

HANDLING FOOD AND DRINKS WHEN LOSING POWER

FREEZER ITEMS

When a power loss happens, a full, well-functioning freezer should be able to keep foods frozen for 2 days **if the freezer temperature was at 0 degrees F or below**. A freezer that is only half full will keep foods frozen for about 1 day.

If there is an appliance thermometer in the freezer, check the temperature when you get power. If the temperature is 40 degrees F or lower, the food is safe to eat and may be refrozen. Remember that some foods may lose their texture or flavor if they are refrozen.

If the food in your freezer has begun to thaw, you will need to check each item to see if it is safe to eat. The chart below can help you decide which foods and drinks you can keep safely. **Do not rely on taste or smell to decide if something is safe to eat!**

ADDITIONAL FREEZER STORAGE TIPS

- ▶ Group packages together to help keep items cold.
- ▶ Place meat and poultry together on the lower shelves of the freezer so their juices will not contaminate other foods if they begin to thaw.
- ▶ Open the freezer only when necessary, working quickly when the door is open.

REFRIGERATOR ITEMS

Food and drinks in the refrigerator should be safe to consume as long as the power has not been out for more than 4 hours. Keep the refrigerator door closed as much as possible.

If the refrigerator temperature has been **40 degrees F or higher for 2 hours or longer, the following foods should be thrown out:**

- ▶ Any meat, fish, poultry, seafood, pork, eggs, or soy (including dishes and salads)
- ▶ Lunchmeat, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, or dried beef
- ▶ Pizza

- ▶ Canned hams labeled "Keep Refrigerated"
- ▶ Opened canned meats and fish
- ▶ Soft cheese (Monterey, Jack, Mozzarella, Brie, blue, cottage, cream, ricotta, Neufachatel, and queso blanco fresco)
- ▶ Shredded cheese
- ▶ Low-fat cheese
- ▶ Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, yogurt, eggnog, or soy milk
- ▶ Opened creamy-based salad dressings (except for opened jars of mayonnaise, tartar sauce, and horse radish, which should be **thrown out after 8 hours if temperature reaches 50 degrees F**)
- ▶ Opened baby formula
- ▶ Eggs (fresh, hard-boiled, egg dishes, or any egg products)
- ▶ Custards and puddings
- ▶ Casseroles, soups, and stews
- ▶ Fresh fruit that has been cut up
- ▶ Opened jars of spaghetti sauce
- ▶ Refrigerator biscuits, rolls, and cookie dough
- ▶ Cooked pasta rice and potatoes
- ▶ Pasta salads with mayonnaise, or with salad or vinaigrette dressings
- ▶ Fresh pasta
- ▶ Cream-filled pastries, custards, cheese-filled or chiffon pies, and cheesecake
- ▶ Pre-cut, pre-washed, and packaged salad greens
- ▶ Cooked vegetables and tofu
- ▶ Opened containers of vegetable juice
- ▶ Baked potatoes and potato salad
- ▶ Commercial garlic in oil

The following can be kept above 40 degrees for 2 to 3 days (but end up losing taste and texture):

- ▶ Grated Parmesan or Romano cheese (in a can or jar)

- ▶ Butter and margarine that is wrapped or in a covered container
- ▶ Raw fruits and vegetables (that have not been cut up)
- ▶ Peanut butter, jelly, relish, taco sauce, mustard, catsup, olives, and pickles
- ▶ Worcestershire, soy, and barbeque sauces
- ▶ Vinegar-based dressings
- ▶ Dried and candied fruits
- ▶ Hard cheese (Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, Parmesan, Provolone, and Romano)
- ▶ Processed cheese
- ▶ Opened canned fruits
- ▶ Opened fruit juices
- ▶ Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads, and tortillas
- ▶ Waffles, pancakes, and bagels
- ▶ Fruit pies
- ▶ Fresh mushrooms, herbs, and spices

FOOD/BEVERAGE TYPE	HAS ICE CRYSTALS	HAS THAWED AND HAS BEEN AT 40 DEGREES F OR WARMER FOR 2 HOURS OR LONGER
Poultry, pork, and meat <i>(including ground meat and organ meat)</i>	Refreeze	Throw out
Casseroles, soups, and stews	Refreeze	Throw out
Fish, shellfish, and breaded seafood products	Refreeze (may be a loss of texture or flavor)	Throw out
Milk	Refreeze	Throw out
Egg products	Refreeze	Throw out
Ice cream and frozen yogurt	Throw out	Throw out
Cheese <i>(soft and semi-soft)</i>	Refreeze	Throw out
Hard cheese	Refreeze	Refreeze
Shredded cheese	Refreeze	Throw out
Cheesecake	Refreeze	Throw out
Fruit juice	Refreeze	Throw out if moldy, has yeasty smell or slime
Vegetable juice	Refreeze	Throw out if temperature is above 40 degrees F for more than 6 hours
Fruits that have been home or commercially packaged	Refreeze (may be changes in texture and flavor)	Throw out if moldy or has yeasty smell or slime
Vegetables that have been packaged at home or done commercially	Refreeze (may lose some texture and flavor)	Throw out if temperature is above 40 degrees F for more than 6 hours
Breads, rolls, muffins, and cakes without custard fillings	Refreeze	Refreeze
Pie crusts and bread dough <i>(commercial or homemade)</i>	Refreeze (may lose some quality)	May be refrozen (quality will be poor)
Flour, cornmeal, and nuts	Refreeze	Refreeze
Waffles, pancakes, and bagels	Refreeze	Refreeze
Frozen meals, TV dinners, and other convenience foods	Refreeze	Throw out

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Adapted from: Emergency Food and Water Supplies, Texas Cooperative Extension and Keeping Food Safe During an Emergency, USDA. http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/NR_091905_01/index.asp