

Power Outages and Food Safety



During a power outage, food in refrigerators can become hazardous and make you sick. Any food that has been above 41° for more than 2 hours in refrigerators or freezer should be thrown away.

How would I know if my food is safe to eat?

- Monitor your refrigerator temperature. Refrigerator temperature should be 41°F or below.
- For power outages under two hours, keep your refrigerator doors closed to maintain the cold temperature.

What do you think I should discard?

- Perishable foods such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers above 41°F for 2 hours or more should be thrown out.
- Food with an unusual odor, color, or texture should not be consumed. When in doubt, throw it out.
- If frozen food is no longer frozen, throw it out.
- Food still containing ice crystals or that feels refrigerator-cold can be refrozen. Discard any thawed food.
- Food that does not need to be refrigerated but kept cold for preference can be eaten.

To properly dispose of food that was refrigerated or frozen:

- Place all food in heavy-duty trash bags.
- Do not open packages. There is a risk of illness if some foods (i.e. meat) opens and comes in contact with you.
- Use disposable gloves to prevent contact with food that needs to be thrown out.
- Use face masks to help with the odors and to provide face protection.
- Use goggles if available to prevent fluids from splashing into your eyes.
- Wash your hands immediately after removing your gloves.
- Use a safe source of water. If you are under a boil water order notice, you can boil the water and cool it before washing your hands. Also, boil water prior to using it to prepare food. Acceptable water is water that is boiled vigorously (a “rolling boil”) for at least 1 minute. Increase boiling time to at least 3 minutes if you live at high elevations above 6,500 feet.

To sanitize the refrigerators and freezers:

- Use household bleach. Do not use scented bleach, whiteners, or other bleaches with special properties used for washing clothes. To make a bleach solution, use 2 capfuls per gallon of water. Instructions are also available on the containers or use an ammonia solution of at least 200 ppm.
- Do not mix bleach and ammonia, use only one solution!
- Do not use anything stronger than bleach or ammonia. Do not use a caustic agent such as lye.