



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Follow hurricane safety precautions

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health recommends all families in areas that may be affected by Hurricane Isaac take health and safety precautions.

State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson urges Alabamians to listen and follow warnings communicated through the news media.

Food Safety

Power outages prompt concerns about the safety of frozen and refrigerated foods. As a general rule, a full upright or chest freezer will keep foods frozen for about two days without power.

A partially full freezer will keep foods frozen for about one day. This time may be extended by keeping the door shut. A refrigerator will keep foods cool for four to six hours if the door is kept closed as much as possible.

Any thawed foods that have been at room temperature for more than two hours should be discarded. Foods still containing ice crystals can be refrozen, although the quality of the food may decrease. Foods that have thawed to refrigerator temperatures (that is, no more than 40 degrees Fahrenheit) can also be cooked and then refrozen.

For specific questions about a food or refrigeration condition, contact your local county health department or the Food Safety and Inspection Service's Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MP-HOTLINE (888-674-6854) or visit www.foodsafety.gov.

Carbon Monoxide

The public should never use generators, grills, camp stoves or other gasoline, propane, natural gas, or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, basement, garage or camper—or even outside near an open window.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause sudden illness and death if breathed. When power outages occur during emergencies such as hurricanes, people often try to use alternative sources of fuel or electricity for cooling or cooking. CO from these sources can build up in a home, garage or camper and poison the people and animals inside. Look to friends or a community shelter for help. If you must use an alternative source of fuel or electricity, be sure to use it only outside and away from open windows.

Exposure to carbon monoxide can cause loss of consciousness and death. The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain and confusion. People who are sleeping or who have been drinking alcohol can die from CO poisoning before ever having symptoms. Consult a health care professional right away if suspect symptoms occur.

Important Tips

- ☐ Never use a charcoal grill, hibachi, lantern or portable camping stove inside a home, tent or camper.
- ☐ Never run a generator, pressure washer or any gasoline-powered engine inside a basement, garage, or other enclosed structure, even if the doors or windows are open, unless the equipment is professionally installed and vented. Keep vents and flues free of debris, especially if winds are high. Flying debris can block ventilation lines.
- ☐ Never run a motor vehicle, generator, pressure washer or any gasoline-powered engine outside an open window or door where exhaust can vent into an enclosed area.
- ☐ Never leave the motor running in a vehicle parked in an enclosed or partially enclosed space, such as a closed garage.

Animals

Stray animals can pose a danger during a hurricane. Most animals are disoriented and displaced, so do not corner an animal. If an animal must be removed, contact your local animal control authorities.

Certain animals may carry rabies; therefore, care should be taken to avoid contact with stray animals. If you are bitten by an animal seek immediate medical attention as soon as possible.

Injury Prevention and Power Lines

Follow these guidelines when coming in contact with downed power lines:

If power lines are lying on the ground or dangling near the ground, do not touch the lines. Notify your utility company as soon as possible that lines have been damaged, or that the power lines are down, but do not attempt to move or repair the power lines.

Avoid driving through standing water if downed power lines are in the water. If a power line falls across your car while you are driving, continue to drive away from the line. If the engine stalls, do not turn off the ignition. Stay in your car and wait for emergency personnel. Do not allow anyone other than emergency personnel to approach your vehicle.

For more information, please visit the Alabama Department of Public Health's website at adph.org.