

POWER OUTAGES & FOOD SAFETY

PLANNING FOR A FUTURE POWER OUTAGE

- Keep an appliance thermometer in both the refrigerator and freezer. Make sure the refrigerator temperature is at 41 °F or below and the freezer is at 0 °F or below.
- Group foods together in both the refrigerator and freezer. This helps foods stay cold longer.
- Keep the freezer full. Fill empty spaces with frozen plastic jugs of water, bags of ice, or gel packs.
- Freeze refrigerated items that you may not need immediately, such as leftovers, milk, and fresh meat and poultry. This will keep them at a safe temperature longer.
- Have a large, insulated cooler and frozen gel packs available. Perishable foods will stay safe in a refrigerator only 4 hours.
- Find out where dry ice and block ice can be purchased.
- Consider purchasing a generator to power your refrigerator and freezer.

DURING A POWER OUTAGE

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed.
- The refrigerator will keep food safe for up to 4 hours. If the power is off longer, you can transfer food to a cooler and fill with ice or frozen gel packs. Make sure there is enough ice to keep food in the cooler at 41 °F or below. Add more ice to the cooler as it begins to melt.
- A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full).
- Obtain dry ice or block ice if your power is going to be out for a prolonged period. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic-foot freezer for 2 days. (**Caution:** Do not touch dry ice with bare hands or place it in direct contact with food. The use of dry ice may result in an unsafe build-up of Carbon Dioxide.)
- In freezers, food in the front, in the door, or in small, thin packages will defrost faster than large, thick items or food in the back or bottom of the unit.
- Do not place perishable food outside in cold or freezing temperatures. Outside temperatures can vary and food can be exposed to unsanitary conditions and animals.

AFTER A POWER OUTAGE

- **Never** taste food to determine its safety. **When in doubt, throw it out!**

Additional Information is available at:

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service --
https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/food-safety-topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/emergency-preparedness/keep-your-food-safe-during-emergencies/ct_index

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) –
<https://www.fda.gov/Food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/Emergencies/ucm076881.htm>

FOOD SAFETY AFTER A POWER OUTAGE

Food that has been out of temperature for more than 4 hours may cause illness. Discard all spoiled food to avoid potential health risk.

Take special care in handling potentially hazardous food (PHF). PHF is moist, perishable food in and on which bacteria can grow. PHF must be maintained at a temperature below 41° F in your refrigerator and below 0° F degrees in your freezer.

If your home was impacted by a power outage, special considerations are necessary to ensure the safety of food in refrigerators or freezers.

- When the power goes out, keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- Check for signs of power outage such as liquid or refrozen meat juices, soft or melted ice cream.
- Discard any food that has an unusual color, odor, or texture.
- Discard perishable foods (including meat, poultry, fish, eggs and leftovers) in your refrigerator when the power has been off for 4 hours or more.
- Thawed food that contains ice crystals can be refrozen or cooked. Freezers, if left unopened and full during a power outage, will keep food safe for 48 hours (24 hours if half full).

Reheating food that has become contaminated will not make it safe!

When in doubt, throw it out!

DISPOSAL OF FOOD

- Discard spoiled food in the appropriate refuse bin.
- To discard large volumes of food, contact your refuse disposal company for expedited service
- **Whole** produce may not need to be discarded. Cut produce needs to be discarded. Consider the quality of the produce before consumption.

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