



Iowa Department of Public Health Bureau of Environmental Health Services

Food Safety During a Power Outage

Overview: When the power goes out for a prolonged time there is a risk that food in your refrigerator and freezer could spoil or become unsafe. This fact sheet provides guidance for keeping food safe during and after a power outage.

Be Prepared

Make sure you have appliance thermometers in your refrigerator and freezer.

- Keep your freezer at or below **0 °F**, and the refrigerator 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.

If possible, freeze containers of water for ice before a power outage to help keep food cold in the freezer, refrigerator, or coolers in case the power goes out.

When the Power Goes Out

Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.

- The refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened.
- A full freezer will keep the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed.

Once Power is Restored

If your freezer temperature 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. You can't rely on appearance or odor. If the food still contains ice crystals or is 40 °F or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook.

Refrigerated food should be safe as long as the temperature did not rise above 40°F.

- Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, or leftovers) that have been above 40°F for two hours or more.

If you plan to eat refrigerated or frozen meat, poultry, fish or eggs while it is still at safe temperatures, it's important that each item is thoroughly cooked to its proper temperature to assure that any foodborne bacteria that may be present are destroyed.

| Safe Cooking Temperatures as measured with a food thermometer | Internal Temperature |
|---|-------------------------|
| Ground Meat (except Poultry) | 160°F |
| Fresh Beef, Pork, Veal, Lamb | 145°F |
| Poultry (Whole cuts or Ground) | 165°F |
| Seafood | 145°F |
| Leftovers & Casseroles | 165°F |