



Emergency food safety

Look out for the "Danger Zone" (40°F to 140°F) when the power goes out. Bacteria can grow rapidly in these temperatures, leading to severe diarrhea, dehydration, and foodborne illness.

Before an emergency

Thermometers are key

Keep an appliance thermometer in both the fridge and freezer to know if the temperature stays at or below 40°F.

Have coolers on hand

Coolers are a great help to keep food cold if the power will be out for more than 4 hours. Have a couple on hand along with cubed or crushed ice, or frozen gel packs.

Identify local stores that sell dry ice or block ice

Obtain dry or block ice to keep your refrigerator as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time. 50 pounds of dry ice can keep an 18-cubic-foot freezer cold for 2 days.

During an emergency

Check the temperature

If your fridge stayed at 40°F or colder, or if frozen food still contains ice crystals, it is generally safe to refreeze or cook food.

Items to throw away if power was out for more than 4 hours

- **Meat and dairy:** Raw or cooked meat, poultry, seafood, milk, yogurt, and soft cheeses.
- **Eggs:** Fresh eggs, egg dishes, and custards.
- **Leftovers:** Pizza, soups, stews, and opened canned foods.
- **Produce:** Cut fruits and vegetables.

Symptoms of food poisoning

If you suspect someone has eaten contaminated food, watch for:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Stomach cramps
- Diarrhea

Seek medical help if symptoms are severe or last more than 3 days.

Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible during a power outage to maintain the cold.

Appliance

Status

Safe duration

Refrigerator

Closed

4 hours

Full freezer

Closed

48 hours

Half-full freezer

Closed

24 hours