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DISASTER RESPONSE - DISPOSAL, RECONDITIONING & DETENTION OF FOODS

DISPOSAL – Arrangements for proper disposal of condemned goods is one of the first steps to be taken after a disaster. This could include the use of approved types of incinerators, when available, or the use of sanitary landfills.

Flood Damage:

All food except commercial hermetically sealed (top and bottom double seamed) cans **that have been in contact with non potable water must be destroyed and cannot be reconditioned.** This includes, but is not limited to:

1. All produce.
2. Eggs – all types shall be destroyed.
3. Coffee and tea, in bags or bulk.
4. Flour, meal, cereals, beans, wheat and whole unprocessed grains.
5. Salt, sugar, spices and dried milk.
6. Nuts (salted, shelled or shell nuts).
7. Screw top, crimped-cap, and similar containers such as bottled water, soft drinks, and alcoholic beverages.
8. Foods in plastic and/or glass containers – This includes products such as jellies, jams, preserves, peanut butter, mayonnaise, ketchup, vinegar, condiments, syrup, molasses, and honey. Home canned foods are not salvageable.
9. Paper or cellophane wrapped goods including such items as candy, cereals, bread, cakes and chewing gum.
10. Tobacco products in paper or cans and loose leaf tobacco.

Loss of Power:

1. Frozen foods with internal product temperatures that have reached 41⁰F or higher, for a period greater than four hours must be discarded.
2. Potentially hazardous food under refrigeration where temperatures have reached 41⁰F or higher, for a period greater than four hours must be discarded. This includes but is not limited to meats, eggs, milk, and dairy products, fish and shellfish, and refrigerated produce.

Fire and Smoke:

Fire and smoke creates insoluble tars, plastics and their by-products that may be suspended in the smoke for an extended period of time. All meats, oil products such as butter, and produce readily absorb smoke. Friction type closures and cellophane wrapped products can be affected by smoke. Extreme heat can re-cook canned goods and adversely affect the contents. All of these present concerns for food products rendering them unsalvageable and they must be discarded.

Chemical contamination of food can occur by chemicals used in fire fighting, explosions, and breakage of glass bottles, other containers, or aerosols of insecticides, rodenticides, and household cleaning items. If there is any indication food has been exposed to chemical contamination, it cannot be salvaged and must be discarded.

RECONDITIONING – Food reconditioning is difficult and supervision by the local public health agency is necessary to ensure good salvage.

1. Empty Fruit Jars, Cans, and Bottles – Thorough washing and chlorination under supervision may salvage these types of containers.
2. Glass Containers – No attempt should be made to recondition foods packed in glass, no matter what type of closure.
3. Canned Goods – Canned goods that come in contact with non-potable water may be salvaged for human consumption by scrubbing the cans thoroughly and removing all of the silt from the surfaces of the can after having removed the labels. The can is then rinsed thoroughly and dipped in a chlorine solution of 200 parts per million (one tablespoon of unscented bleach per gallon of water). The can should then be air dried or wiped dry with clean cloths to prevent rusting or leakers. Strict attention must be paid to preserving original labels for relabeling of products.

The only types of cans that are acceptable for reconditioning are:

- a. The commercial hermetically sealed (top and bottom double seamed) cans in which most canned foods are packed.
- b. The type of can with a key, where the key is removed and the key table is lifted and cleaned underneath.

DETENTION – Any items that are questionable for disposal or reconditioning should be segregated and clearly identified to hold until an evaluation by the local public health agency can be conducted.