
Food safety after cyclones, floods and other disasters

When disasters cause the power to go out, it generally means the food in your fridge will start to go off.

Unless cold storage (below 4 °C) is available within 2 hours of a power cut, all potentially hazardous foods like cheese that are typically stored in the fridge need to be placed in alternative cold storage, eaten immediately or disposed of.

If in doubt, throw it out.

Read more about guidelines on [food safety and storage, particularly during a power cut](#).

You should wash dishes that have been exposed to flood water in hot soapy water or in a dishwasher. Make sure the dishwasher is safe to use and has been thoroughly cleaned if it has been contaminated by dirty floodwater.



Vegetable gardens

Floodwater may have contaminated your vegetable or herb garden with bacteria, chemicals or other dangerous substances. Some vegetables may still be all right to eat.

The Department of Health recommends disinfecting in hot water, peeling and cooking the produce to prevent food borne illness.

Where to get help

- > Contact your [local government authority \(external site\)](#).
- > Phone the Environmental Health Directorate Water Unit on (08) 9222 2000.
- > Phone the [Department of Housing \(external site\)](#) on 1300 137 677. You can also fill out an [online maintenance request form \(external site\)](#).
- > For seweraged properties phone the [Water Corporation \(external site\)](#) on 13 13 75.
- > Contact the [Department of Water \(external site\)](#).

Acknowledgements
Public Health

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See also

- > In and around your home after cyclones, floods and other disasters
- > Hazards after cyclones, floods and other disasters
- > Wastewater after cyclones, floods and other disasters
- > Water safety after cyclones, floods and other disasters
- > The power is off - is your food?
- > Managing health conditions during cyclone season