



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES  
Bureau for Public Health  
Commissioner's Office

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**IMPORTANT SEPTEMBER 2018 HURRICANE FLORENCE STORM INFORMATION**

TO: Local Health Departments  
FROM: Rahul Gupta, MD, MPH, MBA, FACP  
Commissioner and State Health Officer  
DATE: September 14, 2018  
RE: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health is informing all local health departments (LHDs) of the impending weather and potential for significant rainfall, flooding and power outages.

**State Residents Are Being Reminded of Post-Flood Food Safety**

West Virginians are being cautioned about food safety following Hurricane Florence. Power outages or exposure to flood water may result in food contamination, posing serious health risks.

Anyone who loses electrical power without a back-up generator for longer than 4 hours should dispose of perishable food stored at temperatures greater than 41° Fahrenheit. Foods that have thawed or partially thawed should be destroyed; however, frozen foods that have remained in a closed freezer and have not been exposed to flood water or other contamination may be safe for use provided the time without refrigeration does not exceed 24 hours.

The following may serve as a partial guide for food supplies exposed to flood water:

- All fresh fruits and vegetables, including home garden produce, should be destroyed.
- Foods such as cereals, bakery goods, dried fruits, flour, frozen foods, sugar, salt and similar foods in paper or plastic containers or wrapping should be destroyed.
- Foods, household products, medicines and cosmetics in containers with screw caps should be destroyed.
- All meats, including fresh, dried, frozen and home canned should be destroyed.
- At your own risk, you may salvage commercially canned foods using the following method: Foods in hermetically sealed containers that remain airtight (free from severe dents, split seams or leaks) may be salvaged by removing the labels, washing the containers in water containing a detergent, rinsing in clear water, and submerging in a fresh solution containing laundry bleach - two (2) tablespoons of laundry bleach per one (1) gallon of water. The food containers should be rinsed in cool water from a safe source. Re-label the containers as to contents for future use.

In addition to individuals and families, supermarkets, convenience stores and restaurant owners need to be cautious. **When in doubt - throw it out.**

Questions about food safety may be directed to the LHD or the Bureau for Public Health.