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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 19, 2006

American Red Cross Responds to Severe Weather

Springfield, IL: The American Red Cross Illinois Capital Area Chapter Disaster Assessment Teams have been surveying disaster-struck areas in Sangamon County. Disaster Assessment teams are working diligently to determine the needs of the community in the wake of the severe weather.

- **Individuals who have disaster-related needs because of storm-related damaged to their home should call the American Red Cross at (217) 787-7602 or 1-888-343-5766 to schedule an appointment with a caseworker.**

All American Red Cross disaster assistance is free, made possible by voluntary donations of time and money from the American people. To help the Red Cross continue to save lives, contributions can be made to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund by calling (217) 787-7602. Contributions to the Disaster Relief Fund may also be sent to the Illinois Capital Area Chapter P.O. Box 1058, 1045 Outer Park Dr., Springfield, IL 62704-1058.

Individuals who are without power but are otherwise able to continue to stay in their homes are advised to observe the following precautions.

*Information adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and the Food and Drug Administration.
Rev 10/2005*

Identify Unsafe Food

- Throw away food that may have come in contact with flood or storm water.
- Throw away food that has an unusual odor, color or texture.
- You cannot rely solely on appearance or odor. Never taste food to determine its safety. Some foods may look and smell fine, but if they have been at room temperature too long, bacteria that cause food-borne illness can begin to grow very rapidly. Some types of bacteria produce toxins that are not destroyed by cooking.
- Throw away food in your refrigerator or freezer that has been exposed to temperatures above 40° F (4° C) for two hours or more.
- Throw away any fully cooked items in either the freezer or the refrigerator that have come in contact with raw meat juices.

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- Throw away canned goods that are bulging, opened, or damaged.

- Food containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped caps (soda pop bottles), twist caps, flip tops, snap-open, and home canned goods should be thrown away if they have come into contact with floodwater. They cannot be disinfected.

Store Food Safely While the Power is Out

- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. First, use perishable food from the refrigerator. A refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened.
- Then, use the food from the freezer. To minimize the number of times you open the freezer door, post a list of freezer contents on it. A full freezer will keep the temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed.
- Finally, begin to use nonperishable foods and staples.
- Obtain dry or block ice to keep your refrigerator as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time.
- If you are not sure a particular food is cold enough, take its temperature with the food thermometer. Throw out any perishable foods (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers) that have been exposed to temperatures over 40° F (4°C) for two hours or more, and any food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture, or feels warm to the touch.
- Keep food in a dry, cool spot and keep it covered at all times.
- Open food boxes or cans carefully so that you can close them tightly after each use.
- If cans have come in contact with flood or storm water, remove the label, wash the cans and dip them in a solution of 1 cup of bleach mixed with 5 gallons of water. Re-label the cans with a marker once dry.

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