

FOOD SAFETY

before, during, and after A POWER OUTAGE

Snowstorms, summer thunderstorms, and over usage can knock out power. The FDA says power outages can affect the safety of your food. Ensure that food stays safe by having a plan in place and knowing what food safety precautions to take if a power outage does occur.

BEFORE

- Plan ahead. Stock up on supplies in advance or know where to obtain them if needed. *Before an outage*, check that the refrigerator temperature is at or below 40 degrees F and the one for the freezer is at or below 0 degrees F.
- Plan for ice. Know where you can get dry or block ice. Stock plenty of ice cubes and frozen gel packs. Freeze containers of water (plastic milk jugs do well). All of these help keep food cold in the freezer, refrigerator, or coolers. Keep coolers on hand to store refrigerated food in case the power is out for more than 4 hours. Stock your pantry with a few days' worth of ready-to-eat foods that do not require cooking or refrigeration.

DURING

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to slow the growth of bacteria. The refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours. A full freezer will keep the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if unopened. Use ice (dry or block, ice cubes, and frozen containers of water or gel packs) to keep your refrigerator and freezer as cold as possible.



AFTER

- When power is restored, check the temperatures inside your refrigerator and freezer before eating any food. If the power was out for no more than 4 hours, refrigerated food should be safe as long as the doors were kept closed. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk, eggs, or leftovers) that has been above 40 degrees F for 2 hours or longer.
- Food is safe and may be refrozen if the freezer thermometer reads 40 degrees F or below. If you did not have a thermometer in the freezer, check each package to determine its safety; you can't rely on appearance or odor. If the food still contains ice crystals or is 40 degrees F or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook.
- Be aware that perishable foods that are not kept adequately refrigerated or frozen may cause foodborne illness if eaten, *even after they are thoroughly cooked.*