



Renfrew County and
District Health Unit

FOOD SAFETY

During Emergencies

How to Handle refrigerated and frozen foods during a power failure

Keep refrigerated foods at or below 4°C/40°F and frozen foods at or below -18°C or 0°F. If the power is out, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed. The refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours unopened. A full freezer will keep food frozen for approximately 48 hours, a half empty freezer will keep food frozen for approximately 24 hours if the door is kept closed.

If power is out for a prolonged period of time, obtain ice to keep your refrigerator as cold as possible, or use a cooler and ice to keep refrigerated foods cold. Use a thermometer to check the temperature of your food.

How to handle refrigerated and frozen food after a power failure

Discard food that has been at room temperature for more than two hours. Discard food that has a bad smell or odour, if in doubt throw it out.

Food that has come in contact with flood water

Food containers that are not waterproof and may have come into contact with flood waters should be discarded.

Examples of food containers that are not waterproof and should be discarded:

- Containers with screw caps, snap lids, pull tops, crimped caps
- Cardboard juice and milk containers
- Baby formula containers
- Home canned foods

Handling stored food after a flood

Undamaged, commercially-prepared foods in sealed, unopened, airtight, waterproof cans, jars and pouches can be safely cleaned and disinfected. The following steps must be taken to inspect, clean and disinfect food in waterproof containers:

1. Remove contaminated labels from containers. Be sure to re-label items with the best before date.
2. Wash cans or containers with soap and water and rinse.
3. Disinfect all containers in a solution of 5 ml (1 teaspoon) liquid chlorine bleach in 750 ml (3 cups) water.
4. Air dry all cleaned food cans, jars and pouches.

Cleaning food surfaces after a flood

Food preparation equipment, surfaces (i.e. countertops) and dishes must be properly washed, rinsed and disinfected after contact with flood water:

1. Wash countertops with soap and water. Rinse with clean water.
2. Disinfect all equipment, surfaces and dishes in a solution of 5 ml (1 teaspoon) liquid chlorine bleach in 750 ml (3 cups) water. Ensure all surfaces stay wet for 2 minutes.
3. Allow equipment, surfaces and dishes to air dry.

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or 1-800-267-1097, Ext. 555

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Follow these charts to know when to save and when to throw out, but when in doubt, throw the food out!

FROZEN FOODS

FOOD	ICE CRYSTALS STILL INTACT or THAWED BUT STILL COLD	THAWED – HELD UNDER 40°F (4°C) FOR 2 HOURS or LESS	THAWED – HELD ABOVE 40°F (4°C) FOR OVER 2 HOURS
Beef, Veal, Lamb, Pork Poultry	Refreeze	Cook and serve or cook and refreeze	Discard
Casseroles, stews, pies, combination dishes	Cook and serve immediately or cook and refreeze. Do not refreeze previously cooked dishes.	Cook (or heat thoroughly) and serve immediately	Discard
Dishes containing milk, cream, soft cheeses, eggs	Cook and serve immediately	Discard	Discard
Hard cheese, butter and margarine	Refreeze	Refreeze or refrigerate	Refreeze or refrigerate

REFRIGERATED FOODS

Milk, cream, soft cheeses	Discard 8 hours after power loss.
Fruit juices, opened	Safe, unrefrigerated 1 day. Discard if cloudy, bubbling, fermented, yeasty or moldy.
Eggs (fresh)	Safe, unrefrigerated 5-7 days. Discard if shells are cracked. Cook thoroughly when used.
Eggs (hard boiled in shell)	Discard if held above refrigerator temperature 40°F (4°C) over 2 hours.
Hard cheese, butter and margarine	Safe, unrefrigerated if well wrapped. Discard if mold or rancid odours develop.
Fresh fruit and vegetables	Normally safe as long as they look acceptable. Discard if moldy, yeasty smell or slime develops.
Fresh meats and poultry	Discard if held above refrigerator temperature 40°F (4°C) for over 2 hours. Discard any items contaminated by poultry meat juices.
Lunch meats (deli meat/processed meat)	Discard if held above refrigerator temperature 40°F (4°C) 2 hours or more.
Mayonnaise, opened	Discard 8 hours after power loss
Commercial salad dressing, jams and condiments	May be kept safely unrefrigerated until power return. Discard if moldy.

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