



**FOOD SAFETY DURING POWER OUTAGES  
KEEP IT OR DISCARD IT**

During power outages, food safety is of great concern and should be monitored closely to reduce the occurrence of foodborne illnesses and even death as a result of consuming food not stored at the proper time and temperature to maintain its integrity and overall wholesomeness.

**Food storage in a refrigerator:**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends that after a power outage, food remains safe for about four hours provided the refrigerator door remains closed as much as possible. It is also recommended that all refrigerated perishables, including leftovers, be discarded if the power is off beyond 4 hrs.

The following are not recommended after four hours of a power outage in a refrigerator:

1. Taste testing food items to determine its safety;
2. Cooking refrigerated perishable foods;
3. Eating any food containing dairy products.

It is important to secure refrigerator and freezer thermometers to monitor the temperature changes during a power outage. Below are two tables with guidelines to use when power goes out under the conditions specified.

| #                             | Product Type  | Action taken when held above 40 °F for more than 2 hrs. |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Meat, Poultry, Seafood</b> |   |   |
| 1                             | Raw or leftover cooked meat, poultry, fish, or seafood; soy meat substitutes  | Discard   |
| 2                             | Thawing meat or poultry   | Discard   |
| 3                             | Salads: Meat, tuna, shrimp, chicken, or egg salad   | Discard   |
| 4                             | Gravy, stuffing, broth  | Discard   |
| 5                             | Lunchmeats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef  | Discard   |
| 6                             | Pizza with any topping  | Discard   |
| 7                             | Canned hams labeled "Keep Refrigerated"   | Discard   |
| 8                             | Canned meats and fish, opened   | Discard   |
| 9                             | Casseroles, soups, stews  | Discard   |
| <b>Cheese</b>                 |   |   |
| 1                             | Soft cheeses: blue/bleu, Roquefort, Brie, Camembert, cottage, cream, Edam, Monterey Jack, ricotta, mozzarella, Muenster, Neufchatel, queso blanco, queso fresco | Discard   |
| 2                             | Hard cheeses: Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, Parmesan, provolone, Romano  | Keep  |
| 3                             | Processed cheeses   | Keep  |
| 4                             | Shredded cheeses  | Discard   |
| 5                             | Low-fat cheeses   | Discard   |
| 6                             | Grated Parmesan, Romano, or combination (in can or jar)   | Keep  |
| <b>Dairy</b>                  |   |   |
| 1                             | Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, yogurt, eggnog, soy milk  | Discard   |



|    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 2  | Butter, margarine   | Keep  |
| 3  | Baby formula, opened  | Discard   |
|    | <b>Eggs</b>   |   |
| 1  | Fresh eggs, hard-cooked in shell, egg dishes, egg products  | Discard   |
| 2  | Custards and puddings, quiche                               | discard   |
|    | <b>Fruits</b>   |   |
| 1  | Fresh fruits, cut   | Discard   |
| 2  | Fresh fruits, uncut   | Keep  |
| 3  | Fruit juices, opened  | Keep  |
| 4  | Canned fruits, opened                                       | Keep  |
| 5  | Dried fruits, raisins, candied fruits, dates                | Keep  |
| 6  | Sliced or shredded coconut                                  | Discard   |
|    | <b>Sauces, Spreads, Jams</b>                                |   |
| 1  | Opened mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish                | Discard<br>(if above 50 °F for more than 8 hrs) |
| 2  | Peanut butter   | Keep  |
| 3  | Jelly, relish, taco sauce, mustard, catsup, olives, pickles | Keep  |
| 4  | Worcestershire, soy, barbecue, hoisin sauces                | Keep  |
| 5  | Fish sauces, oyster sauce                                   | Discard   |
| 6  | Opened vinegar-based dressings                              | Keep  |
| 7  | Opened creamy-based dressings                               | Discard   |
| 8  | Spaghetti sauce, opened                                     | Discard   |
|    | <b>Bread, cakes, cookies, pasta, grains</b>                 |   |
| 1  | Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads, tortillas       | Keep  |
| 2  | Refrigerator biscuits, rolls, cookie dough                  | Discard   |
| 3  | Cooked pasta, rice, potatoes                                | Discard   |
| 4  | Pasta salads with mayonnaise or vinaigrette                 | Discard   |
| 5  | Fresh pasta   | Discard   |
| 6  | Cheesecake  | Discard   |
| 7  | Breakfast foods: waffles, pancakes, bagels                  | Keep  |
|    | <b>Pies and pastry</b>                                      |   |
| 1  | Cream filled pastries                                       | Discard   |
| 2  | Pies: custard, cheese-filled, or chiffon; quiche            | Discard   |
| 3  | Fruit pies  | Keep  |
|    | <b>Vegetables</b>   |   |
| 1  | Fresh vegetables, cut                                       | Discard   |
| 2  | Fresh vegetables, uncut                                     | Keep  |
| 3  | Fresh mushrooms, herbs, spices                              | Keep  |
| 4  | Greens, pre-cut, pre-washed, packaged                       | Discard   |
| 5  | Vegetables, cooked  | Discard   |
| 6  | Tofu, cooked  | Discard   |
| 7  | Vegetable juice, opened                                     | Discard   |
| 8  | Baked potatoes  | Discard   |
| 9  | Commercial garlic in oil                                    | Discard   |
| 10 | Potato salad  | Discard   |
| 11 | Casseroles, soups, stews                                    | Discard   |



