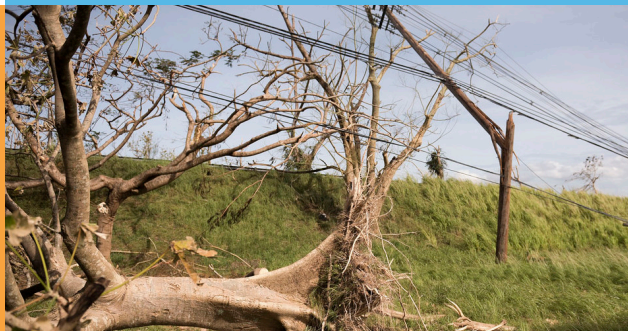


Food Safety During a Power Outage



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First, it is important to keep the doors closed on your refrigerators/freezers as much as possible, keeping the cold air inside.

- A refrigerator will keep foods cold for about four hours if UNOPENED.
- A full freezer can stay at freezing temperatures for about 2 days.
- A half-full freezer for about 1 day—again, if it is UNOPENED.

You can unplug the appliance and cover it with blankets, insulating and keeping the cold in.

Keep track of the temperature in your refrigerator and freezer. If refrigerator or freezer temperatures reach 41°F or above for more than two hours, you must make decisions about keeping the food.

Perishable or Risky Foods

Risky or perishable include foods that must be refrigerated for safety. They can support the growth of the microorganisms that cause foodborne illness.

- Raw or cooked meat (including luncheon meats or hot dogs), fish, poultry or eggs or dishes made from these ingredients.
- Opened baby formula or breast milk.
- Dairy foods including soft cheeses (cream, blue, cottage, ricotta, etc.).
- Leftover cooked pasta, vegetables, and combination foods.
- Cut raw vegetables such as lettuce, tomatoes, celery, onions, and cut raw melon.
- Opened jars of spaghetti, tomato or other sauces.

Frozen Foods

- As long as the food still contains ice crystals or remains below 41°F it is safe to eat. Use a thermometer to know for sure if food is safe.
- If your power has been turned back on, and the food is still icy or very cold, you may refreeze the food without risk of disease, though the quality of the product may be compromised. Be sure to mark refrozen foods so that you know to use them first. An alternative would be to cook the food and refreeze.
- If power is still out and foods are defrosted and still cold, you will need to eat them right away.

Once the temperature rises above 40° for more than two hours, all of these foods should be thrown out.

Condiments, sauces, etc...

- Some condiments and sauces are risky food.
- Opened creamy type salad dressings and fish sauces should be discarded if the temperature goes above 40°F for more than two hours.
- Mayonnaise, tartar sauce, and horseradish sauce should be discarded if above 50°F for more than eight hours.



Less risky (but often refrigerated) foods

While some foods will not cause a foodborne illness, their quality may be affected if left unrefrigerated (above 40°F) for a day or longer. They may be affected by bacteria, yeasts, or other organisms that make them unappetizing, so while they may technically be safe, you will want to evaluate them before eating. Throw out any food that has mold on it.

- These potentially risky foods include vinegar based salad dressings, margarine, fresh fruits and vegetables, fruit juices, pickles, jams and jellies, relishes, barbecue sauce, olives and hard cheese.
- Carbonated beverages (soda, seltzer, and pop), unopened bottled pasteurized juices, ketchup, mustard, steak sauce, Worcestershire sauce, and peanut butter are all foods that can last indefinitely without refrigeration.

How do I know if the food is unsafe to eat?

When food spoils, you can see the signs- sliminess, changes in color, mold, off flavors, or odors. However, the microorganisms that cause foodborne illness generally do not offer clues about their presence. Foods contaminated with pathogenic (illness causing) microorganisms may not look, smell or taste any different. So, remember, some foods may look and smell fine, but if they've been out of the refrigerator or above 40°F for too long, the foodborne illness causing bugs may have grown and multiplied enough to make you sick.

Sources:

Protect Food and Water During Hurricanes and Other Storms

<https://www.fda.gov/food/recallsoutbreaksemergencies/emergencies/ucm2006925.htm>

A Consumer's Guide to Food Safety: Severe Storms and Hurricanes

https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/emergency-preparedness/keep-your-food-safe-during-emergencies/ct_index

Visit <https://eden.uconn.edu/> for more information about storm preparedness

