

Food and Water Safety During Hurricanes and Power Outages

Be prepared for an emergency situation by having the supplies you need on hand and the knowledge to deal with the problems that may arise. Use the following checklists as a guide.

Refrigerator Check list

- ✓ Make sure you have appliance thermometers in your refrigerator and freezer. An appliance thermometer will indicate the temperature in the refrigerator and freezer in case of a power outage and help you determine if the food is safe.
- ✓ Have coolers on hand to keep refrigerator food cold if the power will be out for more than 4 hours. Purchase or make ice cubes and store in the freezer for use in the refrigerator or in a cooler. Freeze gel packs ahead of time for use in coolers.
- ✓ Plan ahead and know where dry ice and block ice can be purchased.

Freezer Check list

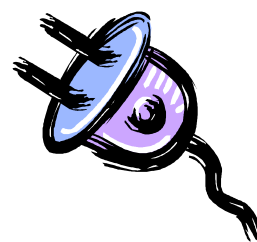
- ✓ Make sure the freezer is at or below 0°F and the refrigerator is at or below 40°F.
- ✓ Freeze containers of water for ice to help keep food cold in the freezer, refrigerator, or coolers after the power is out. If your normal water supply is contaminated or unavailable, the melting ice will supply drinking water.
- ✓ Freeze refrigerated items such as leftovers, milk, and fresh meat and poultry that you may not need immediately. This helps keep them at a safe temperature longer.
- ✓ Group food together in the freezer. This helps the food stay cold longer.

General Storage Tips

- ✓ Store food on shelves that will be safely out of the way of contaminated water in case of flooding.
- ✓ Make sure to have a supply of bottled water stored where it will be safe from flooding.

When the Power Goes Out

- ✓ Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature. The refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will keep the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed. Buy dry or block ice to keep the refrigerator 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 fully-stocked freezer cold for two days.

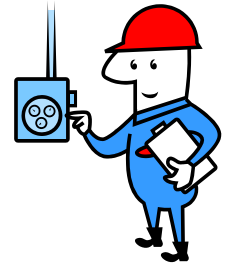


DEPARTMENT OF SENIOR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Mae Carpenter, Commissioner

- ✓ If you plan to eat refrigerated or frozen meat, poultry, fish or eggs while they are still at safe temperatures, it's important that the food is thoroughly cooked to the proper temperature to assure that any foodborne bacteria that may be present is destroyed.
- ✓ Wash fruits and vegetables with water from a safe source before eating.
- ✓ For infants, if possible, use prepared, canned baby formula that requires no added water. When using concentrated or powdered formulas, prepare with bottled water if the local water source is potentially contaminated.

Once Power is Restored



- ✓ Determine the safety of your food. If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, check the temperature when the power comes back on. If the freezer thermometer 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 its safety. 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 or cook.
- ✓ Refrigerated food should be safe as long as the power was out for no more than 4 hours. Keep the door closed as much as possible. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs or leftovers) that has been above 40°F for two hours or more.
- ✓ Be aware that perishable food such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk, and eggs that are not kept adequately refrigerated or frozen may cause illness if consumed, even when they are thoroughly cooked.



- ✓ Make sure to have a supply of bottled water stored where it will be as safe as possible **from flooding**.

Keep on hand a few days worth of ready-to-eat foods that do not require cooking, cooling, or depend on electricity. Use or replace these foods every six months.

- Ready to eat cereal, granola or fruit bars
- Nonfat dried milk, evaporated milk or pasteurized boxed milk
- Canned fruits, dried fruit and vegetables such as bean salad
- Fruit juice, tomato juice, vegetable juice
- Tuna fish, canned chicken, peanut butter, jelly, protein bars
- Bottled water, gallons or individual bottles

**Set refrigerator at 40 degrees F or below.
Set freezer at 0 degrees F.**

Monitor refrigerator & freezer temperatures

- ✓ Place thermometer in the front of refrigerator/freezer in an easy-to-read location.
- ✓ Check temperature regularly



Toll-free Number: USDA Meat & Poultry Hot line (1-888-674-6854)

Information referenced from the following sources: USDA, www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Severe_Storms_and_Hurricanes_Guide/index.asp and the FDA, Center of Food Safety and Applied Nutrition <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/fsdisas.html>