



NEWS RELEASE

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Summer Safety & Your Family: Power Failures & Your Family's Food

Keeping foods safe during power failures is problematic whether the power goes out from a winter snowstorm, a summer overload, or an unplanned refrigerator/freezer breakdown. Some basic rules will help you to determine which foods to keep and which foods to discard:

Rule #1: KEEP AN APPLIANCE THERMOMETER IN YOUR REFRIGERATOR AND FREEZER. Your refrigerator should normally be kept at 40° F. or below. Even under normal circumstances, it is unsafe to store perishable foods (meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers) above 40° F. for more than 2 hours. Your freezer should normally be kept at 0° F. or below.

Rule #2: NEVER TASTE FOOD TO DETERMINE ITS SAFETY! You can't rely on appearance, odor, or taste to determine if a food is unsafe.

Rule #3: DISCARD ANY PERISHABLE FOOD (SUCH AS MEAT, POULTRY, FISH, EGGS, AND LEFTOVERS) THAT HAVE BEEN ABOVE 40° F. FOR 2 HOURS. Refrigerated food should be safe as long as power is out no more than 4 hours and your refrigerator temperature is normally kept at 40° F. or below. Keep the door closed as much as possible.

Rule #4: IF THE FOOD STILL CONTAINS ICE CRYSTALS OR IS 40° F. OR BELOW, IT IS SAFE TO REFREEZE. Read the temperature when the power comes back. If the appliance thermometer stored in the freezer 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. If the food still contains ice crystals or is 40° F. or below, it is safe to refreeze.

Rule #5: DISCARD ANY ITEMS IN EITHER THE FREEZER OR REFRIGERATOR THAT MAY HAVE COME INTO CONTACT WITH RAW MEAT JUICES.

The complete article entitled "*Frequently Asked Questions About Food Safety: Keeping Food Safe During An Emergency*" (in English and Spanish) can be found on the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service website at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/FAQ/poweroutfaq.htm> or obtained by calling your local Cooperative Extension's Nutrition, Family, and Consumer Science Advisor. The article includes a chart with specific recommendations on "When to Save and When to Throw It Out" that will help you to determine which refrigerator and freezer foods that have been held above 40° F. for over 2 hours should be discarded and which foods are safe to keep or refreeze.

Source: USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, Consumer Education and Information. "*Frequently Asked Questions About Food Safety: Keeping Food Safe During An Emergency*". Online at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/FAQ/poweroutfaq.htm>. Revised April 2003.