



Food Safety During Power Outage

Why it is Important to Throw Food Away After a Power Outage

Refrigerator Food: When to Save and When to Throw it Out

If you are without power for an extended period of time, it is important that you throw foods away that may make you ill. Bacteria can be present in food when it is purchased and can grow in food that has not been kept cold enough. Each year there are thousands of people who become ill from eating food that is not handled properly. Symptoms of foodborne illness include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or fever. Some symptoms can become severe causing hospitalization and further problems.

If your power is out for 4 hours or more, items such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers must be thrown away. Items such as condiments may be kept. **Please use this guide** for specific food items to decide what to throw out.

Food in a freezer has thawed by this time and should be thrown away unless the food still contains ice crystals or if the temperature was checked when the power came back on. A freezer will keep food frozen for about 24 hours if half full and for 48 hours if full. If you have a thermometer in your freezer or a food thermometer, you can check the temperature. If the temperature was 41°F or below or there were still ice crystals present in the food when the power came on, you can keep the food and refreeze it, but there may be changes in flavor and texture. If the food is thawed but still 41°F or below, you can cook the food and then eat it or cook it and refreeze it. Cooking does not kill bacteria that may have grown when the food was above 41°F and should not be depended on to make food safe.

Remember, you can't rely on appearance or odor. Never taste food to determine its safety! Some foods may look and smell fine, but if they've been at room temperature too long, bacteria that cause foodborne illness can begin to grow very rapidly. Remember, **when it doubt, throw it out**. If you have any further questions or concerns, please [contact us](#).