



Latah County Idaho
 www.latahcert.us
 contact@latahcert.us

FEBRUARY 2023 NEWSLETTER

2023 CALENDAR

April 5th: Class on Navigation Aids – maps, compasses, & GPS at 6:30 pm in the Latah County Fairgrounds Classroom



Canned Food and Make an Action Plan

February is National Canned Food month so let's take this opportunity to talk about food waste, can date labels, and storage. First a little history. In 1809, Napoleon wanted to find a better way to preserve food for his army so the French government posted a contest for the best ideas. The French inventor Nicholas Appert created the first process for hermetically sealing and heat-sterilizing food storage containers. The English followed up this idea by adapting the process for tin-canned foods and inventing the can opener. And thus began a new era of eating. Canned food is used by everyone around the world and is a dietary staple.

Will canned food last forever? No, there are limits to how long canned food is good for and how long it will maintain its nutritional value.

STORAGE:

Store canned foods and other shelf stable products in a cool, dry place. Never put them above or beside the stove, under the sink, in a damp garage or basement, or any place exposed to high or low temperature extremes.

Temperatures below 85 F are best. Check your pantry every few weeks and use canned goods you have had on hand for a while.

Don't purchase or consume bulging, rusted, leaking, or deeply dented cans.

Sadly, between 30-40% of the food supply or about \$161 billion in perfectly safe food in the US is wasted according to the US Department of Agriculture and Feeding America, a US nonprofit organization. A portion of this lost food is canned food that is past a "best buy" date on the label. So, let's review what different labels mean.

- "Best if Used by" or "Best if Used Before". The date the product will have its best flavor or quality.
- "Use-By". The last date the product will likely be at its highest quality.
- "Freeze-By". The date you should freeze a product for it to maintain its top quality.
- "Sell-By". This label is directed toward the retailer for inventory purposes. This is the last date that the product should be displayed in the store.

So, labels like "Best-By" and "Use-By" are referring to when products are at their highest quality or when they are most flavorful and not when the product is spoiled or no longer safe to eat or drink. Also, product dating is not federally required so there are no federal standards to meet. These dates are also not always based on science, so they're not as accurate as we may believe.

Frequently our products are often completely OK to eat past the date on the package.

Attached to the newsletter email is a chart with USDA food "Best-By" extension dates. For example, canned items (low acid) are good 2-5 years past the best-by date; including meat, poultry, fish, gravy, stew, soup, beans, carrots, corn, pasta, peas, potatoes, and spinach. Canned items (high acid) are good 12-18 months past best by dates; including juices, fruit, pickles, sauerkraut, tomato soup, and foods in vinegar based sauces. Take a look at the extension dates list. You will be surprised how long food is good for after label dates. (Nationaltoday.com "History of Canned food Month" and WebMD archives from 9/17/21)



When to Toss it out!

First, don't do a "taste test." This is dangerous since a tiny amount of bacteria can make you sick. The smell test is a safer option.

Changes in color or texture are also signs that you shouldn't eat it. If you open a can or jar and bursts of air or product gush out or it has a frothy residue, these could be signs that the product is spoiled.



What disasters can affect you?

Communities are subject to many types of disasters. While we hope that such occurrences never happen, it has been shown time and time again that being prepared for disasters is wise. Now is the time to do some research either online or by attending a preparedness fair or presentation hosted by your local jurisdiction or community group to learn about your local hazards.

Create a Disaster Plan

Meet with your family and discuss why you need to be prepared for disasters. Plan to share the responsibilities and work together as a team. Develop a family/household communication and reunification plan so that you can maintain contact and take the best actions for each of you to re-unite if you are separated. Discuss the types of disasters that are likely to happen. Explain what to do in each case. Discuss what to do in an evacuation. Pick two places to meet:

- Right outside your home in case of fire.
- Outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home.

Everyone must know the address and phone number.

Practice and Maintain Your Plan

- Review your plans every six months so everyone remembers what to do.
- Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills.
- Test and recharge your fire extinguishers, according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Test your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors every month; replace batteries every six months.
- Replace stored water and food every six months to a year, depending on expiration dates.
- Update plan as necessary.

Put your Plan into Action

Teach children how and when to call 911. Show them how your cell phone works. Many counties in the US allow Text to 911. Call if you can, text if you can't! Post emergency telephone numbers in a visible location. Show each family member how and when to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at the main switches. Other tips:

- Check for adequate insurance coverage.
- Install an ABC fire extinguisher in your home. Teach each family member to use it and where it is kept.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on each level of your home, in appropriate areas.
- Stock emergency supplies and assemble disaster supply kits.
- Take a First Aid and CPR class.
- Determine the best escape routes from your home. Find two ways out of each room.
- Find a safe spot in your home for each type of disaster.

DISASTER meeting place (if you cannot return home): EXACT LOCATION: _____ HOUSE FIRE meeting place (near home, everyone is safely outside): EXACT LOCATION: _____ LOCAL emergency contact (if you are hurt): PRINT NAME: _____ PHONE: _____	
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OUT OF AREA CONTACT PERSON WHY? Local phone systems may be shut down in a disaster. However, you frequently can place a long-distance call. Name (print): _____ Phone number (with area code): _____ Cell phone number (with area code): _____ TIP: You may be able to text message all your loved ones on your cell phone. Keep these messages short.
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Source: Prepare in a Year - <https://mil.wa.gov/asset/5f171cc0a935f>

Remember, if you are in Latah County on April 5th, join us for a great class on reading maps, using compasses, and getting a peek at a GPS unit.

