

# Help! The Power Is Out...

Sudden power outages can be **frustrating** and **troublesome**, especially when they are prolonged. Perishable foods should not be held above 40 degrees for more than 2 hours. **If a power outage is 2 hours or less, you need not be concerned**, but how do you save your food when the refrigerator is out for longer times? Being prepared can help. By planning ahead, you can save your perishables.

## What do I need?

- One or more **coolers**. Inexpensive styrofoam coolers can do an excellent job as well.
- **Ice**. Surrounding your food with ice in a cooler will ensure that it will stay cold.
- **Shelf-stable foods**, such as canned goods and powdered or boxed milk. These can be eaten cold or heated on the grill.
- A digital quick-response **thermometer**. A digital thermometer should be a necessity in your kitchen anyway. With these thermometers you can quickly check the internal temperatures of food for doneness and safety.



## What to do...

### Do not open the refrigerator or freezer.

Tell your little ones not to open the door. An unopened refrigerator will keep foods cold enough for a couple of hours at least. A freezer that is half full will hold for up to 24 hours and a full freezer for 48 hours. (See chart on back for more details.)

If it looks like the power outage will be for more than 2-4 hours, pack refrigerated milk, dairy products, meats, fish, poultry, eggs, gravy, stuffing and left-overs into your **cooler** surrounded by **ice**. (See chart on back for more details.)

If it looks like the power outage will be **prolonged**, prepare a cooler with ice for your freezer items,



## Q's and A's

**What if I go to bed and the power is still not on?** Before you go to bed, pack your perishables into your coolers if you haven't already done so and put in as much ice as you can. Also, when you go to bed, leave a bedroom light switched on. When the power goes back on, it will wake you, so you can check the condition of your foods in the freezer. If freezer foods still have ice crystals they can be refrozen.

**What if the power goes out while I'm at work or out of the house and it has been more than a few hours before I get home?** Try to determine how long the power has been out. Check the internal temperature of the food in your refrigerator with your quick-response thermometer. A liquid such as milk or juice is easy to check. Spot check other items like steaks or left-overs also. If the internal temperature is above 40 degrees, it is best to throw it out. (Check the chart on the back) If the food in the freezer is not above 40 degrees and there are still ice crystals, you can refreeze.

**What if the power goes out and comes back on while I am out?** If your freezer is fairly full and you know it was not longer than 24 hours, the food should be OK. There will be loss of quality with refreezing, but the food will be safe. If the refrigerator was out for more than 2-4 hours, you are best to discard the perishables.



**American  
Red Cross**

*We'll be there.*

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# What Should Be Discarded After A Power Outage?



As soon as the power returns, **check temperatures.** If the food in the freezer has ice crystals and is not above 40 degrees you can refreeze. Perishable foods in the refrigerator should not be above **40 degrees F.** for more than two hours. **Use this chart** to see what has to be discarded and what can be kept.

<b>Frozen Foods</b>	<b>Still Contains Ice Crystals. Not Above 40° F</b>	<b>Thawed, Held Above 40° F For Over 2 Hours</b>
<b>Meat and Mixed Dishes:</b>		
Beef, veal, lamb, pork, poultry, ground meat and poultry	REFREEZE	DISCARD
Casseroles with meat, pasta, rice, egg or cheese base, stews, soups, convenience foods, pizza	REFREEZE	DISCARD
Fish, shellfish, breaded seafood products	REFREEZE. MAY BE SOME TEXTURE & FLAVOR LOSS	DISCARD
<b>Dairy:</b>		
Milk	REFREEZE. MAY LOSE SOME QUALITY	DISCARD
Eggs (out of shell) egg products	REFREEZE	DISCARD
Ice cream, frozen yogurt	DISCARD	DISCARD
Cheese (soft and semi soft) cream cheese ricotta	REFREEZE. MAY LOSE SOME TEXTURE	DISCARD
Hard cheese (cheddar Swiss parmesan)	REFREEZE	REFREEZE
<b>Fruits and Vegetables:</b>		
Fruit Juices	REFREEZE	REFREEZE. DISCARD IF MOLD, YEASTY SMELL OR SLIMINESS DEVELOPS.
Home or commercially packaged fruit	REFREEZE. WILL CHANGE TEXTURE & FLAVOR	REFREEZE. DISCARD IF MOLD, YEASTY SMELL OR SLIMINESS DEVELOPS.
Vegetable Juices	REFREEZE	DISCARD IF ABOVE 50° F FOR OVER 8 HOURS
Home or commercially packaged or blanched vegetables	REFREEZE. WILL CHANGE TEXTURE & FLAVOR	DISCARD IF ABOVE 50° F FOR OVER 8 HOURS
<b>Baked Goods Baking Ingredients:</b>		
Flour, cornmeal, nuts	REFREEZE	REFREEZE
Pie Crusts, Breads, rolls, muffins, cakes (no custard fillings)	REFREEZE	REFREEZE
Cakes, pies, pastries with custard or cheese filling, cheesecake	REFREEZE	DISCARD
Commercial and homemade bread dough	REFREEZE. MAY LOSE SOME QUALITY	REFREEZE. CONSIDERABLE QUALITY LOSS
<b>Refrigerator Foods</b>		
	<b>Food Still Cold, Held At 40° F Or Above Under 2 Hours</b>	<b>Held Above 40° F For Over 2 Hours</b>
<b>Dairy/Eggs/Cheese:</b>		
Milk, cream, sour cream buttermilk evaporated milk yogurt	KEEP	DISCARD
Butter, margarine	KEEP	KEEP
Baby Formula, opened	KEEP	DISCARD
Eggs, egg dishes, custards puddings	KEEP	DISCARD
Hard & processed cheeses	KEEP	KEEP
Soft cheeses, cottage cheese	KEEP	DISCARD
<b>Fruits &amp; Vegetables:</b>		
Fruit juices, opened: Canned fruits opened Fresh fruits	KEEP	KEEP
Vegetables, cooked; Vegetable luice opened	KEEP	DISCARD AFTER 6 HOURS
Baked potatoes	KEEP	DISCARD
Fresh mushrooms, herbs spices	KEEP	KEEP
Garlic, chopped in oil or buffer	KEEP	DISCARD
<b>Meat, Poultry, Seafood:</b>		
Fresh or leftover meat, poultry, fish, or seafood	KEEP	DISCARD
Lunchmeats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef	KEEP	DISCARD
Canned meats (NOT labeled "Keep Refrigerated" but refrigerated after opening)	KEEP	DISCARD
Canned hams labeled "Keep Refrigerated"	KEEP	DISCARD
<b>Mixed Dishes, Side Dishes:</b>		
Casseroles soups stews pizza with meat	KEEP	DISCARD
Meat tuna shrimp chicken egg salad	KEEP	DISCARD
Cooked pasta Pasta salads with mayonnaise or vinegar base	KEEP	DISCARD
Gravy stuffing	KEEP	DISCARD
<b>Pies, Breads:</b>		
Cream or cheese filled pastries and pies	KEEP	DISCARD
Fruit pies	KEEP	KEEP
Breads, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads	KEEP	KEEP
Refrigerator biscuits, rolls, cookie dough	KEEP	DISCARD
<b>Sauces, Spreads, Jams:</b>		
Mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish	KEEP	DISCARD IF ABOVE 50° F FOR OVER 8 HOURS
Opened salad dressing, jelly, relish, taco and barbeque sauce, mustard, catsup olives	KEEP	KEEP