

SAFETY OF FOOD AFTER A POWER FAILURE

When power is interrupted for a short period of time, it is important to keep the freezer door closed. This helps to prevent food from thawing. Freezers as well as refrigerators should be equipped with thermometers. If a power failure is anticipated (reports of severe storms) set the refrigerator and freezer temperature to a colder setting to build up a cooling reserve.

Foods in the Freezer

With the door closed, food in most freezers will stay frozen for up to 3 days, even in summer. When freezers are in good working condition, thawing will depend on the following:

- A full freezer stays cold longer than one partially full. (24 hours for a half full freezer and 48 hours for a full freezer).
- A freezer filled with meat stays cold longer than a freezer filled with baked goods.
- The colder the food, the longer it will stay frozen.
- A well-insulated freezer keeps food frozen longer than one with little insulation.
- The larger the freezer, the longer food stays frozen.

When Food Has Thawed

Thawing depends on many factors; you may safely refreeze some foods if they still contain ice crystals and if they have been kept at 45°F or less than 2 days. The best practice is to cook these foods for consumption as soon as possible.

When thawing occurs, the following should be considered:

- **Fruits:** Refreeze fruits if they taste and smell good. Fruit that is beginning to ferment is safe to eat, but will have an off-flavor. Such fruit could be used in cooking, but it is not recommended.
- **Frozen Foods and Frozen Dinners:** Do not refreeze frozen foods that have thawed; either cook them for consumption, discard or refreeze after cooking thoroughly.

- **Vegetables:** Do not refreeze thawed vegetables. Bacteria in these foods multiply rapidly. Spoilage may begin before odors develop. Cook them for consumption, discard or refreeze after cooking thoroughly.
- **Meat and Poultry:** Examine each package of thawed meat or poultry. If odor is offensive or questionable, or if the meat temperature has exceeded 45°F then discard. Discard all stuffed poultry. Cook thawed but unspoiled meat and poultry immediately. After cooking, meat can be refrozen or refrigerated for consumption.
- **Fish and Shellfish.** These are extremely perishable. Do not refreeze unless ice crystals remain throughout the package. Seafood may be spoiled, even if it has no offensive odor. Cook thawed seafood for consumption or discard.
- **Ice Cream.** Do not refreeze melted ice cream. Consume it or discard.

If any foods have an offensive or questionable odor, do not consume them, just discard.

Guidelines for Refrigerated Foods After a Power Failure

If the refrigerator door has been kept closed during the power outage and an accurate thermometer registers a temperature of 45°F or less, the contents of your refrigerator will be generally safe to eat. However, if food items taste sour or smell bad, they should be immediately discarded.

If the temperature of the refrigerator is above 45°F for more than four (4) hours, discard all perishable items or cook and consume them immediately.

Most refrigerators will maintain safe temperatures up to twelve (12) hours depending on the fullness. Processed food items as well as uncut fruits and vegetables will last longer. Fish, shellfish, meat and poultry items will spoil quickly so these items should be prepared for consumption immediately. Food

items that smell bad or seem to be discolored should be discarded. Judgments should be applied for all foods. If you remain unsure or uncomfortable about the food item, then discard.

