



**CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
DEPARTMENT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH**

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What to do about your food if the POWER goes out!

Do not open the refrigerator or freezer. Tell your little ones not to open the door. An unopened refrigerator will keep foods safely cold for about 4 hours. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours, 24 hours if it is half full. If it looks like the power outage will be for more than 2-4 hours, pack refrigerated food items such as milk, dairy products, meats, eggs, and left-overs into a cooler surrounded by ice. **Try to obtain block or dry ice to keep your refrigerator as cold as possible.** If it looks like the power outage will last for several days, 50 pound of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic foot full freezer for 2 days. Plan ahead and know where you can buy block ice or dry ice.

CAUTION: You must be careful when handling dry ice. **Never** touch dry ice with bare hands or breathe its vapors in an enclosed area. Dry ice is frozen carbon dioxide, a gas.

What do I need if the power will be out?

- **Coolers:** One or more coolers. Styrofoam coolers can do an excellent job as well.
- **Ice:** Placing ice around your food in a cooler will ensure that it will stay cold.
- **Thermometer:** A digital, dial, or instant-read food thermometer or appliance thermometers will help you know if the food is at safe temperatures. Keep appliance thermometers in the refrigerator and freezer no matter how long the power has been out. The refrigerator temperature should be 40°F or below; the freezer, 0°F or lower. If you are not sure a particular food is cold enough, take its temperature with a food thermometer.

Follow these steps to help keep food safe during power outages or when the freezer or refrigerator is not working:

If the appliance will be working again within a couple of hours, just minimize the opening of the freezer and refrigerator doors. If the freezer is not full, quickly group packages and poultry items from other foods. If the raw meat and poultry begin to thaw this will prevent their juices from getting onto other foods. When the refrigerator and/or freezer is operating again, follow these guidelines to decide what to do with foods:

- Refrigerated foods should be safe as long as power is out no more than 4 hours.
- **Throw out any perishable food in your refrigerator, such as meat, poultry, lunchmeats, fish, dairy products, eggs, and any prepared or cooked foods that have been above 40°F for 2 hours, because bacteria can multiply to unsafe levels under these conditions.**
- Fresh fruits and vegetables are safe as long as they are still firm and there is no evidence of mold, or sliminess.
- If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, read the temperature when power comes back on. If the appliance thermometer stored in the freezer reads 40°F or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen.
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, check each package of food to determine the safety.
- If the food still contains ice crystals or is 40°F or below, it is safe to refreeze.
- Raw meats, and poultry, cheese, juices, breads and pastries can be refrozen without losing too much food quality.
- Prepared foods, fish, vegetables and fruits in the freezer, can be refrozen safely, but food quality may suffer.
- Remember, you can't rely on appearance or odor of the food to determine if it is safe. Food that has thawed or was held above 40°F for more than 2 hours should be thrown out because bacteria may multiply to unsafe levels.
- To remove spills and freshen the freezer and refrigerator, wash them with a solution of 2 tablespoons of baking soda dissolved in 1 quart of warm water.
- To absorb any lingering odors, place an open box or dish of baking soda in the appliance.

Questions and Answers

What if I go to bed and the power is still not on?

Before you go to bed, pack your perishables into your coolers if you haven't already done so and put in as much ice as you can. When you go to bed, leave a bedroom light switched on. When the power goes back on, it will wake you, so you can check the condition of your foods in the refrigerator and freezer.

What if the power goes out while I'm at work or out of the house and it has been more than a few hours before I get home?

Try to determine how long the power has been out. Check the internal temperature of the food in your refrigerator with your thermometer. A liquid such as milk or juice is easy to check. Spot check other items like steaks or left-overs also. If the internal temperature of the food is above 40°F, it should be thrown out. (Check the chart on the back) If the food in the freezer is below 40°F and there are still ice crystals, you can usually refreeze. (Check the chart on the back)

What if the power goes out and comes back while I am out?

If your freezer is fairly full and you know it was not longer than 24 hours, the food should be OK. There will be loss of quality with refreezing, but the food will be safe. If the refrigerator was out for more than 2-4 hours, you should check the perishable food items to determine if the food has been above 40°F.

POWER OUTAGE! What food can I save?

When to save and when to throw away! Use this chart to see what should be thrown away and what can be kept.

