

"If in Doubt, Throw it Out" - What to do With Food and Medication After a Wildfire

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When should food and medications be discarded after a wildfire? The rule of thumb is if in doubt, throw it out. When you return to your home, you should discard any food, beverages, or medications exposed to heat, smoke, or soot. The potency of some medications can be altered by exposure to heat, so check with your doctor before using any prescription or over-the-counter medicines.

Canned goods that are dented, bulging, or rusted or that have been charred or exposed to extreme heat should be discarded. Refrigerators and freezers may not be airtight. If food smells bad or has an off-flavor after cooking, throw it away. If the power was out, you should discard any meats, seafood, milk, soft cheeses, eggs, prepared foods, and cookie dough that have been above 40°F for over two hours. Do not refreeze frozen food that has thawed.

Throw away the following items if they may have come in contact with fumes, water, or chemicals:

- Fresh food such as produce, dairy, meat, fish, and eggs.
- Any opened containers and packages.
- Containers with peel-off tops or cork-lined, waxed cardboard, or paraffin (waxed) seals.
- Food in cardboard boxes or wrapped in paper, foil, plastic, cellophane, or cloth.
- Staples in canisters such as flour, sugar, spices, seasonings, and extracts.
- Stored raw foods such as potatoes, apples, and onions.

Article Written by: Yvonne Barkley, University of Idaho Extension, Moscow, ID