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Farm Service Agency

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA Recommends Food Safety Tips, Additional Resources Before Potential Flooding in California

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With severe storms forecast for northern and central California, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is reminding communities in the region to prepare and to be aware of USDA programs to assist following flooding and other disasters.

Food safety guidance:

Severe weather forecasts often present the possibility of power outages or flooding that could compromise the safety of stored food. USDA encourages those in the potential flood area to take the following precautions to prepare:

If you expect or experience a power outage

The refrigerator will keep food at a safe temperature (below 40°F) for up to 4 hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold a safe temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full and the doors remain closed). Keeping refrigerator and freezer doors closed prevents cold air from escaping.

Keep an appliance thermometer in both the refrigerator and freezer in the event you do need to check the refrigerator or freezer temperatures.

Freeze water in small plastic storage bags or containers prior to a storm. These containers should be small enough to fit around the food in the refrigerator and freezer to help keep food cold.

Freeze refrigerated items, such as leftovers, milk and fresh meat and poultry that you may not need immediately—this helps keep them at a safe temperature longer.

Consider getting 50 pounds of dry or block ice if a lengthy power outage is possible. This amount of ice should keep a fully-stocked 18-cubic-foot freezer cold for two days.

Store food items close together in the freezer—this ‘igloo’ effect helps the food stay cold longer.

Keep a few days’ worth of ready-to-eat foods that do not require cooking or refrigeration.

If you expect or experience flooding:

If possible, raise refrigerators and freezers off the floor, putting cement blocks under their corners.

Move canned goods and other foods in basements or

Farm Service Agency:

1400 Independence Ave.
SW Washington, DC 20250

Contact:

FPAC Press Desk

FPAC.BC.Press@usda.gov