

Activity:

Make and Use a Bleach Solution for Food Contact Surface Flood Cleanup

Audience: Community members, Extension program participants, or emergency preparedness training attendees

Duration: 15–20 minutes

Materials Needed (per group or participant):

- Empty 24 oz spray bottle (marked at 23 oz line) with bleach solution sticker
- Measuring spoons (especially 1/2 teaspoon)
- Unscented household bleach (5–7.5% sodium hypochlorite)
- Clean water (potable tap water)
- Gloves

Objectives

Participants will learn:

1. How to correctly prepare a bleach solution for disinfecting kitchen surfaces after a flood.
2. How to use the solution safely and effectively.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Introduce the Topic (2 minutes)

Use the activity slide to introduce the activity, talk about why it is important to disinfect food contact surfaces after a flood, and what types of bleach to avoid. There are instructor notes you can use to help.

2. Practice Time (8–10 minutes)

Explain the following steps:

- Fill a spray bottle with clean water up to the 23 oz line.
- Add 1/2 teaspoon of unscented bleach (5–7.5% sodium hypochlorite).
- Close and gently mix the solution (do not shake vigorously).
 - Instructor's note: Once you add the bleach, gently turn or swirl the bottle a few times to mix. No need to shake it hard—this helps avoid spills and fumes.

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3. Using the Solution (5 minutes)

Explain how to apply:

- Explain the difference between cleaning and sanitizing.
- Once the surface has been cleaned, spray it with bleach solution until visibly wet.
- Let it sit for 10–15 minutes to disinfect.
- Allow to air dry (do not wipe off).
 - Instructors note:
 - Letting the surface air dry ensures that the bleach solution stays in contact with the surface long enough—**10 to 15 minutes**—to fully kill bacteria, viruses, and mold.
 - Wiping it off too soon may remove the disinfectant **before it has finished working**, reducing its effectiveness.
 - Think of it like giving the solution time to do its job—wiping it off too early is like stopping a wash cycle before it's done.

4. Safety Reminders

- Wear gloves and ensure good ventilation.
- Never mix bleach with ammonia or vinegar (toxic gas risk).
- Make fresh solution anytime any soap bubbles or debris get into the solution, or every 4 hours, whichever comes first.
- Even if the solution looks the same, it may no longer be effective. Always mix a fresh batch to make sure it can actually kill germs and keep your family safe.

5. Wrap-Up (1 minute)

Reinforce that this simple bleach solution is effective and inexpensive. Encourage participants to use the proper ratio, label their bottle, and store it safely.