



## Safe Food after a Tornado

Prepared by MSU Extension Food Safety Area of Expertise Team; edited by Joyce McGarry, MSU Extension

Every county in Michigan has experienced at least one tornado in the past 55 years. The Michigan State Police Emergency Management Division gives tornadoes a high human health risk rating. Because of the risk for unprotected individuals in a storm path and the lack of warning time. (MSP-EMD Michigan Hazard Analysis, December 2001).

### Be prepared

Planning ahead for seasonal storms can help families prepare for the worst. Keep your freezer as full as possible by freezing water in plastic containers and using them to fill any empty spaces not occupied by frozen foods. Keep a clean cooler on hand. Buy freezer-pack inserts and keep them frozen for use in the cooler. Keep an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer at all times to see if food is being stored at safe temperatures (34 to 40 degrees F for the refrigerator; 0 degrees F for the freezer).

### Safe food after a tornado

Every county in Michigan has experienced at least one tornado in the past 55 years. The Michigan State Police Emergency Management Division gives tornadoes a high human health risk rating because of the risk for unprotected individuals in a storm path and the lack of warning time. (MSP-EMD Michigan Hazard Analysis, December 2001).

### Food and water in a tornado

In an area that has sustained tornado damage, the water supply may be disrupted or contaminated. You can drink water from the community water system unless told or have reason to suspect it has become contaminated. Also, food in damaged buildings and homes may be hazardous.

- Drink only approved or chlorinated water.
- Consider all water from wells, cisterns and other delivery systems in the disaster area unsafe until tested.



- Check foods and discard any containing particles of glass or slivers of other debris.
- Discard canned foods with broken seams.
- Purchase bottled water until you are certain your water supply is safe.
- Water from undamaged hot water tanks and water pipes is generally safe to drink.
- Bottled juices and the liquid from canned fruits and vegetables are a source of water.

### Power out chart

Keep an appliance thermometer in both the refrigerator and freezer at all times — refrigerator at 40 degrees F and freezer at 0 degrees F.

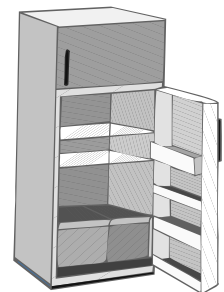
You cannot rely on appearance or odor. Never taste food to determine its safety.

Some foods may look and smell fine, but, if they have been warm too long, they may contain food poisoning bacteria in quantities that could make you sick.

Foods labeled “refrigerate after opening” are perishable and should be discarded if they have been without refrigeration for more than 2 hours. Those that do not require refrigeration either before or after opening may be refrigerated again.

**Discard:** The following should be discarded if kept over two hours above 40 degrees F.

- Meat, poultry, fish, eggs and egg substitutes — raw or cooked.
- Milk, cream, yogurt and soft cheese, shredded cheese.
- Casseroles, stews or soups.
- Lunch meats and hot dogs.
- Creamy-based salad dressings.

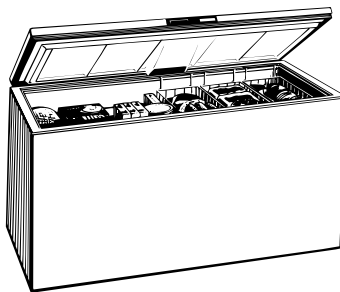


- Custard, chiffon or cheese pies.
- Cream-filled pastries.
- Refrigerator and cookie dough.
- Discard open mayonnaise, tartar sauce and horseradish if above 50 degrees F for over eight hours.

**Save:** The following foods should keep at room temperature a few days. Discard anything that is moldy or has an unusual odor.

- Butter or margarine.
- Processed and hard cheese.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Dried fruits and coconut.
- Opened jars of vinegar-based salad dressings, jelly, relish, taco sauce, barbecue sauce, mustard, ketchup, olives and peanut butter.
- Fruit juices, unopened.
- Fresh herbs and spices.
- Fruit pies, bread, rolls and muffins.
- Cakes, except cream-cheese frosted or cream-filled.
- Flour and nuts.

Allow time for refrigerators to reach the proper temperature below 41 degrees before restocking.



## From the freezer

**Meats and poultry** — Discard if the color or odor is questionable. Thawed meat and poultry should be thoroughly cooked before refreezing and used as soon as possible.

**Fruits (including juices)** — Refreeze only those that look and smell acceptable.

**Vegetables** — Thoroughly cook and serve thawed vegetables immediately or refreeze after cooking.

**Fish and shellfish** — Discard, these highly perishable foods may be spoiled even if there is no bad odor.

**Ice cream** — Do not use melted ice cream.

**Baked goods** — Breads, cakes and pastries without custard fillings may be refrozen, but use as soon as possible. Casseroles, pies, combination salads, and stews should be cooked and reheated thoroughly and served immediately.

---

### Remember, when in doubt, throw it out!

---

Source: Clemson University Extension. Home & Garden Information Center.

## For more information about safe food handling and preparation:

FDA's Food Information Hotline  
1-888-SAFEFOOD (1-888-723-3366)

USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline  
1-800-535-4555

FDA's Food Information and Seafood Hotline  
1-800-332-4010

United States Food Safety Web Site  
[www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)

The Food Domain. Michigan State University  
[www.fooddomain.msu.edu](http://www.fooddomain.msu.edu)

Extension Disaster Education Network  
[www.eden.lsu.edu](http://www.eden.lsu.edu)

Federal Emergency Management Agency  
[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)



MSU is an affirmative-action equal-opportunity institution. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, or family status. ■ Issued in furtherance of Extension work in agriculture and home economics, acts of May 8 and June 20, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Thomas Coon, Extension director, Michigan State University, E. Lansing, MI 48824. ■ This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned. This bulletin becomes public property upon publication and may be printed verbatim with credit to MSU.