



Food Safety Tips

Sources:

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/pdf/foodwater.pdf>

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm076962.pdf>

BEFORE THE POWER IS OUT:

- Make sure you have appliance thermometers in your refrigerator and freezer.
 - Check to ensure that the freezer temperature is at or below 0 °F and the refrigerator is at or below 40 °F.
 - In case of a power outage, the appliance thermometers will indicate the temperatures in the refrigerator and freezer to help you determine if the food is safe.
- Freeze containers of water for ice to help keep food cold in the freezer, refrigerator, or coolers in case the power goes out. If your normal water supply is contaminated or unavailable, the melting ice will also supply drinking water, if it was properly stored.
- Freeze refrigerated items such as leftovers, milk, and fresh meat and poultry that you may not need immediately. This helps keep them at a safe temperature longer.
- Group food together in the freezer. This helps the food stay cold longer.
- Have coolers on hand to keep refrigerated food cold if the power will be out for more than 4 hours. A thermometer should be used to monitor the temperature in the coolers, using the refrigerator guidelines above.
- Purchase or make ice cubes in advance and store in the freezer for use in the refrigerator or in a cooler. Freeze gel packs ahead of time for use in coolers.
- Check out local sources to know where dry ice and block ice can be purchased, just in case. It may also help to know the points of contact to request assistance from local authorities.
- Store food on shelves that will be safely out of the way of contaminated water in case of flooding.

AFTER THE POWER GOES OUT:

- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. A normal size refrigerator should keep food cold for about 4 hours, as long as it is NOT opened. A normal size full freezer will keep the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed. (Commercial size refrigerator/freezers “safe” times will vary.)



Food Safety Tips (continued)

- Add block ice or dry ice to your refrigerator if the electricity is expected to be off longer than 4 hours. Wear heavy gloves when handling dry ice.
- Throw away any food that may be unsafe to eat.
- Throw away food that may have come in contact with flood or storm water.
- Throw away food where the packaging has come in contact with flood or storm water.
- Throw away food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture.
- Throw away perishable foods (including meat, poultry, fish, eggs and leftovers) that have been above 40 degrees Fahrenheit (F) for 2 hours or more.
- If power is anticipated to be out for a prolonged period, you may consider instituting a food use strategy: cook and consume perishable foods (see above bullet for example), followed by other refrigerated food items. Then begin using foods from the part of the freezer that is reaching critical temperatures. Consume canned and dried foods last.
- Once power is restored, check your freezer thermometer immediately. If the freezer thermometer reads 40 degrees F or below, the food is usually safe and may be refrozen. If you don't have a thermometer in the freezer, check each package of food 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. If you can't be sure, the food should be thrown away.
- Throw away canned foods that are bulging, opened, or damaged.
- Food containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped caps (soda pop bottles), twist caps, flip tops and snap-open lids should be discarded if they have come into contact with floodwater because they cannot be disinfected.

REMEMBER, when in doubt, throw it out!



Food Safety Tips (continued)

OTHER FOOD SAFETY RESOURCES:

- **USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline: 1-888-MPHotline.** Available for consumers' questions and concerns about food safety
- **USDA Alert: Keeping Food Safe During Flooding and Power Outages**
(<http://www.usda.gov/2005/08/0340.xml>)
USDA Food Safety Information related to Hurricane Katrina
- **Hand Hygiene in Emergency Situations**
(<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/handwashing.asp>)
When to wash your hands & how to do it without running water
- **Keeping Food Safe in an Emergency, U.S. Department of Agriculture**
(http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/keeping_food_Safe_during_an_emergency/index.asp)
General fact sheet and FAQs on food and water safety including guidance on when to discard perishable foods
- **www.foodsafety.gov - Consumer Advice: Disaster Assistance with Food**
(<http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/emergency/index.html>)
Provides resources on food safety related to fires, floods, hurricanes, power outages, etc.
- **Food Safety Information for Hurricane Aftermath, FDA**
(<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm076993.htm>)
Tips to help people protect their health & food supply
- **Food Safety Office, CDC**
(<http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/>)
Comprehensive food safety information
- **Being Prepared, American Red Cross**
(<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/>)
Comprehensive site on preparing for emergencies including power outages