| Refrigerator Foods | | Food held above 40°F for over 2 hours |
|---|--|--|
| Dairy, Eggs, Cheese | | Dairy, Eggs, Cheese |
| Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, yogurt | | Throw away |
| Butter, margarine | | Keep |
| Baby formula, opened | | Throw away |
| Fresh eggs, hard-cooked in shell, egg dishes, egg products, custards, puddings | | Throw away |
| Hard cheeses: Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, parmesan, provolone, Romano | | Keep |
| Soft cheeses: blue/bleu, Roquefort, Brie, Camembert, cottage, cream, Edam, Monterey Jack, ricotta, mozzarella, Muenster | | Throw away |
| Processed cheeses | | Keep |
| Shredded cheeses, low-fat cheeses | | Throw away |
| Grated Parmesan, Romano, or combination (in can or jar) | | Keep |
| Fruits and Vegetables | | Fruits and Vegetables |
| Fresh fruits, cut | | Throw away |
| Fresh fruits; not cut, fruit juices; opened, canned fruits; opened, coconut, raisins, dried fruits, candied fruits, dates | | Keep |
| Vegetables; raw | | Keep |
| Fresh mushrooms, herbs, spices | | Keep |
| Vegetables; cooked, vegetable juice; opened, greens; pre-cut, pre-washed, packaged | | Throw away |
| Baked potatoes, potato salad, commercial garlic in oil or butter | | Throw away |
| Meat, Poultry, Seafood | | Meat, Poultry, Seafood |
| Fresh or leftover meat, poultry, fish, or seafood, thawing meat or poultry | | Throw away |
| Lunchmeats, hotdogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef | | Throw away |
| Canned meats; opened | | Throw away |
| Canned hams (labeled "Keep Refrigerated") | | Throw away |
| Mixed Dishes, Side Dishes | | Mixed Dishes, Side Dishes |
| Casseroles, soups, stews, pizza with any topping | | Throw away |
| Meat, tuna, shrimp, chicken, egg salad | | Throw away |
| Fresh pasta, cooked pasta, spaghetti, pasta salads with mayonnaise or vinegar base | | Throw away |
| Gravy, stuffing | | Throw away |
| Breads, Cakes, Cookie, Pastries, Pies | | Breads, Cakes, Cookie, Pastries, Pies |
| Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads, Cream or cheese filled pastries and pies | | Keep |
| Breakfast foods—waffles, pancakes, bagels | | Keep |
| Refrigerator biscuits, rolls, cookie dough | | Throw away |
| Pastries; cream filled, Pies—custard, cheese filled, or chiffon, cheesecake | | Throw away |
| Pastries, pies; fruit filled | | Keep |
| Sauces, Spreads, Jams | | Sauces, Spreads, Jams |
| Opened mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish | | Throw away if above 50°F for over 8 hours |
| Peanut butter, jelly, relish, taco, barbecue & soy sauce; mustard; catsup; olives, opened vinegar-based dressings | | Keep |
| Worcestershire sauce, fish sauces, oyster sauces, Hoisin sauces, opened spaghetti sauce; opened creamy based dressings | | Throw away |

| Frozen Foods | Still contains ice crystals, and feels as cold as if refrigerated: food below 40°F | Food thawed, food held above 40°F for over 2 Hours |
|---|--|---|
| Meat and Mixed Dishes | | |
| Beef, veal, lamb, pork, ground meats, poultry, ground poultry | Refreeze | Throw away |
| Variety meats (liver, kidney, heart, chitterlings) | Refreeze | Throw away |
| Casseroles, stews, soups | Refreeze | Throw away |
| Fish, shellfish, breaded seafood products | Refreeze, may be some texture & flavor loss | Throw away |
| Dairy, Eggs, Cheese | | |
| Milk | Refreeze, may be lose some texture | Throw away |
| Eggs (out of shell), egg products | Refreeze | Throw away |
| Ice cream, frozen yogurt | Throw away | Throw away |
| Cheese (soft and semi soft), cream cheese, ricotta | Refreeze, may lose some texture | Throw away |
| Hard cheese (cheddar, Swiss, parmesan) | Refreeze | Refreeze |
| Shredded cheeses | Refreeze | Throw away |
| Casseroles containing milk, cream, eggs, soft cheeses | Refreeze | Throw away |
| Cheesecake | Refreeze | Throw away |
| Fruits and Vegetables | | |
| Fruit Juices | Refreeze | Refreeze, throw away if moldy, yeasty smell or sliminess develops |
| Home or commercially packaged fruit | Refreeze, will change texture & flavor | Refreeze, throw away if moldy, yeasty smell or sliminess develops |
| Vegetable Juices | Refreeze | Throw away after held above 40°F for 6 hrs. |
| Home or commercially packaged or blanched vegetables | Refreeze, will change texture & flavor | Throw away after held above 40°F for 6 hrs. |
| Breads, Pastries, Baking Ingredients | | |
| Breads, rolls, muffins, cakes (without custard filling) | Refreeze | Refreeze |
| Pie crusts, commercial and homemade bread dough | Refreeze, some loss of quality | Refreeze, some loss of quality |
| Cakes, pies, pastries with custards or cheese filling | Refreeze | Throw away |
| Other | | |
| Casseroles—pasta, rice based | Refreeze | Throw away |
| Flour, cornmeal, nuts | Refreeze | Refreeze |
| Breakfast items—waffles, pancakes, bagels | Refreeze | Refreeze |
| Frozen meal, entrée, specialty items (pizza, sausage, and biscuit, meat pie, convenience foods) | Refreeze | Throw away |