

Keeping Food Safe During a Power Failure

During a power failure, the foods you keep in the refrigerator and freezer may become unsafe to eat. Here are some tips to help in making sure your food is stored safely if the power goes out.

Food in your refrigerator:

- **Keep the refrigerator door closed to maintain the temperature inside.** Without power, the refrigerator section will keep foods cool for 4-6 hours if the door is kept closed.
- If possible, add bags of ice to the refrigerator to keep temperatures cooler for a longer period.
- When in doubt, throw it out! If you are not sure whether an item is spoiled, play it safe and throw it out. Eating unsafe foods may cause food-borne illness.
- Throw out perishable foods such as meat, fish, poultry, eggs and leftovers that have been at temperatures above 4°C for more than two hours.
- Throw out any food that is off-colour or has an off odour as soon as possible.
- Contact your doctor or pharmacist for information about proper storage of medication that requires refrigeration, such as insulin.

Food in your freezer:

- **Keep the freezer door closed to maintain the temperature inside.** Without power, an upright or chest freezer that is completely full will keep food frozen for about two days. A half-full freezer will keep food frozen for one day. Avoid opening and closing the freezer to check the food inside.
- If possible, add bags of ice to the freezer to help to keep the temperature cooler for a longer period of time.
- If the power is going to be off for an extended period of time, consider taking food to a freezer belonging to a friend or neighbour – if they have power!
- Foods that have thawed in the freezer may be re-frozen if they still contain ice crystals or are at 4°C or below.
- Be sure to discard any items in either the freezer or the refrigerator that have come into contact with raw meat juices.

More tips to ensure your foods are safe to eat:

- Take the guesswork out of knowing if the temperature inside the refrigerator and freezer are safe. Consider putting an accurate indicating thermometer in each section.
- Temperature ranges should be between 0°C - 4°C for the refrigerator section and -18°C or colder for the freezer section.

www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/publichealth/foodsafety/faq.aspx

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