



CONSUMER HEALTH SERVICES | GUIDANCE

POST DISASTER GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

- Any food or produce other than food packaged in waterproof metal, glass or hard plastic containers that has come in contact with flood waters should be considered unfit for human consumption, denatured, and disposed of. If not disposed of immediately, food items determined to be unfit for human consumption must be segregated (separate room, building, or receptacle) from food items retained for sale or distribution.
- Food packaged in waterproof metal, glass, or hard plastic containers that has come in contact with flood waters should be considered distressed and may be sold as such if otherwise safe. These items may be sold as salvage to a salvage operator licensed by the Texas Department of State Health Services. These food items must be segregated from food items for sale or distribution.
- Food contact surfaces of equipment that have come in contact with flood waters must be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized before re-use. Disassembly of equipment may be required for cleaning and sanitization. Once initially sanitized non-food contact surfaces such as door and equipment handles should be cleaned and sanitized frequently thereafter.
- The Houston Health Department has been advised that the City of Houston Municipal water supply is safe for drinking and other uses.
- If you are unsure about a non-City of Houston water supply, you should consider boiling your tap water for at least 1 minute or use bottled water.
- Frozen food that has thawed because of power outages may be sold, distributed, or consumed as fresh food provided that the temperature has not exceeded 41°F for any period of time. After the temperature exceeds 41°F for more than 2 hours, the food is considered unfit for human consumption and must be denatured and disposed of.
- Refrigerated food that has exceeded 41°F for more than 2 hours is considered unfit for human consumption and should be denatured and disposed of.
- During a post disaster period, such as this employee hand washing is more important than ever. Employees handling food should be required to thoroughly wash their hands and exposed portions of their arms more often than normally required by the Houston Health Department



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- As a food establishment operator, it is your responsibility to properly secure, segregate and dispose of food pending disposal or transfer to a salvage operator. Additional dumpsters and security may be necessary and are the establishment operator's responsibility.
- Establishments without electrical power should not be operating. If temporarily closed by the Houston Health Department, establishments cannot reopen until re-inspected by the Department. If an establishment closes on its own, it can reopen upon restoration of power and any disposition of damaged or distressed food items and cleanup of the facility.

Additional Information:

- Post Disaster Food Protection Guidelines (more detailed information):
 - <http://www.houstontx.gov/health/Food/Post%20Disaster%20Food%20Protection%20Guidelines.pdf> (you may have to cut and paste this link)
- Products That Should be Destroyed and Cannot be Reconditioned or Salvaged (more detailed information):
 - <http://www.houstontx.gov/health/Food/Post%20Disaster%20Food%20Surveillance%20Guidelines.pdf> (you may have to cut and paste this link)
- Emergency Action Plan for Retail Food Establishments (Prepared by the 2014 Council for Food Protection):
 - <http://www.foodprotect.org/media/guide/Emergency%20Action%20Plan%20for%20Retail%20food%20Est.pdf>
- Questions/Concerns:
 - Email: chs@houstontx.gov
 - Phone: 832 393 5100 (during normal business hours)
 - Fax: 832 393 5208