

Hurricane Michael Impact Information for the Food Industry

Wednesday, Oct. 10, 2018 11 a.m.

Michael has strengthened to a Category 4 hurricane. It will likely be a Category 4 hurricane when it makes landfall in the Florida Panhandle this afternoon. A storm of this magnitude has never made landfall in the Florida Panhandle (dating back to 1851 when reliable records began); therefore, this is a storm of unprecedented strength and impact for the Florida Panhandle and Southwest Georgia.

Here in Georgia, a [State of Emergency](#) has been issued for 92 Georgia counties in advance of the storm's landfall. The storm will move across our state starting this afternoon in Southwest Georgia, through midday Thursday as it moves out of Georgia near Augusta.

Catastrophic impacts are expected in southwest area of our state, where a Hurricane Warning has been issued. Tropical Storm Warnings and Flash Flood Watches have been issued for most of Central and South Georgia. Dangerous tropical storm to hurricane force winds (gusts ranging from 40 to 60 mph) will extend inland, resulting in downed trees and power lines, causing widespread and long-lasting power outages as well as structural damage. Heavy rainfall could produce life-threatening flash flooding and tornadoes are possible. The latest weather information is available from the [National Hurricane Center](#).

It is expected that this hurricane will result in food-related incidents, requiring emergency response and recovery activities. Industry sectors most likely to be impacted include commercial facilities, communications, emergency services, energy, healthcare and public health, and transportation. Additionally, airport closures and damage to crops/farms could have national impacts.

Potential Hazards & Impacts

- Localized Flooding
- Food Facility Structural Damage
- Water Interruption at Food Facilities
- Power Interruption at Food Facilities

Potential Response & Recovery Activities

- Assessing Food Facilities
- Issuing Control Measures
 - Temporarily Ceasing Operations
 - Voluntary Destruction of Foods
 - Embargos & Rejections
- Reopening Food Facilities

Food processors and retailers should continue to closely monitor the storm's path and be ready to respond to changing threats. After the storm moves through Georgia on Thursday, food facilities may expect to be visited by a GDA Food Safety Inspector in areas of damage.

Inspectors will be there to assess damage impacting food products; this would not be a formal "inspection," but rather a quick visit that allows inspectors to verify a facility is safe to be open for food sales and/or food processing. Please remember that once the storm hits, response and recovery activities do not begin for at least 48 to 72 hours after high winds have ended, to ensure responder and



public safety. That means it could take several days before an inspector is safely able to reach a facility if it is in an affected area.

The GDA encourages ALL residents to take an assessment of their preparedness status. Find all the latest about food safety, livestock, shelters, fuel and other important disaster-related information for Georgia at <http://agr.georgia.gov/gda-hurricane-response.aspx>, and follow us on [Twitter](#) @GeorgiaGrown and @GDAFoodSafety. For any **non-emergent** questions or concerns relating to food (e.g., requesting an on-site witness for a voluntary destruction of product), please contact the GDA Food Safety Division at (404) 656-3627.

Visit the Georgia READY website, <https://ready.ga.gov>, for tips, checklists and other valuable information to assist with various types of disasters. Be mindful and take protective measures for you, your business, and your family to be prepared for this storm and the days following. The GEMA/HS website also has additional information: <http://www.gema.ga.gov>.