

Keeping Food Safe During A Power Outage

Sooner or later the electricity may fail due to power outage, and a refrigerator without electricity cannot keep food safe very long. To be prepared, keep an appliance thermometer in both the refrigerator and freezer to monitor the temperature.

In the Freezer

- Even when the power is off, a full freezer will stay frozen for about two days; a half-full freezer about one day. Keep the freezer door closed.
- If you think power will be out for several days, locate some block ice, bags of ice or dry ice to put in the freezer along with your refrigerated perishable food, or keep the food continually iced in an insulated cooler.
- You can also pack foods tightly together to insulate one another.
- All thawed raw or cooked foods can be refrozen if they still contain ice crystals or are 40 degrees F. or below but there may be some quality loss.
- Foods thawed and held above 40 degrees F. for more than two hours should be discarded.

In the Refrigerator

- Refrigerated foods should be edible as long as power is out no more than four hours.
- Discard any perishable foods that have been above 40 degrees F. for two hours or more, and any food that has an unusual odor, color, texture, or feels warm to the touch.
- If you have any doubts about the safety of any item in your refrigerator after power is restored, it's best to err on the side of caution and discard it.

In the Pantry

Shelf-stable foods such as canned goods, cereal, baking mixes, pasta, dry beans, mustard, ketchup and peanut butter can be kept safely at room temperature.

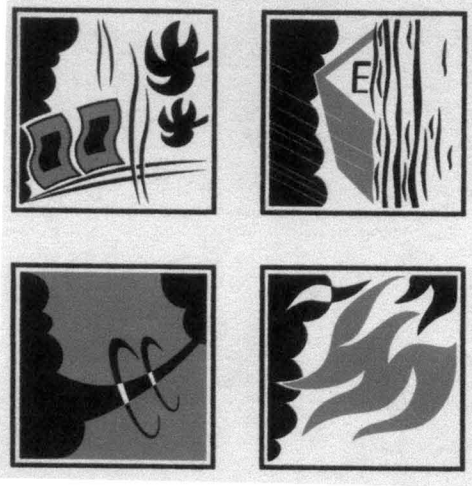
Never use food from cans that are leaking, rusting, bulging, badly dented, or with a foul odor; cracked jars or jars with loose or bulging lids; or any container that spurts liquid when you open it. Never taste such foods. Throw out any food you suspect is spoiled. In general, most canned foods have a long shelf life, and when properly stored, can be eaten for several years:

- Low-acid canned goods - two to five years (canned meat and poultry, stews, soups except tomato, pasta, potatoes, corn, carrots, spinach, beans, beets, peas and pumpkin).
- High-acid canned goods - 12 to 18 months (tomato products, fruits, sauerkraut and foods in vinegar-based sauces or dressings).

Many shelf-stable foods remain edible for several weeks, or even months, after opening. However, be sure to read package labels. Some items must be refrigerated after opening. Products that become contaminated should be immediately thrown out.

*Adapted by Glinder Stephens (2005)
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Create A Disaster Plan Step-by-Step



*Is your family prepared
to cope until help
arrives?*

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DISASTER CAN STRIKE AT ANY TIME!

Disasters can happen anytime and anywhere. When a disaster strikes, you may not have much time to respond. After a disaster, local officials and relief workers will be on the scene, but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours, or you might have to wait for days. ***Is your family prepared to cope with an emergency until help arrives?***

A disaster could damage lines to gas, water, electricity and telephones for days. Whether a disaster forces you to leave or remain in your home, you will be better able to cope by preparing for disaster before it strikes.

One way to prepare yourself, is to develop a family disaster plan. Prepare a kit with supplies you may need if your family is evacuated or confined at home.

To handle a lengthy stay in a shelter, you should have a 2-week supply of the following items: water, food, sanitation supplies, and any special foods or medicines needed by family members, such as insulin, heart tablets, diabetic foods or baby foods.

To make your stay in a shelter more comfortable, you will need to take some supplies from home: bedding, extra clothing, cooking and eating utensils, general emergency tools, reading materials and games or hobbies that will help you pass the time.

Create A Disaster Plan Step-by-Step

To prepare your family for a disaster situation, follow five steps.

Step One: Gather Information

Compile a list of emergency numbers you might need if there is a disaster.

Examples:

- American Red Cross 866-438-4636
- Electric Company 800-621-3362
- FEMA 800-621-3362
- Health Dept. 727-861-5250 / 352-521-1450
- Highway Information 800-576-3886
- Insurance—Home/Rent _____
- Insurance—Flood 800-227-8676
- Insurance Questions _____
- Telephone Company _____
- United Way 727-845-4357 / 877-828-8929

Your list could include other companies, such as water service, cable company, etc.

Step Two: Share Information

Meet with all the members in the household to share information in these areas:

- Discuss the types of disasters that could occur.
- Explain how to prepare and respond.
- Discuss what to do if advised to evacuate.
- Practice what you have discussed.

Step Three: Develop A Plan to Stay In Contact If Separated

In a disaster, normal communications may not be possible. It's important to establish a meeting place with members in your household:

- A safe distance from your home in case of fire.
- Outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home.

An out-of-state telephone number for every one to call. Sometimes it's easier to make long-distance calls than to make local calls.

Step Four: Tasks to Complete Before A Disaster Occurs

Set goals to accomplish the following tasks:

- Post emergency telephone numbers by every telephone.
- Show responsible family members how and when to shut off water, gas and electricity at main switches.
- Install a smoke detector on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms. Test smoke detectors and change the batteries when you change the time in the spring and fall.
- Contact your local fire department to learn about home fire hazards.
- Learn first aid and CPR. Contact the American Red Cross for training.

Step Five: Meet with Your Neighbors

Plan how the neighborhood could work together after a disaster.

- Know your neighbors' skills.
- Determine how you could help neighbors who have special needs, such as elderly or disabled persons.
- Make plans for child care in case parents cannot get home.

Be certain all household members know the location of the emergency supplies. If you've gathered supplies and have discussed your emergency plan with your household, you will be better equipped to endure an evacuation or home confinement. **Make sure your family is prepared to cope until help arrives!**