

SAFE FOOD HANDLING DURING POWER OUTAGES

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The safety of food may be a problem following a storm where electricity has been interrupted for an extended period of time. The following information is intended to help you judge the safety of your food after a power outage.

Frozen Food

As long as power is interrupted, keep the freezer door closed as much as possible. Food in most full, free-standing freezers will be safe for about 2 days and half-full freezers for about 1 day. If your freezer is not full, group packages together so they form an "igloo" protecting each other.

If power is going to be out for several days, it is certainly safest to move food to another freezer. To move food safely, wrap it in newspapers or blankets, or place it in insulated containers. If you can not relocate your food, use dry ice to assist in keeping food frozen. Twenty-five pounds of dry ice should hold a 10-cubic foot full freezer 2 to 4 days. Covering the freezer with blankets, quilts, or crumpled newspaper will also aid in keeping cold air inside.

If food has started to thaw, you will have to evaluate each item separately to see what can safely be kept. For specific food items to save or throw out, refer to the charts on the following pages.

Generally, it is safe to refreeze foods that still contain ice crystals. Raw meats and poultry from the freezer can usually be refrozen without too much quality loss. Prepared foods, vegetables and fruits can normally be refrozen, but there may be some quality loss. Fruits and fruit juices can be refrozen with minimal quality loss.

Refrigerated Food

Food in a refrigerator is generally safe if the power was out for no more than a few hours. Adding block ice to the refrigerator will aid in keeping the food below 40° F for an additional time period. If at all possible, transfer food items to a refrigerator or freezer that is operating at a safe temperature.

Do not rely on the appearance or odor of a food to determine if it is safe. Bacteria that cause foodborne illness can multiply rapidly on perishable foods that have been between 40° F-140° F for more than 2 hours.

Be very careful with meat, poultry, and fish products or any food containing milk, cream, sour cream or soft cheese. When in doubt, it is usually best to throw it out.

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Disaster Resources Web site: <http://www.ag.uiuc.edu/~disaster>

FROZEN FOOD: When to Save and When to Throw Out

	Still contains ice crystals and feels as cold as if refrigerated	Thawed, held above 40°F for over 2 hours
Meat, Poultry, Seafood		
Beef, veal, lamb, pork, ground meats	Refreeze	Discard
Poultry, ground poultry	Refreeze	Discard
Variety meats (liver, kidney, heart, chitterlings)	Refreeze	Discard
Casseroles, stews, soups, convenience foods, pizza	Refreeze	Discard
Fish, shellfish, breaded seafood products	Refreeze (there will be some texture and flavor loss)	Discard
Dairy		
Milk	Refreeze (may lose some texture)	Discard
Eggs (out of shells), egg products	Refreeze	Discard
Ice cream, frozen yogurt	Discard	Discard
Soft/semi-soft cheeses (cream cheese, ricotta)	Refreeze (may lose some texture)	Discard
Hard cheeses (cheddar, Swiss, Parmesan)	Refreeze	Refreeze
Casseroles containing milk, cream, eggs, soft cheeses	Refreeze	Discard
Cheesecake	Refreeze	Discard

	Still contains ice crystals and feels as cold as if refrigerated	Thawed, held above 40°F for over 2 hours
Fruits		
Juices	Refreeze	Refreeze (discard if mold, yeasty smell, or sliminess develops)
Home or commercially packaged	Refreeze (will change in texture and flavor)	
Vegetables		
Juices	Refreeze	Discard after held above 40°F for 6 hours
Home or commercially packaged; blanched	Refreeze (may suffer flavor and texture loss)	
Breads, Pastries		
Breads, rolls, muffins, cakes (without custard fillings)	Refreeze	Refreeze
Cakes, pies, pastries with custard or cheese fillings	Refreeze	Discard
Pie crusts	Refreeze	Refreeze
Commercial and homemade bread dough	Refreeze (may suffer some quality loss)	Refreeze (will suffer considerable quality loss)
Other		
Casseroles - pasta; rice-based	Refreeze	Discard
Flour, cornmeal, nuts	Refreeze	Refreeze

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service Food News for Consumers.

REFRIGERATOR FOOD: When to Save and When to Throw Out

	Food still cold, held at 40°F or above under 2 hours	Held above 40°F for over 2 hours
Meat, Poultry, Seafood		
Fresh or leftover meat, poultry, fish, seafood	Safe	Discard
Thawing meat or poultry	Safe	Discard if warmer than refrigerator temperatures
Meat, tuna, shrimp, chicken, egg salad	Safe	Discard
Gravy, stuffing	Safe	Discard
Lunch meats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef	Safe	Discard
Pizza - meat topped	Safe	Discard
Canned meats (not labeled "Keep Refrigerated") - refrigerated after opening	Safe	Discard
Canned hams (labeled "Keep Refrigerated")	Safe	Discard
Casseroles, Soups, Stews	Safe	Discard
Dairy		
Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, yogurt	Safe	Discard
Butter, margarine	Safe	Safe
Baby formula - opened	Safe	Discard
Eggs - fresh, hard cooked in shell	Safe	Discard
Egg dishes, custards, puddings	Safe	Discard
Hard cheeses, processed cheeses	Safe	Safe
Soft cheeses, cottage cheese	Safe	Discard

	Food still cold, held at 40°F or above under 2 hours	Held above 40°F for over 2 hours
Fruits		
Canned fruits, juices - opened	Safe	Safe
Fresh fruits, coconut, raisins, dried fruits, candied fruits, dates	Safe	Safe
Vegetables		
Vegetables - cooked, juice - opened	Safe	Discard after 6 hours
Baked potatoes	Safe	Discard
Fresh mushrooms, herbs, spices	Safe	Safe
Garlic - chopped in oil or butter	Safe	Discard
Breads, Pastry		
Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins	Safe	Safe
Pastries - cream filled	Safe	Discard
Pies - custard, cheese filled, chiffons	Safe	Discard
Pies - fruit	Safe	Safe
Refrig. biscuits, rolls, cookie dough	Safe	Discard
Other		
Cooked pasta, spaghetti	Safe	Discard
Pasta Salads with mayonnaise or vinegar base	Safe	Discard
Mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish	Safe	Discard if above 50°F for over 8 hours
Opened salad dressing, jelly, relish, barbeque sauce, mustard, catsup, olives	Safe	Safe

