



KEEPING FOOD SAFE DURING A POWER OUTAGE

By Diane Whitten

We practice basic safe food handling in our daily lives, but storing food safely becomes more challenging during a power outage caused by high winds, ice storms or natural disasters, such as hurricanes and floods.

Steps to Follow to Prepare for a Possible Weather Emergency:

- Keep an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer to make sure the freezer is at 0 °F (Fahrenheit) or below and the refrigerator is at 40 °F or below.
- Plan ahead and know where dry ice or block ice can be purchased.
- Have coolers on hand to keep refrigerated food cold, if the power is out for more than 4 hours. In the winter a cooler can be kept outdoors.

Group food together in the freezer—this helps the food stay cold longer.

Steps to Follow During and After the Weather Emergency:

- Never taste a food to determine its safety!
- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.
- The refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full and the door remains closed).
- Obtain block ice or dry ice to keep your refrigerator and freezer as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic-foot full freezer for 2 days.
- When the power comes back on check the temperature of the freezer with an appliance thermometer or food in the freezer with a food thermometer. If the freezer is at 40 °F or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen. If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, then check each package of food with an Instant Read thermometer to determine its safety. If the food is 40°F or below or still contains ice crystals, the food is safe.
- Drink only bottled water, if flooding has occurred.
- Discard refrigerated perishable food such as meat, poultry, fish, soft cheeses, milk, eggs, leftovers, and deli items after 4 hours without power.

Check this guide for a list of WHAT TO [KEEP AND WHAT TO TOSS](#)

When in Doubt, Throw it Out!