

## Keeping Your Food Safe During a Power Outage

### **Be prepared and plan ahead. . .**

- Have a refrigerator thermometer
- Know where you can get dry ice, frozen gel packs, and/or blocks of ice.
- Keep on hand a few days worth of ready-to-eat food that do not require cooking, cooling or refrigeration, which depend on electricity.

### **When the power goes out. . .**

- Note the time the power outage begins.
- Discontinue all cooking operations.
- Discard food products that are in the process of being cooked and have not reached the final cooking temperature.
- Do not place hot food in working refrigerators or freezers, this will raise the temperature inside the refrigerator or freezer and may make more food unusable.
- Maintain hot potentially hazardous food at 135° F or above.
- Use ice or ice baths to rapidly cool small batches of hot food.
- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.

The refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed. If it appears as though the power will not turn on for more than 4 hours, ice, dry, ice, or frozen gel packs may be used to keep potentially hazardous foods at 41° F or below.

- If you are unsure of the time frame in this instance, throw out food that is potentially hazardous .**

Potentially hazardous foods are high protein foods such as meat, eggs, dairy, as well as cooked vegetables and cut melons. These foods support the rapid and progressive growth of disease causing bacteria. Foodborne illnesses can be caused by bacteria that can multiply rapidly in food when the food is held in the temperature danger zone which is 41° F to 135° F.

**Never taste food to determine its safety!** You can't rely on appearance or odor to determine whether food is safe. Always discard any items in the refrigerator that have come into contact with raw meat juices.

### **Once power is restored, determine the safety of your food. . .**

- If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, **check the temperature** when the power comes back on. If the freezer thermometer reads 40° F or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen.
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, **check each package** of food to determine its safety. You can't rely on appearance or odor. If the food **still contains ice crystals** or is 40° F or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook.
- Refrigerated food should be safe as long as the power was out for **no more than 4 hours** and the refrigerator door was kept shut. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, or leftovers) that has been at temperatures above 40° F for 2 hours or more (or 1 hour if temperatures are above 90° F).

**Perishable food such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk, and eggs that are not kept adequately refrigerated or frozen may cause illness if consumed, even when they are thoroughly cooked.**

