

Power Outage Food Safety Chart

Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. Never taste food to decide whether it is safe.

Core rules

Refrigerator:	about 4 hours if unopened
Full freezer:	about 48 hours if unopened
Half-full freezer:	about 24 hours if unopened
Refrigerator target:	40°F or below
Freezer target:	0°F or below during normal operation
Refreeze:	ice crystals remain or food is 40°F or below
Discard perishables:	above 40°F for more than 2 hours
Hot surroundings:	1-hour limit above 90°F

Refrigerator

- 4 hours or less, started cold, door stayed closed: food should generally remain safe.
- Longer than 4 hours: move perishables to a cooler at 40°F or below before the window expires, or discard.
- Perishable food above 40°F for more than 2 hours: discard.
- Time above 40°F unknown: discard.

Freezer

- Keep the door closed. Full: about 48 hours. Half-full: about 24 hours.
- Ice crystals remain: refreeze or cook, subject to item-specific guidance.
- Fully thawed but 40°F or below: refreeze or cook; quality may decline.
- Perishable food above 40°F for more than 2 hours: discard.
- Soft or melted ice cream and frozen yogurt: discard.

What to Discard After Unsafe Warming

Common refrigerated perishables

- ☐ Raw or cooked meat, poultry, fish, and seafood
- ☐ Milk, cream, yogurt, sour cream, and soft cheese
- ☐ Eggs and egg products
- ☐ Deli meat, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, and refrigerated salads
- ☐ Leftovers, pizza, soups, casseroles, gravy, and stuffing
- ☐ Cooked rice, pasta, potatoes, and vegetables
- ☐ Cut melon, packaged cut greens, opened vegetable juice
- ☐ Cream-filled pastries, custard pies, cheesecake, and quiche

Examples that may remain safe under USDA guidance

- ☐ Hard and processed cheese
- ☐ Butter and margarine
- ☐ Whole fresh fruits and vegetables
- ☐ Bread, rolls, muffins, tortillas, and fruit pies
- ☐ Peanut butter and jelly
- ☐ Mustard, ketchup, pickles, relish, and many high-acid condiments
- ☐ Flour and nuts

Use the official item-specific chart for foods not listed. Discard contamination and uncertainty.

During and After the Outage

During

- ☐ Write down the outage start time
- ☐ Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed
- ☐ Prepare a clean cooler if the outage may exceed 4 hours
- ☐ Use enough ice or gel packs to keep cooler food at 40°F or below
- ☐ Group frozen food together
- ☐ Use an appliance thermometer in each compartment
- ☐ Do not put perishable food outside in snow
- ☐ Use dry ice only with gloves, ventilation, and supplier instructions

When power returns

- ☐ Read the appliance thermometer
- ☐ Check freezer packages separately for ice crystals
- ☐ Measure individual food when needed
- ☐ Separate leaking raw foods
- ☐ Keep, refreeze, cook, or discard according to time and temperature
- ☐ Clean contaminated surfaces and wash hands

Outage began: _____

Power returned: _____

Refrigerator reading: _____

Freezer reading: _____

Food moved to cooler at: _____

Items discarded: _____

Thermometers, Safety, and Help

Keep two appliance thermometers

- ☐ One in the refrigerator
- ☐ One in the freezer
- ☐ Refrigerator at 40°F or below
- ☐ Freezer at 0°F or below
- ☐ Check regularly and after outages

Do not

- ☐ Taste food to decide whether it is safe
- ☐ Assume normal smell means safe
- ☐ Put food outdoors in snow
- ☐ Use cooking to rescue unsafe food
- ☐ Use bare hands on dry ice
- ☐ Keep dry ice in an airtight container

Official help

USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline: 1-888-674-6854. FoodSafety.gov also links to Ask USDA for food-safety questions.

For flood contamination, drinking-water concerns, medication refrigeration, or a local emergency, use the relevant FDA, CDC, health-department, utility, and medical guidance.