

# Hurricane Season: Be Prepared

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration experts have predicted a near-normal or below-normal 2014 Atlantic hurricane season. While a potential dip in the number of hurricanes this year would be welcome news, it's important to remember that severity and quantity are two different things.

When the gale-force winds start blowing and the torrential rain raises water level, people and their food and water supplies need to be ready.

"The most important thing is to avoid letting your crops, or your food and drinking water, come into contact with the flood waters," says Yinqing Ma, Ph.D., Consumer Safety Officer in the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. "Flood waters may have been exposed to sewage, chemicals, heavy metals, pathogenic microorganisms, or other contaminants." If crops do come in contact with flood waters, consult FDA's guidance on Evaluating the Safety of Flood-affected Food Crops for Human Consumption.

## Keeping Food And Water Safe

Here are some food-related tips to remember:

### WATER: WHAT'S ENOUGH?

(water storage for hurricane preparedness)

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1 gallon



per person



24  
HOURS

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5 gallons



for a family of 5

per day

- Do not eat any food that is not in a waterproof container if there is any chance that it has come into contact with flood water.
- Inspect canned foods and discard any food in damaged cans. Can damage is shown by swelling, leakage, punctures, holes, or rusting.
- Follow tips on how to keep the food safe at proper temperatures.
- Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs or leftovers) that has been held above 40° F for two hours or more.

Watch a video on Food Safety During Power Outages

Power loss is common in severe storms, but there are ways to increase the time the food in your fridge will remain safe to eat. It's important to keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed.

Food in an unopened refrigerator and freezer is safe to consume if the power outage lasts less than 4 hours. The foods in the freezer are typically safe for 48 hours if it is full or 24 hours if the freezer is half full.

For refrigerated items, after the 4-hour power outage, it is best to pack them into a cooler surrounded by ice or frozen gel packs for storage. Check the food temperature of these items before cooking or eating them

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and toss them out if the item has been above 40 degrees Fahrenheit for two hours or more.

For infants, ready-to-feed formula should be used. However, if only concentrated or powdered formula is available, prepare the formula with bottled water or water that has been sterilized. Whether or not bottled water needs to be boiled should be determined by the health care professional. You should ensure that the bottles and nipples used are also clean.

Here are some tips for keeping your drinking water safe:

- Use bottled water that has not been exposed to flood waters if it is available. If you don’t have bottled water, you should boil water for one minute. This will kill most types of disease-causing organisms that may be present. Let the boiled water cool and store it in clean containers with covers.
- If you can’t boil water, you can disinfect it using household bleach. Bleach will kill some, but not all, types of disease-causing organisms that may be in the water. Add 1/8 teaspoon (or 8 drops) of regular, unscented, liquid household bleach per gallon of water. Stir it well and

let it stand for at least 30 minutes before you use it.

- If the water is cloudy, filter it through clean cloths or allow it to settle, and draw off the clear water for disinfection.
- If you have a well that has been flooded, the water should be tested and disinfected after flood waters recede. If you suspect that your well may be contaminated, contact your local or state health department or agriculture extension agent for specific advice.

For more information on keeping food and water safe during a hurricane and flooding check our emergency page here.

### Planning Ahead Can Make A Huge Difference

As with any emergency situation, food, water and medical supplies will become harder to find in the days before an expected storm. Keeping emergency supplies of food and water stored in the home is the best way to be prepared for hurricanes and flooding. The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Red Cross recommend keeping at home one gallon of water per person per day-- or 12 gallons of water for a family of four -- which should last for three days in case of an emergency.

These emergency agencies recommend that the water should be bottled and store-bought to avoid possible contamination, and kept at home in a dry, dark place. The same care should be taken when storing food. Be sure to take into account the dietary needs of your family, and to routinely check the expiration or “use by” dates on these items. Rotate and replace them if necessary. Anyone on prescription medication should also make sure to have a sufficient supply of their medication before a storm. Don’t forget about keeping medicine, food and water for your pets also.

As we’ve seen with severe storms in the past, stores and pharmacies may be forced to close. 

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