



Food safety during a power failure

Safe food handling and preparation is always important in preventing foodborne illness, but power failure can result in food spoiling due to a lack of temperature control. Follow these safe food-handling tips during a power failure to reduce the risk of foodborne illness:

Frozen Food

Bacteria will not grow on frozen food. If kept closed, a full upright or chest freezer will keep food frozen for up to 48 hrs during a power failure and a half-full freezer will keep the food frozen for about 24 hrs.



- If you know the power will be back on soon, keep the freezer door closed as much as possible to help the food stay colder longer, and put ice in the freezer to help keep it cold.
- If you know that a power failure will last for a long period of time, transport the food to a friend's or family member's freezer if possible.
- Discard any thawed hazardous food items that have remained at room temperature for 2 or more hours. *When in doubt throw it out!*
- Discard any food that has an obvious strange colour or odour.
- If raw food has leaked during thawing, clean and disinfect the areas the food has touched. Do not reuse washcloths until they have been cleaned and disinfected.
- Discard all food items that are cooked/ready to eat that may have been contaminated by raw foods/ juices.
- Food that still contains ice crystals or feels refrigerator-cold can be re-frozen. The quality may change, however the food is still safe.

Dry Goods

- Do not store dry goods on the floor because insects and rodents may get inside.
- Dry items such as cookies, potato chips, etc. do not need to be kept cool.

Refrigerated Food

During a power failure, the refrigerator will keep food cool for 4 to 6 hours, depending on the kitchen temperature and the original temperature of the refrigerator.



- Keep the refrigerator closed as much as possible.
- Use a thermometer to make sure the temperature of hazardous food items stays cold (below 4°C/40°F).
- Add ice packs or bagged ice to the refrigerator to help keep it cool.
- Place securely wrapped packages of raw meat, poultry or fish in the coldest section of your refrigerator.
- A cooler filled with ice will keep hazardous food items temporarily chilled.
- Discard any hazardous food items that have remained at room temperature for 2 or more hours. *When in doubt throw it out!*
- If a power failure has lasted 8 hours or more, and you were not able to keep your refrigerator cold (below 4°C/40°F), discard all hazardous food items that have remained in the refrigerator. *When in doubt, throw it out!*

Ottawa Public Health does not recommend placing food items outdoors to keep cold (e.g. in the snow or cold air) as they can attract animals and can potentially become contaminated. The sun's rays can warm up or even thaw the surface of food items, exposing the products to fluctuations in temperatures and increasing the chances of bacterial growth.

Instead, consider colder locations within your home such as your garage or cold cellar. Use a cooler with a tight fitting lid and ice. Monitor the internal temperature of the food to ensure it has remained at 4°C and below.

When in doubt, throw it out!