

# Food Safety During Power Outage



**Clermont County  
Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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Emergencies can happen, especially with extreme weather conditions. When they do, the best strategy is to already have a plan in place. This includes knowing the proper food safety precautions to take before, during, and after a power outage.

## Be prepared

- Have a refrigerator thermometer and a stem thermometer.
- Know where you can get dry ice.
- Keep on hand a few days worth of ready-to-eat foods that do not require cooking or cooling (which depend on electricity).

## When the power goes out, here are basic tips for keeping food safe:

- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- The refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours if it is unopened.
- A **full freezer** will keep the temperature for approximately **48 hours** (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed.
- Group foods together in both the refrigerator and freezer. This helps foods stay cold longer.
- Refrigerators should be kept at **41°F** or below for proper food storage.
- Obtain dry ice or block ice if your power is going to be out for a prolonged period.
- If you plan to eat refrigerated or frozen meat, poultry, fish, or eggs while they are still at safe temperatures, it is important that each item is **thoroughly cooked to a safe minimum internal temperature** to ensure that any foodborne bacteria that may be present are destroyed. However, if at any point these foods were above **41 °F** for four hours or more — **discard them**.

## Once the power is restored to determine the safety of your food:

- Check the temperature inside of your refrigerator and freezer.
- If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, check the temperature when the power comes back on. If the thermometer reads **41°F** or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen.
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, check each package of food to determine its safety. You can't rely on appearance or odor. If the food still contains ice crystals, or is **41°F** or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook.
- Refrigerated food should be safe as long as the power was out for no more than 4 hours. Keep the door closed as much as possible.
- Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs or leftovers) that has been above **41°F** for 4 hours or more. These foods may cause illness if consumed, even though they are thoroughly cooked.

Remember, you can't rely on appearance or odor. Never taste food to determine its safety! Some foods may look and smell fine, but if they've been at room temperature too long, bacteria that cause foodborne illness can begin to grow very rapidly. Remember when in doubt, throw it out. If you have any further questions or concerns please contact us.

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## When to Save and When to Throw It Out

General Rule: As long as the power has been out less than four hours, all foods will be safe.

FOOD	Held above 41°F for over 4 hours
<b>MEAT, POULTRY, SEAFOOD</b> Fresh or leftover meat, poultry, fish, or seafood	Discard
Thawing meat or poultry	Discard
Meat, tuna, shrimp, chicken or egg salad	Discard
Gravy, stuffing	Discard
Lunchmeats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef	Discard
Pizza – with any topping	Discard
Canned hams labeled "Keep Refrigerated"	Discard
Canned meats, opened	Discard
<b>CHEESE</b> Soft Cheeses: blue/bleu, Roquefort, brie, Camembert, colby, cottage, cream, Edam, Monterey Jack, ricotta, mozzarella, Muenster, Neufchatel	Discard
Hard Cheeses: cheddar, Swiss, Parmesan, provolone, Romano	Safe
Processed Cheeses	Safe
Shredded Cheeses	Discard
Low-fat Cheeses	Discard
Grated Parmesan, Romano, or combination (in can or jar)	Safe
<b>DAIRY</b> Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, yogurt	Discard
Butter, margarine	Safe
<b>Baby formula, opened</b>	Discard
<b>EGGS</b>	

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Fresh eggs, hard-cooked in shell, egg dishes, egg products	Discard
Custards and puddings	Discard
<b>CASSEROLES, SOUPS, STEWS</b>	Discard
<b>FRUITS</b> Fresh fruits, cut	Discard
Fruit juices, opened	Safe
Canned fruits, opened	Safe
Fresh fruits, coconut, raisins, dried fruits, candied fruits, dates	Safe
<b>SAUCES, SPREADS, JAMS</b> Opened mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish	Safe
Peanut butter	Safe
Jelly; relish; taco, barbecue & soy sauce; mustard; catsup; olives	Safe
White wine Worcestershire sauce	Discard
Fish sauces (oyster sauce)	Discard
Hoi sin sauce	Discard
Opened vinegar-based dressings	Safe
Opened creamy-based dressings	Discard
Spaghetti sauce, opened jar	Discard
<b>BREAD, CAKES, COOKIES, PASTA</b> Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads	Safe
Refrigerator biscuits, rolls, cookie dough	Discard
Cooked pasta, spaghetti	Discard
Pasta salads with mayonnaise or vinaigrette	Discard
Fresh pasta	Discard

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Cheesecake	Discard
Breakfast foods – waffles, pancakes, bagels	Safe
<b>PIES, PASTRY</b> Pastries, cream filled	Discard
Pies – custard, cheese filled, or chiffon	Discard
Pies, fruit	Safe
<b>VEGETABLES</b> Fresh mushrooms, herbs, spices	Safe
Greens, pre-cut, pre-washed, packaged	Discard
Vegetables, raw	Safe
Vegetables, cooked	Discard
Vegetable juice, opened	Discard
Baked potatoes	Discard
Commercial garlic in oil	Discard
Potato Salad	Discard