

Environmental Health Emergency Preparedness

The following is provided as a guide and is intended to assist in emergency preparedness.

Condition - Loss of power

Food

Keep your refrigerator door closed. Opening the door unnecessarily will let cold air out. Never open a refrigerator or freezer “just to check on how the food is doing.” Your refrigerator should keep foods cool for about four (4) hours. If it looks like the electricity will be out for more than a few hours, add regular ice to the refrigerator if possible. The more ice you use, the longer the food will keep cold. You may also consider transferring refrigerated food to the freezer. The products already frozen will keep the refrigerated food cold longer. You may want to do this only as a last resort and if the power is going to be out for an extended or undetermined period of time.

A fully loaded freezer will keep foods frozen for two (2) days. A half full freezer will only keep food cold for a day.

Discard the following foods if kept more than two (2) hours above 40° F:

- Meats - raw or cooked meats, poultry and seafood, meat topped pizza and lunch meats
- Dairy - milk/cream, yogurt, soft cheese, custard, cream filled pastries
- Other - open jars of baby food/infant formula, mayonnaise, tarter sauce, open jars of salad dressing, casseroles, stews or soups

The following foods may be kept for a few days at room temperature above 40° F:

- Dairy - butter, margarine, hard and processed cheeses
- Other - fresh fruits and vegetables, dried fruits, coconut, fruit juices, fresh herbs and spices, flour and nuts, fruit pies, muffins, bread, rolls, cakes, peanut butter, jelly, mustard and ketchup

* It should be noted that these may not address all scenarios but may be used as a general guide when determining potential food spoilage.

** Foods may be refrozen provided they contain ice crystals. If foods have thawed over a period of several days to a temperature of 60° F, they are not likely fit for refreezing. Meats, poultry and some prepared foods may become unsafe to consume relatively quickly.

*** **Caution: You cannot rely on appearance or odor to distinguish whether food will make you sick. Spoilage is often difficult if not impossible to detect. Never taste suspect meats, poultry or other foods. If in doubt, throw it out!**

Condition - Loss of power

Medications

For information on insulin and other refrigerated medications, contact your physician or pharmacist.

Condition - Loss of power, Compromised supply

Water

If your water supply has been impaired and is suspect to contamination, you should attempt to obtain an alternative source of supply such as bottled water or other beverages for drinking. Should you be in a position whereby it is necessary to continue to drink water from the suspect water supply, you must treat the water by one of the following methods:

- Bring water to a rolling boil for a minimum of three (3) to five (5) minutes. If unsure as to effectiveness of disinfection, you may want to boil water up to ten (10) minutes.
- Disinfect with unscented household chlorine bleach. Use two (2) drops of chlorine bleach per quart of water or eight (8) drops per gallon. For cloudy water, first strain through a clean cloth, then add four (4) drops of chlorine to each quart, or sixteen (16) drops to each gallon. Stir or shake the water after the chlorine has been added and let stand for thirty (30) minutes before consuming.

*** Do not use contaminated water to make ice, brush your teeth or wash dishes.**

Should water be in scarce supply, alternative temporary sources may include hot water tanks, toilet tanks (if no chemical disinfectant is used), snow (if available - also good for refrigeration), canned fruit and vegetable juices and liquid from other canned goods. Once again, be sure to disinfect all suspect sources.

Disinfection of Private Domestic Water Wells

Disinfection of a well is recommended to eliminate disease causing organisms. A well should be disinfected following a repair, maintenance or replacement of the pump or if the power has been off for an appreciable period of time possibly causing the pressure tank to loose pressure and the distribution system to back siphon into the well causing possible contamination. Disinfection generally involves five (5) steps:

8. Remove the threaded inspection plug from the cap on top of the well. Place a funnel in this entry port and pour one (1) to three (3) gallons of domestic 5.25% chlorine bleach into the well. Should you wish to be more precise in this effort, introduce one gallon of bleach per 1000 gallons of water. You may calculate this as follows:

- a) Determine the amount of water in the well using the following formula:

TOTAL WELL DEPTH - STANDING WATER LEVEL = FEET

_____ - _____ = _____

- b) Take the gallons per foot (gpf) using the chart below times the number of feet to determine capacity.

_____ ft x _____ gpf = _____

WATER IN WELL x GALLON PER FOOT = TOTAL GALLONS

4" Well has .65 gallons per foot
5" Well has 1.04 gallons per foot
6" Well has 1.47 gallons per foot
7" Well has 2.00 gallons per foot
8" Well has 2.61 gallons per foot

c) Determine the amount of chlorine needed to disinfect the well. Remember, you need use only one gallon of 5.25% bleach per thousand gallons of water!

9. Open all faucets until the odor of chlorine is detected at water outlets, including faucets or fittings, sprinklers, drip lines, irrigation lines, etc.
10. Close all outlets and allow water to remain in all water lines and well, preferably overnight or longer if possible. Be sure to limit water usage during these critical hours.
11. The next day or after an appreciable period of time, open all outlets until the odor of all chlorine has disappeared. The water supply should then be free of all chlorine.
12. Have the water sampled by a state certified laboratory for bacteriological quality.

Note: Disposal of chlorinated water should be done away from trees, shrubs, lawns, ponds and streams and into a sanitary sewer. It is important to avoid discharging highly chlorinated water in large volumes into septic tank systems.

Condition - Loss of power, Compromised systems

Sewage

Be sure to avoid skin contact with raw sewage should sewage systems fail (i.e. sanitary district pump failures and the like) leading to the spillage of sewage onto the surface of the ground. Areas contaminated with sewage should be thoroughly disinfected. Common household disinfectants such as bleach can be used. Mix 2 teaspoons of household chlorine bleach to one (1) gallon of water and apply over the contaminated area. A limited amount of granulated chlorine may also be used and sprinkled over the affected area.

Condition - Interruption in services

Waste Disposal

All food waste should be stored in leakproof and properly sealed containers to prevent the propagation, harborage, or attraction of flies, rodents or other vectors and the creation of nuisances. Containers best suited for this include non-absorbent, water tight, vector resistant, durable and easily cleanable containers. Plastic bags of sufficient strength and water tightness which are designed for containment of refuse may also be used.

If you have questions regarding topics addressed in this document, do not hesitate to contact the Environmental Health Department at 754-6399.