

# FOOD SAFETY BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER A POWER OUTAGE

Know how to keep food safe before during and after emergencies. Hurricanes, tornadoes, winter weather and other events may cause power outages. Follow these tips to help minimize food loss and reduce your risk of foodborne illness.

## BEFORE PLAN AHEAD (IF YOU CAN) ...

**Put appliance thermometers** in your refrigerator and freezer.

Keep **freezer 0°F** or below

Refrigerator **40°F** or below

Freeze **containers of water and gel packs** to help keep food cold if the power goes out.

Freeze refrigerated items such as leftovers, milk, and fresh meat and poultry that you do not need immediately.

**Group foods together** in the freezer to help food stay colder longer.

If you think power will be out for an extended period of time, buy **dry or block ice** to keep the fridge or freezer cold.

Store nonperishable foods on higher shelves to avoid flood water.

## DURING WHILE THE POWER IS OUT ...

Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed **to maintain cold temperature.**

**IF DOORS STAY CLOSED ...**

- ... a full freezer will hold its temperature for **48 HOURS** if half-full **24 HOURS**
- ... a fridge will keep food safe for **4 HOURS**

## AFTER ONCE THE POWER IS BACK ON ...

**WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!**

Check the temperature inside of your refrigerator and freezer. If they're still at safe temperatures, your food should be fine.

Never taste food to **determine its safety!**

**WHAT SHOULD I THROW OUT?**

- Meat, poultry or seafood products
- Soft cheeses and shredded cheeses
- Milk, cream, yogurt, and other dairy products
- Opened baby formula
- Eggs and egg products
- Dough, cooked pasta
- Cooked or cut produce

**WHAT CAN I KEEP?**

The following foods are safe if held above 40 °F for more than 2 hours:

- Hard cheeses (Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, Parmesan, Provolone, Romano)
- Grated Parmesan, Romano, or combination (in can or jar)
- Butter or margarine
- Opened fruit juices
- Opened canned fruits
- Jelly, relish, taco sauce, mustard, ketchup, olives, pickles
- Worcestershire, soy, barbecue, and Hoisin sauces
- Peanut butter
- Opened vinegar-based dressings
- Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads, tortillas
- Breakfast foods (waffles, pancakes, bagels)
- Fruit pies
- Fresh mushrooms, herbs, and spices
- Uncut raw vegetables and fruit

**REFREEZE FOOD THAT STILL CONTAINS ICE CRYSTALS OR IS AT 40°F OR BELOW.**

## AFTER A FLOOD

**FOLLOW THESE STEPS AFTER A FLOOD:**

- DO NOT EAT any food that may have touched flood water.
- DISCARD FOOD not in waterproof containers; screw-caps, snap lids, pull tops, and crimped tops are not waterproof.
- DISCARD cardboard juice/milk/baby formula boxes and home canned foods
- DISCARD any damaged cans that have swelling, leakage, punctures, holes, fractures, extensive deep rusting, or crushing/denting severe enough to prevent normal stacking or opening.

**SANITIZE**  
1 tbsp. bleach + 1 gallon water

- Pots, pans, dishes and utensils
- Undamaged all-metal cans after removing labels



For more food safety tips, go to [FoodSafety.gov](http://FoodSafety.gov)