

Policy Clarifications - SNAP

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Agency: CAOs

Citations:

Subject: Replacement SNAP Benefits for Food Lost in a Household Misfortune

Can the CAO authorize SNAP benefits to replace food lost because of power outages from recent storms?

Response By: Division of Federal Programs and Program Management

Date:06/06/11

Yes, SNAP households may qualify for replacement benefits because of recent storms. Refer to [SNAPH 580.52](#).

SNAP replacements can be issued for food losses due to declared disasters or for more localized “household misfortunes”.

- A disaster declaration affects a large area or population; damage is very severe and widespread; and, as a result, affected populations are given more flexible eligibility criteria and access to benefits than normally possible in the SNAP program.
- A “household misfortune” is a fire, local flooding, power outage or similar circumstance lasting a short period of time that affects individuals already receiving SNAP benefits. **Note that www.foodsafety.gov states that the safety of refrigerated food can be compromised if a power is out for 4 hours.**

CAOs will be advised of specific steps to take if recent events result in declared disaster. At this point these storms may be considered a household misfortune.

Eligibility for a SNAP benefit issuance to replace food lost in a household misfortune is determined as follows:

- Replacement will be provided if a household timely reports a loss. The report may be made in the CAO, by phone or in writing. The report is timely if it is made within 10 days of the date food is lost in the household misfortune.
- The CAO must verify the household misfortune (dates and affected areas) through a collateral contact, documentation from a community agency, or a home visit.
- The CAO must verify that the household resides in the affected area.
- The lost food must have been purchased with SNAP benefits.

- The CAO must instruct the household to sign a statement of loss and return it to the CAO within 10 days of the date of report.
 - The statement should include the date of loss, reason for the food loss, the amount of the requested replacement and the recipient's signature.
 - The client may bring or mail the statement to the CAO. If the statement of loss is not returned to the CAO within 10 days of the timely report, no replacement may be made.

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Recipients who timely report a loss of food and request replacement benefits will be given an authorization for the amount of the loss the recipient has declared, up to a maximum of their monthly SNAP benefit amount. If the SNAP benefits issued in the month of the household misfortune included restored benefits, the full amount of restored benefits will be replaced. There is no requirement to check EBT balances. Use reason code 168 to replace food destroyed in a household misfortune.

Example: On June 1, 2011, a recipient household reports they were without power due to storms on May 26, 2011. They lost \$100 worth of food due to spoilage. The household's May allotment is \$275. Narrate the request for replacement and details in the case comments. On June 10, 2011, the recipient provides a signed statement of loss to request replacement of \$100 in SNAP benefits because of food lost due to a power outage in the area. The worker does a one-time issuance for \$100, using reason code 168.

NOTE: There is no limit to the number of replacements for food lost because of household misfortunes. However, they must be separate incidents and the process outlined above must be followed.