

Vanderburgh County Health Department
Food Safety Section

website: www.vanderburghgov.org/health follow the links to Food Safety under "Environmental"

FOOD SAFETY DURING POWER OUTAGES

When there is a power outage:

- Note the time the power outage begins.
- Discontinue all cooking operations on electrical appliances if cooking process is incomplete.
- Do not place hot food in refrigerators or freezers, as this will rapidly raise the temperature inside the refrigerator or freezer and may make more food unusable.
- Discard food products that are in the process of being cooked, but which have not yet reached the final cooking temperature.
- Maintain hot potentially hazardous food at 135°F or above. Food that has reached final cooking temperature may be kept hot (135°F) by the use of Canned Heat in chafing dishes.
- Use ice or ice baths to rapidly cool small batches of hot food.

Information on Potentially Hazardous Foods:

Potentially hazardous foods are those foods, such as high protein foods (meat, egg, dairy) and cooked vegetables, that support the rapid and progressive growth of disease causing bacteria.

Foodborne illnesses can be caused by bacteria that can multiply rapidly in foods when the food is held in the temperature danger zone (41 degrees F to 135 Degrees F).

- Keep refrigerated potentially hazardous foods stored below 41 degrees F.
- Frozen foods must be maintained frozen.
- Hot potentially hazardous food must be maintained at 135 degrees F.

Keep Foods at Safe Temperatures

Freezers

Leave the freezer door closed. A full freezer should keep food safe about two (2) days, and a half -full freezer, about one (1) day. You can safely re-freeze thawed foods that still have ice crystals and are less than 41 degrees F. Dry ice or bags of ice can be added to the freezer if it appears the power will be off for an extended time.

Caution: the use of dry ice may result in the unsafe build-up of carbon dioxide.

Refrigerators

Food in the refrigerator should be safe as long as the power is out no more than about four (4) to six (6) hours. Leave the door closed because every time you open it, needed cold air escapes, allowing the foods inside to reach unsafe temperatures. Discard any potentially hazardous food that has been above 41 degrees F for (4) four hours or more, any non-potentially hazardous food that has reached a temperature of 45 degrees F or higher for any length of time, or has an unusual color, odor, or texture.

When In Doubt, Throw It Out!

Some other things you can do if the power is out for extended periods of time.

- Check with friends and family who might have electricity and ask to store your food in their refrigerator until your power is restored.
- Once your refrigerator reaches 45°F, you shouldn't use the food.
- Once the food in your freezer has thawed out, either cook it immediately or throw it out.
- Long-term, a cooler with ice isn't sufficient in maintaining a safe temperature.
- For short periods of time, if the out door temperature is below freezing you may also want to place food into a cooler or protected container and set it outside, completely avoid setting it in any sun.
- If it appears the power will be off for more than six (6) hours, ice, dry ice, or frozen gel packs may be used to keep potentially hazardous foods at 41°F or below.

The Decision to Discard or Save: The following are examples of foods that can be discarded or saved once power is restored.

Discard

The following foods in refrigerators and freezers should be discarded if kept over four (4) hours at above 41°F or if the temperature exceeds 41°F for any length of time.

- Meat, poultry, fish, eggs and egg substitutes - raw or cooked
- Milk, cream, soft and semi soft cheese
- Casseroles, stews or soups
- Lunch meats and hot dogs
- Creamy-based foods made on-site
- Custard, pumpkin or cheese pies
- Cream-filled pastries
- Cookie dough made with eggs
- Whipped butter
- Cut melons
- Cooked vegetables

Save

The following foods may be kept at room temperature a few days although food quality may be affected.

- Butter or margarine
- Hard and processed cheeses
- Fresh uncut fruits and vegetables
- Dried fruits and coconut
- Opened jars of vinegar-based salad dressings, jelly, relish, taco sauce, barbecue sauce, mustard, ketchup, olives and peanut butter
- Fruit juices
- Fresh herbs and spices
- Fruit pies, breads, rolls, and muffins
- Cakes, except cream cheese frosted or cream-filled
- Flour and nuts

When Power is Restored:

- Identify and discard potentially hazardous foods that may have been above 41°F or below 135°F for four (4) or more hours or above 41°F for any length of time.
- Check the internal food temperatures using a food thermometer and record the temperature.
- If practical, separate packages of food in refrigeration units and freezers to allow for faster recooling.
- The refreezing of food may affect the quality and should be used within a short period of time.

As always, when in doubt, throw it out.

Other Food Safety Tips

REFRIGERATOR FOODS *When to Save and When to Throw It Out*

FOOD	Held above 40°F for over 2 hours
MEAT, POULTRY, SEAFOOD	
Fresh or leftover meat, poultry, fish, or seafood	Discard
Thawing meat or poultry	Discard
Meat, tuna, shrimp, chicken, or egg salad	Discard
Gravy, stuffing	Discard
Lunchmeats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef	Discard
Canned meats, opened	Discard
Pizza - with any topping	Discard
Canned hams labeled "Keep Refrigerated"	Discard
CHEESE	
Soft Cheeses: blue/bleu, Roquefort, Brie, Camembert, cottage, cream, Edam, Monterey Jack, ricotta, mozzarella, Muenster, Neufchatel	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	Discard
Butter, margarine	Safe
Baby formula, opened	Discard
EGGS	
Fresh eggs, hard-cooked in shell, egg dishes, egg products	Discard
Custards and puddings	Discard
CASSEROLES, SOUPS, STEWS	
Discard	
FRUITS	
Fresh fruits, cut	Discard
Fruit juices, opened	Safe
Canned fruits, opened	Safe

Fresh fruits, coconut, raisins, dried fruits, candied fruits, dates	Safe
SAUCES, SPREADS, JAMS	
Opened mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish	Discard if above 50°F for more than eight hours.
Peanut butter	Safe
Jelly; relish; taco, barbecue & soy sauce; mustard; catsup; olives	Safe
Worcestershire sauce	Discard
Fish sauces (oyster sauce)	Discard
Opened vinegar-based dressings	Safe
Opened creamy-based dressings	Discard
Spaghetti sauce, opened jar	Discard
BREAD, CAKES, COOKIES, PASTA	
Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads	Safe
Refrigerator biscuits, rolls, cookie dough	Discard
Cooked pasta, spaghetti	Discard
Pasta salads with mayonnaise or vinaigrette	Discard
Fresh pasta	Discard
Cheesecake	Discard
Breakfast foods - waffles, pancakes, bagels	Safe
PIES, PASTRY	
Pastries, cream filled	Discard
Pies - custard, cheese filled, or chiffon	Discard
Pies, fruit	Safe
VEGETABLES	
Fresh mushrooms, herbs, spices	Safe
Greens, pre-cut, pre-washed, packaged	Discard
Vegetables, raw	Safe
Vegetables, cooked	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 more than two hours
MEAT, POULTRY, SEAFOOD		
Beef, veal, lamb, pork, and ground meats	Refreeze	Discard
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		
Juices	Refreeze	Discard after held above 40°F for six hours.
Home or commercially packaged or blanched	Refreeze. May suffer texture and flavor loss.	Discard after held above 40°F for six hours.
BREADS, PASTRIES		
Breads, rolls, muffins, cakes (without	Refreeze	Refreeze

custard fillings)		
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.
OTHER		
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