



**Wicomico County Health Department**  
**(410) 749-1244**  
*Lori Brewster, M.S., APRN/BC, LCADC*  
*Health Officer*



**Worcester County Health Department**  
**(410) 632-1100**  
*Rebecca Jones, R.N., BSN, MSN*  
*Health Officer*



**Somerset County Health Department**  
**(443) 523-1700**  
*Lori Brewster, M.S., APRN/BC, LCADC*  
*Health Officer*

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Media contact:

**Travis Brown: 443-523-6172**

**Sharon Lynch: 443-523-1700**

**Tammy Griffin: 443-880-1418**

**Date: 9/12/18**

## **Public Health Officials Offer Food Safety Tips in Preparation of Potential Power Outages and Flooding Due to Hurricane Florence**

(Salisbury, MD) - As Hurricane Florence begins to make way across the Eastern seaboard, health officials of Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester counties recommend the following food safety tips for residents to help them prepare now, should local power outages or flooding occur.

- Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any partially enclosed area. For more information on **generator safety**, visit <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/power-outage/safe-generator-use.html>
- Always keep meat, poultry, fish and eggs refrigerated at or below 41 degrees F and frozen food below 0 degrees F. In preparation for power outages, turn your refrigerator and freezer down to their coldest settings before the hurricane arrives and power goes out. This will ensure food stays colder for a longer period of time.
- If the power goes out keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. The refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours if left closed. A freezer that is full will hold the temperature for approximately 24 hours if the door remains closed. If your freezer is not full, move the items close together to help them stay cold longer. Having some coolers packed with ice can be used to help keep your food cold.
- When the power comes back on, you should check the frozen food for temperatures and/or ice crystals. If the food temperature is below 40 degrees F and still has ice crystals, it is safe to re-freeze. Food that has partially thawed and refrozen is safe to eat, although the taste or texture quality may have degraded. Discard all refrigerated food that is above 41 degrees.
- Maintain a supply of non-perishable food to keep on hand. This food should not require refrigeration or heating. Examples are canned food, or shelf stable food, bottled water, ready to drink baby formula or nutritional drinks. Make sure you also have a hand operated can opener available.
- Discard all food that comes into contact with floodwater. If you live in an area likely to flood, move your food higher on the shelves to keep it out of the floodwater. Floodwater may contain fecal contamination and other disease-causing agents.

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- Drink only bottled, chlorinated, boiled or otherwise disinfected water. After a flooding event, consider water from wells and the community water suppliers unsafe until it has been tested for safe drinking conditions. When boiling water, bring it to a rolling boil for at least three minutes. You can add household chlorine bleach to your water to disinfect it. Do not use bleach with fragrances or detergents. Add eight drops of 5.25% sodium hypochlorite (household bleach) per gallon of water to allow it to sit for 30 minutes before using it. Try to maintain a supply of bottled water, approximately one gallon per person per day.

Keep a Food Emergency Kit on hand including:

- Household bleach or water purification tablets.
- A hand held can opener.
- A food thermometer.
- Waterless hand sanitizer and baby wipes.
- A small grill or Coleman stove for cooking. NEVER USE INSIDE.
- A three to five day supply of nonperishable foods such as canned goods, shelf stable foods, boxed or canned milk, and infant formula and pet food, if needed.

For more information, call your local Health Department's Environmental Health Division, the USDA Food Safety Hotline at 1-800-535-4555, or The Maryland Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. Information is also available on-line at [www.usda.gov/fsis](http://www.usda.gov/fsis), [www.mema.state.md.us](http://www.mema.state.md.us), [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), or [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

Local Health Department Contact Information

- Somerset: 443-523-1700
- Wicomico: 410-546-4446
- Worcester: 443-736-6302

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