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)
Orange County Extension
Distributed by Betsy Crisp, MS, LD—Pasco County

Create A Disaster Plan
Step-by-Step

Is your family prepared to cope until help arrives?

UF/IFAS—Pasco County Extension
Central Pasco Professional Center
4111 Land O’ Lakes Boulevard, Suites 311/314
Land O’ Lakes, FL 34639-4402
Phone: (813) 929-2725

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