

# FACT SHEET

## FOOD SAFETY DURING A POWER OUTAGE RESIDENTIAL

**1. *Never taste food to determine its safety.***

**2. *What is the first step to keeping foods safe?***

Keep the *refrigerator and freezer doors closed* as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature. The refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will keep the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed. *Buy dry or block ice to keep* the 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 fully-stocked freezer cold for two days.

**3. *May I refreeze the food in the freezer if it thawed or partially thawed?***

You will have to evaluate each item separately. If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, read the temperature when the power comes back on. If the appliance thermometer stored in the *freezer reads 41° 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 the safety. *Remember you can't rely on appearance or odor.* If the food still contains ice crystals; or is 41° F or below; it is safe to refreeze.

**4. *What about food in my refrigerator?***

Discard any perishable foods (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers) that have been above 41 °F for 2 hours. If you plan to eat refrigerated or frozen meat, poultry, fish or eggs while they are still at safe temperatures, it's important that the food is thoroughly cooked to the proper temperature to assure that any foodborne bacteria that may be present is destroyed.

**5. *A snowstorm knocked down the power lines, can I put the food from the refrigerator and freezer out in the snow?***

*No, frozen food can thaw if it is exposed to the sun's rays even when the temperature is very cold.* Refrigerated food may become too warm and foodborne bacteria could grow. The outside temperature could vary hour by hour and the temperature outside will not protect refrigerated and frozen food. Additionally, perishable items could be exposed to unsanitary conditions or to animals. Animals may harbor bacteria or disease; never consume food that has come in contact with an animal. Rather than putting the food outside, consider taking advantage of the cold temperatures by making ice. Fill buckets, empty milk cartons or cans with water and leave them outside to freeze. Then put the homemade ice in your refrigerator, freezer, or coolers.

### **References:**

Keeping food safe during an emergency

[www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/keeping\\_food\\_Safe\\_during\\_an\\_emergency/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/keeping_food_Safe_during_an_emergency/index.asp)

What Consumers Need to Know About Food and Water Safety During Hurricanes, Power Outages, and Floods [www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/fsdisas.html](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/fsdisas.html)