

# Help, Power Outage

March 2003 Nutrition Tip  
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Winter storms, traffic accidents, high winds, or system overloads can all cause power outages. Power outages can jeopardize your food supply so here's what to do.



- **Keep the freezer closed.** Don't open the door anymore than necessary to keep the cold air inside. A full freezer will stay at freezing temperatures about 2 days. A half-full freezer about 1 day. If you think your power will be out for several days you can use dry ice to keep the freezer cold.
- **Some foods that have started to thaw can be safely kept.** A thermometer in your freezer is the best way to tell if food is still safe. If the temperature remained below 40 degrees F, the food can be safely refrozen. If you do not have an appliance thermometer, evaluate each food separately. If the food still has ice-crystal it can be refrozen; however, some products will have a change in texture and flavor especially fish, vegetables, and fruits.
- **Refrigerated items will be good for a few hours.** Refrigerated items should be safe if the power is out for no more than a few hours. Again a thermometer in the refrigerator is the best way to determine food safety. If the temperature remained below 40 degrees F, the food should be safe to eat. If the power is out for more than a few hours you can add block ice to keep the foods cool.
- **Appearance and odor are not reliable ways to determine if a food is safe.** Some foods may look and smell fine, but may actually have enough bacteria on them to cause illness. If the food has been at temperatures between 40-140 degrees F for more than 2 hours throw it out. If in doubt throw it out.

<b>Food Item</b> <i>(adapted from Food News For Consumers, USDA FSIS 1989)</i>	<b>held above 40 degrees F for over 2 hours</b>
<b>Dairy</b> Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, yogurt, ice cream, frozen yogurt Butter Margarine Baby formula mixed	<b>Discard</b>  Safe <b>Discard</b>
<b>Eggs</b> fresh, hard-cooked, egg dishes, custards, puddings	<b>Discard</b>
<b>Cheese</b> Hard cheese, processed cheeses Soft cheese, cottage cheese	Safe <b>Discard</b>

<b>Fruits</b>	fruit juices, canned fruits, fresh fruits, dried fruits	Safe
<b>Vegetables</b>	cooked vegetables, vegetable juice, baked potatoes raw vegetables	<b>Discard</b> <b>Discard</b> if above 40 degrees for 6 hours
	Casseroles, soups, and stews	<b>Discard</b>
<b>Meats</b>	fresh or leftover meat, poultry, fish, or seafood, gravy, stuffing, lunchmeats, hotdogs, bacon, sausage, pizza, canned hams	<b>Discard</b>
<b>Pies, Pastry</b>	Cream filled, custard, chiffon, or cheese filled	<b>Discard</b>
	Fruit pies	Safe
	Pie Crust – no filling	Safe
<b>Bread, Cakes, Cookies, Pasta</b>	Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads	Safe
	Refrigerator biscuits, rolls, cookie dough, cooked pasta, pasta salads	<b>Discard</b>
<b>Sauces, Spreads, Jams</b>	Mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish	<b>Discard</b> if above 40 degrees for 6 hours
	Peanut butter, salad dressing, jelly, relish, barbeque sauce, mustard, catsup	Safe