

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Flood of formula donations a second disaster

Well-meaning donations put babies at risk during hurricane Florence

Athens, GA - September 17 2018 - Infants and young children affected by Hurricane Florence and related flooding need access to safe and adequate nutrition. With over a million people evacuated or sheltering in their homes, Americans across the country are looking for ways to help. SafelyFed USA and Alimentación Segura Infantil (ASI), along with their partners, remind donors and relief organizations that donations and untargeted distribution of infant formula and feeding equipment such as bottles and breast pumps put infants and their families at risk.

In an emergency, infants and young children are at increased risk of illness, mostly due to infections that can be reduced by continued breastfeeding. Families who are breastfeeding, even partly, protect their babies and also require fewer resources from emergency services.

Donors should donate cash to organizations providing high-quality services to families with young children. Relief organizations should procure infant formula and related items based on the assessed need of the families being served.

Donations of infant formula and related items are prohibited by the [Operational Guidelines on Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies](#). While donations in general are increasingly understood to create problems in disaster response, infant formula and related supplies are especially dangerous.

- Donated products are typically based on what the donor has available, even if these are difficult to prepare safely in the circumstances or are inappropriate products that may easily be misused, such as toddler drinks or liquid concentrates
- Donations flood in at the outset in quantities far greater than are needed, consuming critical skilled resources to process and store them safely
- Without appropriate trained supports and coupled with an excess of available donations, parents may overuse these products during the emergency, only to find themselves dependent on them when donations dry up

What can donors, aid organizations and others involved in the recovery efforts do?

- Don't initiate or share requests for infant formula or feeding equipment donations
- Support efforts to ensure that skilled lactation support, including International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) and other trained helpers are in place to assess and support individual families with their feeding needs
- Create an enabling environment for safe infant feeding, including facility assessments and expert procurement of infant formula and other infant feeding supplies
- Donate cash to organizations that are applying best practices and supporting all families to feed their babies safely

SafelyFed USA and ASI have developed a number of resources to support the needs of families, helpers and emergency managers in this and other emergencies.

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