



FACT SHEET

Flood impact on food businesses

Many food businesses around the Byron Shire have been affected by the recent flood disaster. Our thoughts are with you all at this difficult time and we are reaching out to let you know that Byron Shire Council staff are available to provide advice and assistance in any way that we can. You can contact our Environmental Health Team on 6626 7107.

The following information is specifically for food businesses who have been dealing with food that might not be safe to eat, as well as food waste. This information is available on our website if you ever need to reference it again in the future – just use the search.

You may also have questions about cleaning equipment and utensils, and what the rules are when it comes to drinking water, so that information has been included as well.

What you need to know about floodwater

Floodwater can be contaminated with bacteria, parasites, viruses, sewage, agricultural and industrial waste, and other substances that can cause illness. There is a danger that any food, surfaces, and cooking utensils that have come into contact with floodwater could be contaminated.

Spills and sewage discharges can also contaminate water supplies and food gardens. Ensure that discarded food cannot be collected by consumers. Leave separate to other waste for ease of priority collection. For further information on food waste collections call our Resource Recovery Team on 1300 652 625. It is also recommended that you take photos of discarded waste for insurance purposes.

Do's and don'ts for businesses

Businesses must not sell food that is unsafe or unsuitable and use only drinking quality (potable) water for activities such as cleaning on food premises.

- Throw out food that might not be safe to eat:
- Throw out food that has come into contact with floodwater or has an unusual odour, colour or texture. Do not taste or cook it.
- Salvaging canned food for resale is not recommended for food businesses.
- Food businesses must not re-label packaged foods unless permission is obtained from the NSW Food Authority.
- Vegetable gardens can take a month to become suitable after flood or sewage discharge. Discard all leafy green produce.
- After one month, wash other vegetables then sanitise in a weak bleach solution of 1 tablespoons bleach to 2 litres of water. Then rinse in drinking-quality water, peel and use.
- Monitor announcements and consult local authorities after other sorts of contamination.

- **Remember - If in doubt throw it out**

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Tel: 02 6626 700 | **Email:** council@byron.nsw.gov.au | **Web:** www.byron.nsw.gov.au

If your business has a large amount of food waste from flood damage, please contact Council or call the Resource Recovery Hotline on 1300 652 625.

Tips for cleaning and sanitising after a flood

Clean and sanitise surfaces and food utensils - Follow these steps:

1. Carefully check dishes, pots, pans, cutlery and kitchen equipment that might have been in contact with floodwater. Throw away damaged or cracked items, items made from porous material such as wood, plastic or rubber including wooden chopping boards as they cannot be adequately sanitised.
2. Wash utensils and surfaces in hot, soapy, drinking-quality water. Take apart and clean the non-electrical pieces of any kitchen equipment that can be safely taken apart and then rinse in clean, hot water.
3. Sanitise silverware, metal utensils, pots, pans and kitchen equipment in pieces by boiling in water for 10 minutes. Sanitise dishes by immersing glass, porcelain, China and enamelware for 10 minutes in a disinfecting solution of 1 tablespoon of chlorine bleach per 2 litres of hot water. Then rinse. Clean cupboards and counters with hot soapy water then rinse with a chlorine bleach solution before storing dishes or food.
4. Air dry items because towels might have been splashed with contaminated water. Commercial and most domestic dishwashers are capable of sanitising all eating and cooking utensils as part of their normal cycle. Water for drinking in an emergency such as a flood or contamination event, tap water and private water supplies such as from tanks, wells and bores sometimes might not be safe to drink and use for cooking and cleaning.

What you need to know about water supply during and after a flood

Monitor public announcements (internet if available, ABC Radio, TV media) and those from the local water supplier to know if tap water is safe to use. Private water supplies should be tested before using again. If the water is unsafe:

- Use only bottled, boiled, or treated water - in that order of preference - for drinking, cooking or preparing food, washing utensils and surfaces, brushing teeth, hand washing, making ice, and bathing.
- Only treat contaminated water if no drinking-quality water can be obtained:
 - filter cloudy water through a clean cloth or allow it to settle, then pour off the clear water for boiling. Boil the water vigorously for 1 minute then leave it to cool and store in a clean, covered container. Boiling will ensure water safe from most types of harmful bugs but will not remove chemical contaminants.
 - If water cannot be boiled, treat it with chlorine or iodine tablets. Follow the directions that come with the tablets. This might not kill all bugs and will not remove any chemical contaminants. Thoroughly clean any containers used to store water with hot soapy drinking-quality water, then rinse with a bleach solution before use.

You can also find this [Fact Sheet](#) on Council's Flood Recovery page