



Food Safety Tips for Power Outages

With local areas hit by power outages from recent storms, the Allegheny County Health Department is offering advice on how to preserve perishable foods without refrigeration and how to tell when food is spoiled and should be discarded. Here are some recommendations:

-Keep an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer at all times to see if food is being stored at safe temperatures (40 ° F for the refrigerator; 0 ° F for the freezer). The key to determining the safety of foods in the refrigerator and freezer is how cold they are. Most foodborne illness is caused by bacteria that multiply rapidly at temperatures above 40 ° F.

-Leave the freezer door closed. A full freezer should keep food safe about 2 days; a half-full freezer, about 1 day. Add bags of ice or dry ice to the freezer if it appears the power will be off for an extended time. You can safely refreeze thawed foods that still contain ice crystals or feel cold to the touch.

-Refrigerated items should be safe as long as the power is out no more than 4 to 6 hours. Discard any perishable food that has been above 40 ° F for 2 hours or more, and any food that has an unusual odor, color or texture. Leave the door closed; every time you open it, needed cold air escapes causing the foods inside to reach unsafe temperatures.

If it appears the power will be off more than six hours, transfer refrigerated perishable foods to an insulated cooler filled with ice or frozen gel packs. Keep a thermometer in the cooler to be sure the food stays at 40 ° F or below.

-Never taste food to determine its safety. Some foods may look and smell fine, but if they've been at room temperature longer than two hours, bacteria able to cause foodborne illness can begin to multiply very rapidly. Some types will produce toxins which are not destroyed by cooking and can possibly cause illness.

For information about food safety during a power outage or disaster, call the Allegheny County Health Department's Food Safety Program at **(412) 587-8044**.

For additional information and questions, please contact:



Allegheny County Health Department Food Safety Program

2121 Noblestown Rd, Suite 210, Pittsburgh, PA 15205
phone: 412.578.8044 • fax: 412.578.8190
alleghenycounty.us/food

REFRIGERATED FOODS

When to Save and When to Throw it Out

Foods which are above 40° F for less than 2 hours are safe.

Refrigerated	Held above 40° F for over 2 hours
Dairy	
Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, yogurt	Discard
Butter, Margarine	Safe
Baby formula, opened	Discard
Eggs	
Fresh eggs, hard-cooked in shell, egg dishes, egg products	Discard
Custards and puddings	Discard
Cheese	
Soft Cheeses: blue (bleu or imported), brie, camembert, colby, cottage, cream, edam, Monterey Jack, mozzarella, muenster, neufchatel, ricotta, roquefort	Discard
Hard Cheeses: cheddar, parmesan, provolone, romano, swiss	Safe
Processed cheeses: American	Safe
Shredded cheeses	Discard
Low-fat cheeses	Discard
Commercial Grated Hard Cheese purchased in a can or jar (Parmesan, Romano or combination)	Safe
Fruits	
Fruit juices, opened	Safe
Canned fruits, opened	Safe



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Fresh fruits, coconut, raisins, dried fruits, candied fruits, dates	Safe
Fresh cut-up fruits	Discard
Pastries, cream filled	Discard
Pies - custard, cheese filled or chiffons	Discard
Pies, fruit	Safe
Vegetables	
Fresh mushrooms, herbs and spices	Safe
Vegetables, raw	Safe
Vegetables, cooked	Discard
Vegetable juice, Opened	Discard
Baked potatoes	Discard
Commercial garlic in oil	Discard
Potato Salad	Discard
Casseroles, Soups, Stews, Meat, Poultry, Seafood	
Fresh or leftover meat, poultry, fish or seafood	Discard
Thawing meat or poultry	Discard
Meat, tuna, shrimp, chicken, egg salad	Discard
Gravy, stuffing	Discard
Lunch meats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef	Discard
Pizza - any topping	Discard
Canned meats (NOT labeled "Keep Refrigerated") but refrigerated after opening	Discard
Canned hams labeled "Keep Refrigerated"	Discard
Bread, Cakes, Cookies, Pasta	
Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads	Safe
Refrigerator biscuits, rolls, cookie dough	Discard
Cooked pasta, spaghetti	Discard
Pasta salads with mayonnaise or vinegar base	Discard
Fresh pasta	Discard
Cheese cake	Discard
Breakfast foods - waffles, pancakes, bagels	Safe
Sauces, Spreads, Jams	
Peanut butter	Safe
Jelly, relish, taco and barbecue sauce, mustard, catsup, olives	Safe
White wine Worcestershire sauce	Discard
Fish Sauce or Oyster sauce	Discard
Hoisin sauce	Discard
Opened vinegar-based dressings	Safe
Opened creamy-based Dressings	Discard



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Other	
Deli-prepared foods - Salads, cole slaw, cooked meats or poultry, luncheon meats	Discard
Opened mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish	Discard if above 40° F for over 8 hours

FROZEN FOODS

Frozen Foods	Still contains ice crystals and feels as cold as if refrigerated	Thawed. Held above 40° F for over 2 hours
Meat, Poultry, Seafood		Discard
Beef, veal, lamb, pork And ground meats	Refreeze	Discard
Poultry and ground poultry	Refreeze	Discard
Variety meats (liver, kidney, heart, chitterlings)	Refreeze	Discard
Casseroles, stews, soups	Refreeze	Discard
Fish, shellfish, breaded seafood products	Refreeze	Discard
Dairy		
Milk	Refreeze. May lose some texture	Discard
Eggs (out of the shell) and egg products	Discard (poor quality)	Discard
Ice cream, frozen yogurt	Refreeze. May lose some texture	Discard
Cheeses (soft and semi-soft)	Refreeze	Discard
Hard Cheeses	Refreeze	Refreeze
Shredded cheeses	Refreeze	Discard
Casseroles containing milk, cream, eggs, soft cheeses	Refreeze	Discard
Cheesecake	Refreeze	Discard
Fruits		
Juices	Refreeze	Discard after held above 40° F for 6 hours
Home or commercially packaged or blanched	Refreeze. May suffer texture and flavor loss.	Discard after held above 40° F for 6 hours



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Breads, Pastries		
Breads, rolls, muffins, cakes (without custard fillings)	Refreeze	Refreeze
Cakes, pies, pastries with custard or cheese filling	Refreeze	Discard
Pie Crusts	Refreeze	Refreeze
Commercial and homemade bread dough	Refreeze. Some quality loss may occur	Refreeze. Considerable quality loss
Other		
Casseroles – pasta, rice-based	Refreeze	Discard
Flour, cornmeal, nuts	Refreeze	Refreeze
Breakfast items – waffles, pancakes, bagels	Refreeze	Refreeze
Frozen meal, entrée, specialty items (pizza, sausage and biscuit, meat Pie)	Refreeze	Discard



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