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*Promoting and Protecting Public Health*

**For Immediate Release: June 9, 2008**

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## **Health Department's Suggestions after the Storm**

The Douglas County Health Department recommends that adults who have open wounds, lacerations or punctures from storm clean-up activities should cleanse the wound thoroughly and contact their healthcare provider. That is especially true if they are unsure when they had their last tetanus vaccine booster. Adults should have a tetanus booster every 10 years, and may need to have it sooner if an injury occurs.

“With the storm there is a lot of dirt and debris,” Health Director Dr. Adi Pour said. “Tetanus bacteria usually are found in the soil and dust. Tetanus frequently requires hospitalization, and death occurs in about three of 10 cases. The disease is also known as lockjaw.”

Facts about tetanus include:

- When people get tetanus, they are most often infected through a dirty wound.
- Symptoms include painful spasms and tightening of the muscles, usually all over the body.
- Those spasms can lead to the locking of the jaw so a person can't swallow or breathe.
- Tetanus cannot be transmitted from person to person.

Food safety is another potential health concern since many neighborhoods have been without power for more than 24 hours.

“While the power is out, keep the doors to your appliances closed as much as possible to preserve the cold,” Dr. Pour said. “But with food, when in doubt, throw it out.”

Here are some recommendations for food safety during power outages:

- Do not open refrigerators or freezers unless it is absolutely necessary.
- A full freezer will hold food safely for 48 hours, while a half-full freezer will hold food safely for up to 24 hours.
- Pack items from the refrigerated section, like milk, meat, fish, eggs and spoilable leftovers, into a cooler full of ice. Inexpensive Styrofoam coolers work fine.
- Check the temperature of your food before you cook or eat it. If the food in the freezer has ice crystals and is not above 40 degrees, you can refreeze. Dispose of any food with a temperature of more than 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

Some other ideas that will help include asking friends who have electricity to share their freezer space, even if you have to divide the frozen items; looking for freezer space in a store, church, school or commercial freezer; or using dry ice.

[www.douglascountyhealth.com](http://www.douglascountyhealth.com)

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