



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

201 W. Preston Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Martin O'Malley, Governor – Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor – Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D., Secretary

## **\* \* \* Fact Sheet \* \* \***

### **Storm Disaster Survival “TIPS”**

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene provides the following hurricane disaster survival tips:

**Time to clean up** - Surfaces should be cleaned with soap and water and disinfectant to avoid the growth of mold. Be particularly careful of surfaces that may come in contact with food (i.e. counter tops). Areas where children play should be carefully cleaned. Wash linens and clothing in hot water or dry clean them. For items that cannot be washed or dry cleaned (i.e., mattresses and furniture), air dry them in the sun and then spray them thoroughly with a disinfectant. Steam clean all carpeting. If sewage backs up, wear rubber gloves and boots during clean up. Remove and discard all contaminated household materials that cannot be disinfected (i.e., rugs, wall coverings, drywall).

**Immunizations** - Outbreaks of communicable diseases after floods are unusual. However, if you have a puncture wound or a wound contaminated with feces, soil, or saliva, have a doctor or health department determine whether a tetanus booster is necessary.

**Precautions when returning to your home** - If an outage has occurred do not go near downed or dangling power lines - assume they are 'live' and report them to BGE immediately. If you smell gas or suspect a leak call **911 immediately** and get out of the house.

Large amounts of pooled water remaining after the flood will lead to an increase in mosquito population. Where possible, eliminate standing water found in or around the yard, flowerpots, tires, wading pools, gutters and containers for pets and other wildlife. Also avoid activity near standing water, wear long-sleeved and long-legged clothing, and use insect repellants containing DEET according to the instructions.

**Sanitation and Hygiene** - It is critical to remember to practice basic hygiene. Always wash your hands with soap and water. Flood waters may contain fecal matter from overflowing sewage systems and industrial byproducts. There is a risk of disease from eating or drinking anything contaminated with flood water. If you have open cuts or sores, keep them as clean as possible by washing with soap and water to control potential infections. If a wound develops redness, swelling, or drainage, seek immediate medical attention.

DO NOT allow children to play in flood water areas both to prevent drowning and other health issues. Wash children's hands frequently and do not allow them to play with contaminated toys that have not been disinfected.

The Health Department's Office of Food Control also recommends the following food safety tips for residents that lost power and experienced flooding:

- Perishable foods without refrigeration that have a temperature of 40° Fahrenheit and above for two hours should be discarded; this includes meats, milk, yogurt, eggs, mayonnaise and cran dressings, pastas, and desserts.
- Food items that can be kept for a **limited time** without refrigeration include: hard process cheeses (Cheddar, Swiss, Provolone, Romano and Parmesan); Butter and Margarine; Opened canned fruits and fruit juices; Peanut butter, jellies, jams; Mustard and vinegar based dressings; Bread products like rolls, muffins, bagels, waffles; and herbs, spices and raw vegetables.
- Discard all foods that come in contact with flood waters **including canned goods**. Thoroughly wash all kitchen utensils, pots, plates, etc., after contact with flood water with hot soapy water and sanitize them by boiling in clean water or immersing them in a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water for 15 minutes.
- When discarding spoiled foods place them in double plastic bags closed with ties. Place in animal and bird proof trash cans.
- As a rule—an unopened, well functioning freezer half full will keep foods safely for up to 24 hours. A fully stocked freezer, unopened can keep foods safely for 48 hours.
- Use common sense when dealing with the issue of possible food spoilage: **Do not taste foods to see if they are spoiled --- If in doubt throw it out.**

###

Fall 2012

Toll Free 1-877-4MD-DHMH – TTY/Maryland Relay Service 1-800-735-2258

Web Site: [www.dhmh.maryland.gov](http://www.dhmh.maryland.gov)