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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Sarpy/Cass Health Department Issues Post-Storm Safety Tips

Severe storms on June 16, 2017, affected many local communities, causing power outages and damage to buildings and trees.

As people begin to assess the damage and clean up debris, the Sarpy/Cass Health Department suggests the following post-storm safety reminders:

Outdoor Debris Removal

- Wear sturdy shoes or boots, long sleeves, and gloves.
- Learn proper safety procedures and operating instructions before operating any gas-powered or electric-powered saws or tools.
- Be careful entering any structure that has been damaged.
- Do not touch downed power lines or objects in contact with downed lines. Report electrical hazards to the police and utility company.

Food Safety

Basic tips for keeping food safe:

- Keep the **refrigerator and freezer doors closed** as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.
 - o The **refrigerator** will keep food **cold for about 4 hours** if it is unopened.
 - o A **full freezer** will keep the temperature for approximately **48 hours** (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed.
 - o Buy **dry or block ice** to keep the refrigerator as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should keep an 18 cubic foot, fully stocked freezer cold for two days.



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- o If you plan to eat refrigerated or frozen meat, poultry, fish, or eggs while they are still at safe temperatures, it is important that each item is **thoroughly cooked to a safe minimum internal temperature** to ensure that any foodborne bacteria that may be present are

destroyed. **However, if at any point the food was above 40° F for 2 hours or more (or 1 hour if temperatures are above 90 ° F) — discard it.**

Once power is restored, determine the safety of your food:

- o If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, **check the temperature** when the power comes back on. If the freezer thermometer reads 40° F or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen.
- o If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, **check each package** of food to determine its safety. You can't rely on appearance or odor. If the food **still contains ice crystals** or is 40° F or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook.
- o Refrigerated food should be safe as long as the power was out for **no more than 4 hours** and the refrigerator door was kept shut. **Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, or leftovers) that has been at temperatures above 40° F for 2 hours or more (or 1 hour if temperatures are above 90° F).**
- o Perishable food such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk, and eggs that are not kept adequately refrigerated or frozen may cause illness if consumed, even when they are thoroughly cooked. For more information you can visit the Food and Drug Administration's website at <https://www.fda.gov/food/resourcesforyou/consumers/ucm076881.htm#power>

Additional Tips

- Stay informed by listening to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio for updated information and instructions.
- Contact your family and friends to let them know you are okay.
- Help your neighbor.

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