSED FOODS:

1. Cans should be inspected for spoilage before opening. Inspect cans for spoilage by determining if the can is swelled on the top or bottom, has dents along the seams, if the contents have an odor, foam, milkiness of juice, or leaks. **Do not taste any suspected product to determine safety of the food.**
2. Leftover food, not refrigerated below 41°F for greater than four hours should be considered spoiled or unsafe and should be denatured and discarded.

COOKING AND PROCESSING FOODS:

1. Safe potable water must be available and used for cooking, dishwashing, drinking and maintaining personal hygiene. Safe water means commercially packaged water, water from individual wells that has been tested by Houston Health and Human Services Department laboratory, or water supplied through the City lines certified as safe.
2. Menus at food establishments that are open after a disaster should be simple and require minimal handling. For example, soups, canned meats and beans, canned vegetables, dehydrated potato products, canned juices, powdered milk, canned fruits, packaged cookies, crackers, breads, etc.

TEMPERATURES:

1. Foods intended to be cooked or heated should be heated to a minimum of 140°F. If food is to be reheated, it must be reheated rapidly to a minimum of 165°F.
2. Perishable or potentially hazardous food should be stored at 41°F or below.

CLEANLINESS:

1. There is only one way to be sure dishes and utensils are clean. They must be washed, rinsed and sanitized in safe potable water. Sanitization is very important during and after a disaster. Effective sanitization can be obtained by adding 1 ounce of chlorine to each gallon of safe potable cool water. Wash dishes and utensils with soap and water first, rinse with clean water and sanitize with the bleach water.

2. Do not forget to store clean utensils in a clean place after washing, to be protected from recontamination.
3. Food dishes and utensils should be guarded against chemical exposure or contamination.
4. The use of single service items is encouraged to reduce the possibility of food borne illness. Paper plates and cups, plastic knives and forks that are used only once are highly recommended.

INSECT AND RODENTS:

After a disaster, insect and rodent activity usually increases. Doors and windows should have adequate protection to exclude insects and rodents.