



Keeping Food Safe During a Power Outage

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Power outages make it hard to keep food cold and to properly heat it. Not keeping food at safe temperatures increases the risk of bacteria that can cause foodborne illness. Following food safety procedures will keep food safe during an emergency or disaster.

In case of a power outage:

- Keep an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer at all times. The refrigerator should be at 40 °F or below and the freezer at 0 °F or below.
- Freeze water in thoroughly washed or new plastic containers. You can use this water for drinking when thawed.
- Purchase a generator, if possible.
- Have a cooler on hand to keep food cold with ice or gel packs that you store in the freezer.

During a power outage:

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- Do not place food outside to keep it cold. Outdoor temperatures vary, and insects and animals can invade the food.
- If the freezer is full, use frozen containers and ice or gel packs in a cooler.
- Use cook stoves or grills outside if preparing food.



After a power outage:

- Do not eat perishable food that has been left in the danger zone (between 41 and 140 °F) for more than 4 hours. Pathogens cannot be seen, smelled or tasted.
- Use instant-read food and appliance thermometers to help you know if food has been kept at safe temperatures. An appliance thermometer will indicate the temperature in the refrigerator and freezer no matter how long the power has been out. If you are not sure if particular foods are at safe temperatures, use an instant-read food thermometer to check.
- Throw out foods that have completely defrosted and are not at 40 °F or below.

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- If ice crystals remain on freezer food, it can be refrozen or cooked.
- Throw out any food that has an unusual texture, color or odor.
- Never taste food to see if it is safe. You cannot see, smell or taste contaminated food.

References and Resources

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