

Residential Guidelines for Food Safety During Power Outages

During extended periods of power loss, safe storage of perishable food products is very important. Extended power outages, which are those lasting 4 hours or more, creates an environment where residential refrigeration and freezer units may have difficulty in maintaining proper temperature. Perishable food products held at temperatures above 41°F for extended periods of time will allow bacteria to grow to unsafe levels which can cause illness if eaten.

If your home is without power, the following guidelines are to assist you in preventing food-borne illness for you and your family.

- Keep refrigerators and freezers closed during power outages.
- Note the time the outage occurred, and for how long.
- Keep a calibrated stem thermometer with the ability to read down to 0°F.
- An unopened refrigerator can maintain perishable items for up to 4 hours without electricity.
- To prolong product safety, food in a refrigerator less than 4 hours without power may be placed in a cooler to protect items from environmental hazards. The cooler can be placed outside or in an un-insulated garage, provided the temperature stays below 41°F. Additionally, ice may be used to maintain product temperature.
- Frozen foods in unopened freezers can be maintained for 24 hours if half-full and 48 hours if completely full.
- Frozen foods that have thawed but are below 41°F (ice crystals still present) can be used or refrozen.
- In general, food above 41°F for more than 2 hours should be discarded.

When in doubt, perishable food products that may have been out of the safe temperature range should be disposed of to prevent illness. Never taste food to determine its safety. Also, you can't rely on odor or appearance in determining which foods are safe to keep. Discard items that have come into contact with raw meat juices.

Additional information can be found at <https://www.foodsafety.gov/>.