



**Benton County
Emergency Management**

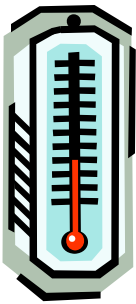
*Emergency preparedness:
one step at a time.*

Tips for Safe Food Storage in an Emergency

Keep Food Safe When the Power Goes Out

The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides important recommendations in advance of the winter storm season in an effort to help minimize the potential for food borne illness, particularly for those emergencies where the power is out.

Following are steps to prepare for a possible weather emergency, including some that you can take when there is advance warning of a severe weather event:



- Keep an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer. An appliance thermometer will indicate the temperature in the refrigerator and freezer in case of a power outage and help determine the safety of the food.
- Make sure the freezer is at or below 0 degrees Fahrenheit and the refrigerator is at or below 40° F.
- Freeze containers of water for ice to help keep food cold in the freezer, refrigerator or coolers after the power is out. Energy officials tell us that this technique can also help your freezer operate more efficiently and using less energy when the power is on.
- Freeze refrigerated items such as leftovers, milk and fresh meat and poultry that you may not need immediately - this helps keep them at a safe temperature longer.
- Plan ahead and know where dry ice and block ice can be purchased.
- Store food on shelves that will be safely out of the way of contaminated water in case of flooding.
- Have coolers on hand to keep refrigerator food cold if the power will be out for more than four hours. Purchase or make ice cubes and store in the freezer for use in the refrigerator or in a cooler. Freeze gel packs ahead of time for use in coolers.
- Group food together in the freezer - this helps the food stay cold longer.

Being prepared is another form of insurance.

Together we're building a more disaster resilient community!

Steps to follow after the weather emergency:

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature. A 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 and the door remains closed.)
- Food may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 40 degrees F or below. Never taste a food to determine its safety!
- Obtain dry or block ice to keep your refrigerator and freezer 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.
- If the power has been out for several days, check the temperature of the freezer with an appliance thermometer or food thermometer. If the food still contains ice crystals or is at 40 degrees F or below, the food is safe.
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, check each package of food to determine its safety. If the food still contains ice crystals, the food is safe.
- Discard refrigerated perishable food such as meat, poultry, fish, soft cheeses, milk, eggs, leftovers and deli items after 4 hours without power.
- Drink only bottled water if flooding has occurred.

When in doubt, throw it out!

- Discard all food that came in contact with flood waters including canned goods.
- Discard wooden cutting boards, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and pacifiers that may have come into contact with flood waters or other contaminants.
- Thoroughly wash all metal pans, ceramic dishes and utensils that came in contact with flood water with hot soapy water and sanitize by boiling them in clean water or by immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water.

For additional information on food safety during an emergency, call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854); for the hearing-impaired (TTY) 1-800-256-7072. The Hotline is staffed by food safety experts weekdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern time. Food safety recordings can be heard 24 hours a day via touch-tone phone.

Information is also available from the FSIS Web site:
<http://www.fsis.usda.gov>



Thank you to: Benton County Office, United States Department of Agriculture