



Food Safety during Floods

Not all food or beverage items can be saved after a flood. You must discard any food items that have been in contact with flood water. In some cases, you may be able to save commercially canned goods in metal cans or rigid plastic containers. The condition of the container is crucially important.

To salvage canned goods (in metal cans)

- Remove the labels.
- Wash in warm water and detergent.
- Sanitize with a solution of one (1) tablespoon of bleach in a gallon of water.
- Products must be relabeled if they are sold or salvaged.

When relabeling, be sure to include:

- The common or usual name of the product, the net contents of the container.
- The name, address, and zip code of the "distributor" (i.e., the firm that relabeled the product).
- Any label codes from the original label; and
- Any other required labeling information.

Discard canned goods if the surface is rutted, pitted, swollen, leaking, creased or dented at the rims or seams.

Salvage items in rigid plastic containers ONLY IF:

- They have not been submerged in flood water or other liquids.
- The product is not contaminated.
- All traces of soil can be removed, and there is no soil on the cap or closure.
- There is no evidence of rusting or pitting on the cap or closure, and the seal is completely intact.
- The cap or crown is not dented in any way that affects the rim seal.
- The container is not defective in any other obvious way.

Salvaging beverage items:

- May salvage corked wine bottles sealed with foil or wax.
- Cannot salvage beverage containers with twist or screw tops.

Equipment

Determine if the equipment can be salvageable by the extent of the contamination, length of exposure and the type and age of the equipment. Equipment can also be evaluated by the equipment manufacturer or an appliance repair service in your area. All salvageable equipment needs to be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized. Use a detergent solution, then a sanitizing solution made with one (1) tablespoon of bleach in a gallon of water.

You can generally save equipment if...

- It is made of stainless steel or other nonabsorbent materials (i.e., stoves, steam tables, preparation tables, fryers, etc.).
- It contains only non-absorbent, closed-cell polyurethane insulation. (This material is used in newer refrigerators and freezers. It may require cleaning - check with the manufacturer.)

Refrigerator/Freezers

- Commercial approved walk-in refrigerators and freezers can be cleaned by dismantling the panels and cleaning and sanitizing exposed areas. This would require a qualified manufacturer technician.
- Reach-in refrigerators and freezers should be evaluated. If flooding was minimal reconditioning may be possible. If flooding involved several feet of water for an extended time period, the insulation would become exposed, which would make reconditioning difficult if not impossible. Foam insulation should be less absorbent than fiber insulation. The insulation value of fiber insulation may also be adversely affected by water exposure.
- Interior and exterior surfaces of reconditioned reach-in refrigerators and freezers should be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized. Interior panels should be free of cracks or other damage. There should be no odor after reconditioning, and the units should be tested for temperature maintenance prior to being placed into service.

Equipment with water supply lines:

Take the following precautions when salvaging post-mix and beverage machines, coffee or tea urns, ice machines, dishwashers, and other equipment with water connections:

- Flush water supply lines, faucet screens and waterline strainers, and purge fixtures of any standing water.
- Clean and sanitize all fixtures, sinks, and equipment, using detergent and a solution of one (1) tablespoon of bleach in a gallon of water.

Discard any equipment:

- Containing fiberglass insulation that was wet
- Surfaces that are rusted or deteriorating
- Damaged and incapable of being repaired
- If the equipment includes flood-damaged wood/particle board or plastic laminate components (counters, cabinets, bars, etc.)
- Wooden walk-in refrigerators and freezers should be removed and replaced with NSF or similar units
- Domestic equipment subjected to a significant flood water exposure should be considered no longer in good repair and replaced with NSF or similar units that meet the requirements of law.

*****WARNING*****

Always use extreme caution when restarting equipment with electrical components.

**When in doubt, remember the golden rule of clean-up work: THROW IT OUT!
WASH YOUR HANDS THOROUGHLY, and do it often.**