FOOD SAFETY AFTER A FLOOD
This fact sheet provides tips for protecting yourself and your family from food-borne illness after a flood.

UNPACKAGED FOODS
Do not eat any food that may have come in contact with flood water.
Discard any food that is not in a waterproof container if there is any chance that it has come into contact with flood water.

SEALED FOIL OR CELLOPHANE AND PAPER PACKAGED FOODS
Discard any food that is not in a waterproof container if there is any chance that it has come into contact with flood water, including those with screw caps and lids.
Product in sealed foil, cellophane, or paper packages (e.g., candy, cream, crackers, bread, chewing gum, and shredded nuts) that were stored above flood level are often damaged by condensation. Examine all containers for leaks, breaks, or other signs of damage. Discard any damaged food products.

FROZEN FOODS
Discard all frozen products inside a refrigerator or freezer if they were contaminated by flood waters.
If the inside of the refrigerator or freezer was not contaminated by flood waters, then food might be salvaged and refrozen if:
• The products remained at, or below, 4°F at all times.
• The food is only partially thawed and still has ice crystals. Note the quality of these products upon refreezing.
• Completely thawed foods, including fruits, vegetables, meats, poultry, fish, shellfish, and cooked food, should not be refrozen.
• Any vacuum-packed fish that is no longer frozen should be discarded.

CANNED AND GLASS PACKAGED FOODS
Discard any home canned foods if they have come in contact with flood water.
Discard any canned food product that has evidence of rust, leaks, swelling, or broken/cracked seams.
Discard glass containers with porous, screw-top type closures of paper or fiber (e.g., Mason jars, mustard, pickles, and baby food glass) because they cannot be effectively cleaned and sanitized.
Food from glass containers that have crimped caps (e.g., bottled water and soft drinks) should be discarded.
Place canned and glass packaged foods in separate piles, by food type, to help with identification after the floodwater has been cleaned and sanitized. Use these cans as soon as possible, after cleaning and sanitizing, as they may rust over time.
All other canned and glass packaged foods can be washed and rinsed using potable water and detergent. After cleaning, store containers in chlorine sanitizing solution made by mixing one (1) tablespoon of household bleach (must be unscented and have 5% available chlorine) with one (1) gallon of water. Keep containers submerged for at least fifteen (15) minutes. Allow containers to air dry before using.

If the safety of a food product cannot be determined, it is best to throw it out.
Do not rely on odor or taste to assess the safety of a food product.
Dispose all food in plastic bags and ensure they are subsequently sealed to prevent access by insects or rodents.
Remember, flood waters are heavily contaminated with disease organisms.

GENERAL INFORMATION
When in doubt, throw it out!

APPENDIX

AGENCY RESOURCES WEBSITE
USDA (US Department of Agriculture) Food Safety and Inspection Service www.fsis.usda.gov
CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) Food Safety Resources www.cdc.gov/foodsafety
FDA (Food and Drug Administration) Food Safety After A Flood http://www.fda.gov/food/foodcontaminantsbyproducts/ucm073993.htm

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