**Food storage in a freezer:**

The USDA also advises that a well packed freezer will maintain a safe temperature for about 48hrs/2dys and 24hrs/1 day for a half filled freezer once the door remains closed. Further, if a food retains ice crystals or is at 40°F or below, although safe, may lose its quality. Taste testing food items to determine its safety or cooking food that was stored at temperatures above 40°F in excess of two hours are not recommended.

| #                             | Food Type   | Action taken if ice crystals are present, feels cold as if refrigerated | Action taken if thawed, held above 40 °F for more than 2 hrs.    |
|-------------------------------|---|---|--|
| <b>Meat, poultry, seafood</b> |   |   |  |
| 1                             | Meat, poultry, seafood – all types of cuts  | Refreeze  | Discard  |
| 2                             | stews, soups  | Refreeze  | Discard  |
| <b>Dairy</b>                  |   |   |  |
| 1                             | Milk  | Refreeze (some loss of texture)   | Discard  |
| 2                             | Eggs (out of shell) and egg products  | Refreeze  | Discard  |
| 3                             | Ice cream, frozen yogurt  | Discard   | Discard  |
| 4                             | Cheese (soft and semi-soft)   | Refreeze (some loss of texture)   | Discard  |
| 5                             | Hard cheeses  | Refreeze  | Refreeze   |
| 6                             | Shredded cheeses  | Refreeze  | Discard  |
| 7                             | Cheesecake  | Refreeze  | Discard  |
| <b>Fruits</b>                 |   |   |  |
| 1                             | Juices  | Refreeze  | Refreeze. (discard if mold, yeasty smell, or sliminess develops) |
| 2                             | Home or commercially packaged   | Refreeze (will change texture and flavor)                               | Refreeze (discard if mold, yeasty smell, or sliminess develops)  |
| <b>Vegetables</b>             |   |   |  |
| 1                             | Juices  | Refreeze  | Discard after held above 40°F for 6 hours                        |
| 2                             | Home or commercially packaged or blanched   | Refreeze (may suffer texture and flavor loss)                           | Discard after held above 40°F for 6 hours                        |
| <b>Breads and pastries</b>    |   |   |  |
| 1                             | Breads, rolls, muffins, cakes (without custard fillings)                                      | Refreeze  | Refreeze   |
| 2                             | Cakes, pies, pastries with custard or cheese filling  | Refreeze  | Discard  |
| 3                             | Pie crusts, commercial and homemade bread dough   | Refreeze (some quality loss may occur)                                  | Refreeze (quality loss is considerable)                          |
| <b>Other Foods</b>            |   |   |  |
| 1                             | Casseroles: pasta, rice-based   | Refreeze  | Discard  |
| 2                             | Flour, cornmeal, nuts   | Refreeze  | Refreeze   |
|                               | Breakfast items: waffles, pancakes, bagels  | Refreeze  | Refreeze   |
|                               | Frozen meal, entree, specialty item (pizza, sausage and biscuit, meat pie, convenience foods) | Refreeze  | Discard  |

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/food-safety-during-power-outage> - retrieved on September 11, 2019

**Note** – if power is off for a long period of time, consider placing well wrapped foods in a cooler and fill with ice.