

Disposal of Food and Other Household Waste

Orderly clean-up after a disaster is important to prevent impact of waste on human health and the environment. The North Dakota Department of Health provides the following guidelines for disposal of food and other household waste after a disaster.

Do NOT mix different types of waste or pile different types together for collection.

- Waste such as food, small animal carcasses, diapers, and similar wastes that quickly spoil should be separated from other waste.
- Hazardous chemicals, paint, materials that contain mercury (fluorescent lights, thermostats, etc.), and electronics should be separated for proper recycling or disposal. See the “Disposal of Household Hazardous Waste and Electronics” fact sheet at www.ndhealth.gov/flood.
- Appliances that cannot be cleaned and repaired and scrap metal materials should be collected separately for recycling.
- Furniture, carpet, books and paper that cannot be recycled, and demolition debris should be placed together for collection. Be aware some demolition materials may contain lead paint and/or asbestos.
- Concrete and brick should be stockpiled for recycling.
- Tree branches and clean, non-treated wood should be separated to be ground for mulch, etc.

Waste that rots or decays quickly should be kept apart from other waste or disaster debris, placed in heavy-duty plastic bags or containers, and disposed of quickly. This includes:

- Fruits and vegetables.
- Meats.
- Dairy products.
- Small animal carcasses.
- Diapers.
- Sanitary products.
- Medicines that have been contaminated or spoiled.

Food Wastes may be unsafe because of damaged containers or because the refrigerator or freezer was without power for a few days. As food waste spoils or decays, it can be a health hazard and can attract rodents and other vermin. Take these steps to dispose of food waste:

- Do not keep any food that may be spoiled or contaminated, including:
 - Food from refrigerators and freezers, including catsup, mustard, pickles, jelly, sandwich meat, milk, juices, etc.
 - Dry food in damaged packages.
- Do not keep any household medicines that are spoiled or contaminated.
- Place food waste and other waste that rots or decays into plastic bags and place them in a designated area for separate collection.
- **When in doubt, throw it out!**

Take the following steps to clean refrigerators and freezers:

- Remove everything from the refrigerator or freezer.
- Use paper towels or rags to wipe up spills and leaks and dispose of them with the food waste.
- Wash out the refrigerator or freezer with a strong bleach solution. Use 1½ cups of bleach in 1 gallon of water. Use latex or rubber gloves if you have sensitive skin that may be irritated by the bleach solution.
- Wash out the appliance with warm, soapy water.
- To remove odors, wipe out the appliance with a mixture of water and baking soda, or keep a box of baking soda in the appliance. You also may want to air out the appliance for a few days before plugging it in and using it again. Secure doors in an open position to provide air flow and keep children away.

Check with your local waste hauler or community emergency officials for guidelines specific to your community for disposal of disaster-related waste.

For more information, contact the North Dakota Department of Health at 701.328.5166 or visit www.ndhealth.gov.

For information about asbestos and lead-based paint in your home , contact the North Dakota Department of Health at 701.328.5188.