



Calvert County NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Calvert County Health Department Issues Food Safety Statement

PRINCE FREDERICK, MD –Oct. 28, 2012 — The following is a food safety information statement from the Calvert County Health Department. In anticipation of Hurricane Sandy, the Calvert County Health Department urges food service establishments, and residents, that food spoilage can cause serious illness. In order to decrease the chance of foodborne disease, the Division of Environmental Health requires establishments to adhere to the following guidelines:

If you lose power, do not open your refrigerator/freezer. An unopened freezer, if it is fully stocked, can keep food safe for up to two days. A half full freezer, if left unopened, can keep food safe for up to one day. A refrigerator can usually keep food safe (less than 40 degrees) for up to four hours.

Perishable food items, without proper refrigeration/freezing, that have a temperature of 41 degrees or above for two hours or more **must** be discarded. These items include, but are not limited to, meats, milk yogurt, eggs, cream dressings, prepared pastas, desserts, and prepared (cut) produce.

Food items that can be kept for a limited time include hard processed cheeses (cheddar, Swiss, parmesan, provolone, Romano) and processed cheeses, opened canned fruits and fruit juices, relish, jelly barbecue sauce, soy sauce, mustard, ketchup, olives, peanut butter, bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads, waffles, pancakes, bagels, fruit pies, fresh mushrooms, herbs, spices, and unprocessed (uncut) produce.

It is **not** okay to refreeze foods. Store thawed products still at 41 degrees or less in the refrigerator.

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If you have been without electricity for more than two hours, you must evaluate the temperature of all food products immediately once the power returns since insulation may vary with each appliance. Dry ice may be used to save chilled and frozen foods in case of a power outage.

When discarding spoiled products, please inventory the type of produce and quality lost. Place items in a double bag so it does not attract animals. Close bags with a tie and place in a closed approved refuse container.

Discard all foods, baby pacifiers and bottles that come into contact with floodwater including canned goods. Flood water often contains dangerous bacteria. Thoroughly wash all kitchen utensils, pots, plates, etc., that come into contact with floodwater with hot soapy water and sanitize with a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach without fragrance (lavender, etc.) per quart (four teaspoons per gallon).

Spoiled foods emit a foul odor that often attract wildlife and can cause a nuisance. If you do not have a trash collection scheduled until later in the week, you may want to check with your local landfill for the hours of operation and transport your spoiled products directly to the landfill for proper disposal. You may also call your local office or public works for other disposal options.

Remember it is never safe to taste food items to determine if they are spoiled. This method is inaccurate in determining product safety and may put your health at risk!

Use common sense and precaution when dealing with the issue of possible food spoilage. **IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT.** In the interest of public health, County and State Health Officials will make random checks at retail facilities in the affected areas(s) to ensure that the above guidelines are being followed.

Disclaimer: These guidelines are not intended to superseded approved HACCP plans and COMAR 10.15.03

The county has established rumor control numbers and can be reached at 410-535-0396 or 410-535-0314. These lines will be staffed until the immediate event passes. During regular business hours (Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), call 410-535-1600, ext. 2638. Questions or requests for information can also be sent by email to oem@co.cal.md.us. Visit the Calvert County Government website at www.co.cal.md.us for updates.

Further hurricane preparedness information is available through the Maryland Emergency Management Agency online at www.mema.state.md.us. For the most up-to-date forecasts on the track of Hurricane Sandy, visit the National Weather Service at www.weather.gov.