



## **Kanawha-Charleston Health Department Information on power and water outages for residents during storm recovery efforts Updated October 28, 2012**

### **Food Safety Guidelines**

- For emergency cooking you can use a fireplace, a charcoal grill or camp stove **outdoors only** due to the chance of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- If the temperature of perishable foods rises above 41°F for more than 4 hours, it should be discarded.
- Foods in the freezer will remain frozen up to 24 hours if the freezer door is not open.
- In a well-filled, well-insulated freezer, foods will usually still have ice crystals in their centers (meaning the food is safe to eat) for at least three days.
- After 24 hours, if the food is still partially frozen, it should be safe to refreeze.
- If frozen foods have thawed and have been stored at temperatures above 41° for less than 4 hours, they should be safe, if used immediately.
- If they have been completely thawed and have been above 41°F for more than 4 hours, they should be discarded.
- Meat and poultry products should not be used if the temperature of the meats is above 45°F for more than 2 hours. Properly discard these products.
- Use emergency measures; add insulation, cover the freezer with blankets. This will help to keep foods cold for a longer period of time. Do not cover the air vent openings. If alternate working mechanical refrigeration is available, use it. Use dry ice if it is available.
- Do not refreeze the following: frozen dinners, vegetables, meat and fish, shellfish and ice cream.
- If it seems likely that your freezer will not be on for several days, dry ice may help keep frozen food safe.

## **Foodborne Illnesses**

Everyone is at risk for food poisoning, especially when the power is out and your refrigerator is not working. To reduce your risk, be sure to follow the “Food Guidelines” above for keeping food safe when the power is out.

See your doctor or healthcare provider if you have diarrhea along with a fever over 101°F, blood in your stool, prolonged vomiting, signs of dehydration, including a decrease in urination, a dry mouth and throat, and feeling dizzy when standing up, or if you have had diarrhea for more than 3 days.

Young children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with weak immune systems are more at risk for food poisoning and should be especially careful. Knowing the rules of food safety will help prevent germs sometimes found in food from making you sick.

## **How to Store Emergency Water Supplies**

- You can store your **safe** water in thoroughly washed plastic, glass, fiberglass or enamel-lined metal containers. Never use a container that has held toxic substances. Sound plastic containers, such as soft drink bottles are best.
- Before storing your water, treat it with a preservative, such as chlorine bleach, to prevent the growth of microorganisms. Use unscented liquid bleach that contains 5.25 percent of sodium hypochlorite and no soap. Add four drops of bleach per quart of water or two scant teaspoons per 10 gallons and stir.

## **Safe Water for Drinking and Cooking**

### **Boiling**

If you don't have safe water for drinking or cooking, you should boil water to make it safe. You can improve the taste of boiled water by pouring it from one container to another and then allowing it to stand for a few hours, OR by adding a pinch of salt for each quart or liter of boiled water.

If the water is cloudy,

- Filter it through a clean cloth, paper towel, or coffee filter OR allow it to settle.
- Draw off the clear water.
- Bring the clear water to a rolling boil for one minute.
- Let the boiled water cool.
- Store the boiled water in clean sanitized containers with tight covers.

If the water is clear,

- Bring the clear water to a rolling boil for one minute.
- Let the boiled water cool.

- Store the boiled water in clean sanitized containers with tight covers as per the included “*How to Store Emergency Water Supplies*” information.

### **Disinfectants**

If you don't have **safe** water and boiling is not possible, you often can make water safer to drink by using a disinfectant such as unscented household chlorine bleach or iodine. These can kill most harmful organisms, such as viruses and bacteria, but are not as effective in controlling more resistant organisms.

To disinfect water,

- Filter it through a clean cloth, paper towel, or coffee filter OR allow it to settle.
- Draw off the clear water.
- To use bleach, add 1/8 teaspoon (about 8 drops) of unscented liquid household chlorine (5-6%) bleach for each gallon of clear water,
  - Stir the mixture well.
  - Let it stand for 30 minutes or longer before you use it.
  - Store the disinfected water in clean sanitized containers with tight covers.

### **Finding Emergency Water Sources**

Alternative sources of clean water can be found inside and outside the home. **DO NOT DRINK** water that has an unusual odor or color, or that you know or suspect might be contaminated with fuel or toxic chemicals. **To conserve water, use safe drinking water which is store bought or treated for eating and cooking only and use other sources of water to flush your toilet.**

The following are possible sources of water:

#### *Inside the Home*

- Water from your home's water heater tank
- Melted ice cubes made with water that was not contaminated

Listen to reports from local officials for advice on water precautions in your home. It may be necessary to shut off the main water valve to your home to prevent contaminants from entering your piping system. Only use alternative sources of water in a dire necessity.

#### *Outside the Home*

- Rainwater
- Streams, rivers, and other moving bodies of water
- Ponds and lakes
- Natural springs