

FOOD SAFETY

To those who lost electrical power: Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed.

If it looks like the power outage will be out for more than 2-4 hours, put refrigerated milk, dairy products, meats, fish, poultry, eggs, gravy, stuffing and leftovers into a cooler surrounded by ice.

If the refrigerator was out for more than 2-4 hours, it is recommended that you discard the perishables.

A freezer that is half full will hold for up to 24 hours and a full freezer for 48 hours. If it looks like the power outage will be prolonged, prepare a cooler with ice for your freezer items.

If your freezer is fairly full and you know it has been under 24 hours, the food should be OK. There will be loss of quality with refreezing, but the food will be safe.

Do not eat any food that may have come into contact with flood water. If in doubt, discard it.

Do not eat food packed in plastic, paper, cardboard, cloth and similar containers that have been water damaged.

Discard food and beverage containers with screw-caps, snap lids, crimped caps (soda bottles), twist caps, flip tops and home-canned foods, if they have come in contact with flood water. These containers cannot be disinfected.

Never use portable generators indoors, in garages or near open windows.

Refrigeration

The lack of adequate refrigeration may result in the growth of pathogenic or disease causing organisms and toxins in foods that require temperature control for safety.

- Monitor and record food temperatures every 2 hours to document that you have acted responsibly
- Keep refrigeration equipment doors closed
- Pack potentially hazardous food in commercially made ice or dry

Refrigerated Food and Power Outages: When to Save and When to Throw Out

Adapted from [Keeping Food Safe During an Emergency](#) (USDA).

Is food in the refrigerator safe during a power outage? It should be safe as long as power is out **no more than 4 hours**. Keep the door closed as much as possible. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers) that have been above 40 °F for over 2 hours.

Never taste food to determine its safety! You can't rely on appearance or odor to determine whether food is safe.

Note: Always discard any items in the refrigerator that have come into contact with raw meat juices.

You will have to evaluate each item separately. Use this chart as a guide.

Food Categories	Specific Foods	Held above 40°F for over 2 hours
MEAT, POULTRY, SEAFOOD	Raw or leftover cooked meat, poultry, fish, or seafood; soy meat substitutes	Discard
	Thawing meat or poultry	Discard
	Salads: Meat, tuna, shrimp, chicken, or egg salad	Discard
	Gravy, stuffing, broth	Discard
	Lunchmeats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef	Discard
	Pizza – with any topping	Discard
	Canned hams labeled “keep refrigerated”	Discard
	Canned meats and fish, opened	Discard
	Casseroles, soups, stews	Discard
CHEESE	Hard cheeses: Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, Parmesan, Provolone, Romano	Safe
	Processed Cheeses	Safe
	Shredded Cheeses	Discard
	Low-fat Cheeses	Discard
	Grated Parmesan, Romano, or combination (in can or jar)	Safe
DAIRY	Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, yogurt, eggnog, soy milk	Discard
	Butter, margarine	Safe
	Baby formula, opened	Discard
EGGS	Fresh eggs, hard cooked in shell, egg dishes, egg products	Discard
	Custard and puddings, quiche	Discard
FRUITS	Fresh fruits, cut	Discard
	Fruit juices, opened	Safe
	Canned fruits, opened	Safe

	Fresh fruits, coconut, raisins, dried fruits, candied fruits, dates	Safe
SAUCES, SPREADS, JAMS	Opened mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish	Discard if above 50°F for over 8 hours
	Peanut Butter	Safe
	Jelly, relish, taco sauce, mustard, catsup, olives, pickles	Safe
	Worcestershire, soy, barbecue, hoisin sauces	Safe
	Fish sauces, oyster sauce	Discard
	Opened vinegar-based dressings	Safe
	Opened creamy-based dressings	Discard
	Spaghetti sauce, opened jar	Discard
BREAD, CAKES, COOKIES, PASTA, GRAINS	Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads, tortillas	Safe
	Refrigerator biscuits, rolls, cookie dough	Discard
	Cooked pasta, rice, potatoes	Discard
	Pasta Salads with mayonnaise or vinaigrette	Discard
	Fresh pasta	Discard
	Cheesecake	Discard
	Breakfast foods – waffles, pancakes, bagels	Safe
PIES, PASTRY	Pastries, cream filled	Discard
	Pies – custard, cheese filled, or chiffon; quiche	Discard
	Pies, Fruit	Safe
VEGETABLES	Fresh mushrooms, herbs, spices	Safe
	Greens, pre-cut, pre-washed, packaged	Discard
	Vegetables, raw	Safe
	Vegetables, cooked; tofu	Discard
	Vegetables juice, opened	Discard
	Baked potatoes	Discard
	Commercial garlic in oil	Discard
	Potato salad	Discard
	Casseroles, soups, stews	Discard

Q. Some of my food in the freezer started to thaw or had thawed when the power came back on. Is the food safe? How long will the food in the refrigerator be safe with the power off?

A. Never taste food to determine its safety! You will have to evaluate each item separately. If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, read the temperature when the 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. Remember you can't rely on appearance or odor. If the food still contains ice crystals or is 40 °F or below, it is safe to refreeze. Refrigerated food should be safe as long as power is out no more than 4 hours. Keep the door closed as much as possible. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers) that have been above 40 °F for 2 hours.