

## **Keeping Food Safe During an Emergency**

Did you know that a flood, fire, natural disaster, or the loss of power from high winds, snow, or ice could jeopardize the safety of your food? Knowing how to determine if food is safe and how to keep food safe will help minimize the potential loss of food and reduce the risk of foodborne illness. This fact sheet will help you make the right decisions for keeping your family safe during an emergency.

### **ABCD's of Keeping Food Safe in an Emergency**

Always keep meat, poultry, fish, and eggs refrigerated at or below 40 °F and frozen food at or below 0 °F. This may be difficult when the power is out.

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. Obtain dry or block ice to keep your refrigerator as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic foot full freezer for 2 days. Plan ahead and know where dry ice and block ice can be purchased.

### **Be prepared for an emergency...**

... by having items on hand that don't require refrigeration and can be eaten cold or heated on the outdoor grill. Shelf-stable food, boxed or canned milk, water, and canned goods should be part of a planned emergency food supply. Make sure you have ready-to-use baby formula for infants and pet food. Remember to use these items and replace them from time to time. Be sure to keep a hand-held can opener for an emergency.

Consider what you can do ahead of time to store your food safely in an emergency. If you live in a location that could be affected by a flood, plan your food storage on shelves that will be safely out of the way of contaminated water. Coolers are a great help for keeping food cold if the power will be out for more than 4 hours—have a couple on hand along with frozen gel packs. When your freezer is not full, keep items close together—this helps the food stay cold longer.

Digital, dial, or instant-read food thermometers and appliance thermometers will help you know if the food is at safe temperatures. Keep appliance thermometers in the refrigerator and freezer at all times. When the power is out, an appliance thermometer will always indicate the temperature in the refrigerator and freezer no matter how long the power has been out. The refrigerator temperature should be 40 °F or below; the freezer, 0 °F or lower. If you're not sure a particular food is cold enough, take its temperature with a food thermometer.

### **Refrigerator Foods**

## When to Save and When to Throw It Out

### **FOOD**Held above 40 °F for over 2 hours

#### **MEAT, POULTRY, SEAFOOD**

Raw or leftover cooked meat, poultry, fish, or seafood; soy meat substitutes Discard

Thawing meat or poultry Discard

Meat, tuna, shrimp, chicken, or egg salad Discard

Gravy, stuffing, broth Discard

Lunchmeats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef Discard

Pizza – with any topping Discard

Canned hams labeled "Keep Refrigerated" Discard

Canned meats and fish, opened Discard

#### **CHEESE**

Soft Cheeses: blue/bleu, Roquefort, Brie, Camembert, cottage, cream, Edam, Monterey Jack, ricotta, mozzarella, Muenster, Neufchatel, queso blanco, queso fresco Discard

Hard Cheeses: Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, Parmesan, provolone, Romano Safe

Processed Cheeses Safe

Shredded Cheeses Discard

Low-fat Cheeses Discard

Grated Parmesan, Romano, or combination (in can or jar) Safe

#### **DAIRY**

Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, yogurt, eggnog, soy milk Discard

Butter, margarine Safe

Baby formula, opened	Discard
<b>EGGS</b>	
Fresh eggs, hard-cooked in shell, egg dishes, egg products	Discard
Custards and puddings	Discard
<b>CASSEROLES, SOUPS, STEWS</b>	Discard
<b>FRUITS</b>	
Fresh fruits, cut	Discard
Fruit juices, opened	Safe
Canned fruits, opened	Safe
Fresh fruits, coconut, raisins, dried fruits, candied fruits, dates	Safe
<b>SAUCES, SPREADS, JAMS</b>	Discard if above 50 °F for over 8 hrs.
Opened mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish	
Peanut butter	Safe
Jelly, relish, taco sauce, mustard, catsup, olives, pickles	Safe
Worcestershire, soy, barbecue, Hoisin sauces	Safe
Fish sauces (oyster sauce)	Discard
Opened vinegar-based dressings	Safe
Opened creamy-based dressings	Discard
Spaghetti sauce, opened jar	Discard
<b>BREAD, CAKES, COOKIES,PASTA, GRAINS</b>	
Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads, tortillas	Safe
Refrigerator biscuits,rolls, cookie dough	Discard
Cooked pasta, rice, potatoes	Discard

Pasta salads with mayonnaise or vinaigrette	Discard
Fresh pasta	Discard
Cheesecake	Discard
Breakfast foods –waffles, pancakes, bagels	Safe
<b>PIES, PASTRY</b>	
Pastries, cream filled	Discard
Pies – custard,cheese filled, or chiffon; quiche	Discard
Pies, fruit	Safe
<b>VEGETABLES</b>	
Fresh mushrooms, herbs, spices	Safe
Greens, pre-cut, pre-washed, packaged	Discard
Vegetables, raw	Safe
Vegetables, cooked; tofu	Discard
Vegetable juice, opened	Discard
Baked potatoes	Discard
Commercial garlic in oil	Discard
Potato Salad	Discard

### Frozen Food

When to Save and When To Throw It Out

**FOOD** Still contains ice crystals and feels as cold as if refrigerated  
**Thawed.**  
**Held above 40 °F for over 2 hours**

#### **MEAT, POULTRY, SEAFOOD**

Beef, veal, lamb, pork, and ground

Refreeze

Discard

meats

Poultry and ground poultry                      Refreeze                      Discard

Variety meats (liver, kidney, heart, chitterlings)                      Refreeze                      Discard

Casseroles, stews, soups                      Refreeze                      Discard

Fish, shellfish, breaded seafood products                      Refreeze. However, there will be some texture and flavor loss.                      Discard

**DAIRY**

Milk                      Refreeze. May lose some texture.                      Discard

Eggs (out of shell) and egg products                      Refreeze                      Discard

Ice cream, frozen yogurt                      Discard                      Discard

Cheese (soft and semi-soft)                      Refreeze. May lose some texture.                      Discard

Hard cheeses                      Refreeze                      Refreeze

Shredded cheeses                      Refreeze                      Discard

Casseroles containing milk, cream, eggs, soft cheeses                      Refreeze                      Discard

Cheesecake                      Refreeze                      Discard

**FRUITS**

Juices                      Refreeze                      Refreeze. Discard if mold, yeasty smell, or sliminess develops.

Home or commercially packaged                      Refreeze. Will change texture and flavor.                      Refreeze. Discard if mold, yeasty smell, or sliminess develops.

**VEGETABLES**

Discard after held above

Juices	Refreeze	40 °F for 6 hours.
Home or commercially packaged or blanched	Refreeze. May suffer texture and flavor loss.	Discard after held above 40 °F for 6 hours.
<b>BREADS, PASTRIES</b>		
Breads, rolls, muffins, cakes (without custard fillings)	Refreeze	Refreeze
Cakes, pies, pastries with custard or cheese filling	Refreeze	Discard
Pie crusts, commercial and homemade bread dough	Refreeze. Some quality loss may occur.	Refreeze. Quality loss is considerable.
<b>OTHER</b>		
Casseroles – pasta, rice based	Refreeze	Discard
Flour, cornmeal, nuts	Refreeze	Refreeze
Breakfast items –waffles, pancakes, bagels	Refreeze	Refreeze
Frozen meal, entree, specialty items (pizza, sausage and biscuit, meat pie,convenience foods)	Refreeze	Discard