



FSIS Constituent Update

Protecting Public Health Through Food Safety and Food Defense

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food Safety and
Inspection Service

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Agency Takes Proactive Measures in Response to More Hurricanes

This week FSIS Administrator Dr. Barbara Masters prepared the Agency to take proactive measures to ensure the public receives important food safety information.

The effort is in response to Hurricane Rita, which is expected to strike the U.S. Gulf Coast. Strong storms such as Hurricane Rita can potentially cause flooding and power outages, as was witnessed after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast.

Flood waters often carry bacteria that can contaminate food, utensils and counter tops. Power outages affect food safety because frozen and refrigerated foods spoil quickly after power is lost.

FSIS has issued Consumer Alerts to address issues on food safety during, and after, severe storms. The alerts are available in English and Spanish.

You can view these alerts on FSIS' Web site at: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Emergency_Preparedness_Fact_Sheets/index.asp.

In addition to these alerts, FSIS has food safety brochures with important food safety information for consumers affected by severe weather. The brochures also contain important information for volunteer food service workers, facility managers, dispatchers, and trainers.

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Export Requirement Updates



The Library of Export Requirements has been updated for the following country:

Saudi Arabia

Complete information can be found at: www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&_Policies/Export_Information/.

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These publications are available in Spanish, and include:

- A Consumer Alert on food safety during power outages and flooding available at: www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Hurricane_Katrina_Flyer.pdf;
- A booklet for volunteer food handlers called “Cooking for Groups” available at: www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/cfg/CookGroups.pdf;
- A fact sheet on preparing food for groups called “7 Food Safety Steps for Successful Community Meals” available at: www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/cfg/7Steps_2.pdf.

Reminder about FSIA Meeting in Miami

A public meeting to discuss the Food Safety Institute of the Americas’ (FSIA) strategic plan to improve and harmonize food safety, food security and food defense education, training and communication throughout the Americas will take place September 29-30, in Miami, Fla.

The meeting will be held at the Renaissance Eden Roc Hotel, 4525 Collins Avenue, Miami Beach, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Thursday, September 29; and from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Friday, September 30. All sessions are free, but registration is required. Attendees who need sign language interpreters or have other special needs should contact the FSIA at (305) 347-5552 or by fax at (305) 530-6066.

The meeting agenda is available in English and Spanish on FSIS’ Web site at: www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/Meetings_&_Events/.

Reminder about NACMCF Meeting

The National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF) will hold public meetings on September 26-29.

The full Committee will discuss consumer guidelines for the safe cooking of poultry products; the analytical utility of *Campylobacter* methodologies; and the determination of cooking parameters for safe seafood for consumers. All meetings are open to the public and will

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Food Safety After a Weather Emergency

FSIS is providing recommendations in advance of Hurricane Rita, which is expected to strike the Gulf Coast. USDA is hopeful that this information will help minimize the potential for foodborne illnesses.

Steps to follow after the weather emergency:

Never taste a food to determine its safety!

Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.

The refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about four hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full and the door remains closed.)

Food may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 40° F or below.

Obtain dry or block ice to keep your refrigerator and freezer as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic-foot full freezer for two days.

If the power has been out for several days, then check the temperature of the freezer with

NACMCF Meeting...

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be held at the Omni Colonnade Hotel, 180 Aragon Avenue, Coral Gables, Fla. 33134. A meeting agenda is available on FSIS' Web site at: www.fsis.usda.gov/About_FSIS/NACMCF_Meetings/.

The full Committee will hold an open meeting on Wednesday, September 28, from 8:30 a.m. to noon. The Subcommittee on Consumer Guidelines for the Safe Cooking of Poultry Products will hold open meetings on Monday, September 26, from 1 - 5 p.m. and on Tuesday, September 27, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Subcommittee on Determination of Cooking Parameters for Safe Seafood for Consumers will hold open meetings on Wednesday, September 28, from 1 - 5 p.m. and on Thursday, September 29, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For further information contact Karen Thomas by phone at (202) 690-6620; by fax at (202) 690-6334, or by e-mail at karen.thomas@fsis.usda.gov.

USDA Food Safety Mobile Still Touring in Relief Effort

The USDA Food Safety Mobile continues its tour of the region recently affected by Hurricane Katrina this week to get USDA's food safety education materials into the hands of those affected by the hurricane.

The Mobile will be visiting the following locations in the next two weeks:

Date	Location	City, State
Sept. 25	Wal-Mart	Slidell, La.
Sept. 26	Wal-Mart	Covington, La.
Sept. 27	Albertsons	Hammond, La.
Sept. 29	Albertsons	Baton Rouge, La.
Sept. 30	Albertsons	Baton Rouge, La.
Oct. 1	Albertsons	Baton Rouge, La.
Oct. 2	Albertsons	Baton Rouge, La.
Oct. 5	Wal-Mart	Hattiesburg, Miss.

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an appliance thermometer or food thermometer. If the food still contains ice crystals or is at 40° F or below, the food is safe.

If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, then check each package of food to determine its safety. If the food still contains ice crystals, the food is safe.

Discard refrigerated perishable food such as meat, poultry, fish, soft cheeses, milk, eggs, leftovers and deli items after four hours without power.

Drink only bottled water if flooding has occurred.

Discard all food that came in contact with flood waters, including canned goods.

Discard wooden cutting boards, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and pacifiers.

Thoroughly wash all metal pans, ceramic dishes and utensils that came in contact with flood water with hot soapy water and sanitize by boiling them in clean water or by immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water.

When in Doubt, Throw it Out!

Technical Guidance Documents Now Available

There are a number of public health concerns to take into consideration after natural disasters affect environmental systems and infrastructures.

In order to ensure the production of safe food in these establishments, FSIS personnel assigned to slaughter and processing plants should consider the following documents as establishments begin to resume production. These documents include information for discussion with establishment management before the establishment resumes operations.

These are issues that a prudent establishment would consider, rather than specific regulatory requirements.

Technical Guidance Documents, one for slaughter and one for processing establishments, identify possible issues in establishments affected by natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina.

The documents are available on FSIS' Web site at: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/FSIS_Employees/IKE/.

Industry Donations Being Accepted

FSIS has received a number of questions concerning where to make donations for evacuees of Hurricane Katrina. In response, FSIS wants to make the public aware that donations of food, personal items, housing, and other services can now be made at the following Web site: www.nerr.gov. This site permits the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other relief organizations, including the American Red Cross, to be aware of donations that are currently available and how they can reach those in need.

To submit comments or questions, contact the editor, at: fsisupdate@fsis.usda.gov, or (202) 720-9113.