

Food Safety & Power Outages



Food safety is paramount, especially during and after a power outage. Follow these basic food safety rules, time and temperature guidelines, and tips for safe disposal of food after a power outage.

- Keep Refrigerator and Freezer Doors Closed: During a power outage, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.
- Use a Thermometer: Keep an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer at all times. In the refrigerator, the temperature should be 40°F (4°C) or below, and the freezer should be at 0°F (-18°C) or below.
- Check Food Temperatures: If the power has been out for more than four hours, check the temperature of perishable food items. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers) if the temperature is above 40°F (4°C).
- Frozen Food Safety: A full freezer will hold its temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours if half full) if the door remains closed. If you believe the power will be out for an extended period, consider moving perishable items to a friend's or neighbor's freezer.
- Safe Disposal of Perishable Foods: If perishable food items have been above 40°F (4°C) for more than two hours, they should be discarded for safety reasons. This includes meat, poultry, seafood, cooked leftovers, dairy products, and cut fruits and vegetables.
- Don't Taste Food for Safety: Never taste food to determine its safety. Spoiled food may not always have an off odor or appearance.
- Non-Perishable Food Safety: Canned foods are safe to eat as long as they are not damaged, dented, or bulging. However, discard any canned goods that are exposed to floodwaters.
- Use Dry Ice or Block Ice: If available, you can use dry ice or block ice to keep the refrigerator and freezer cold during a power outage.
- Be Cautious with Refreezing: While some foods can be refrozen if they still contain ice crystals or are below 40°F (4°C), others may not be safe to refreeze. Use your best judgment or consult a food safety expert.
- Clean and Sanitize: After disposing of spoiled food, thoroughly clean and sanitize your refrigerator and freezer to remove any lingering odors or bacteria.