

KNOW THE FACTS!

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.

ABCs 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.



When to save and when to throw it out

Refrigerator Foods	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
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	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
BREAD, CAKES, COOKIES, PASTA, GRAINS	
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
PIES, PASTRY	
Pastries, cream filled	Discard
Pies—custard, cheese filled, or chiffon; quiche	Discard
Pies, fruit	Safe
VEGETABLES	
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, potato salad & commercial garlic in oil	Discard



**HAMILTON COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH**

PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

250 William Howard Taft Road, 2nd Floor
Cincinnati, OH 45219
Phone 513.946.7800 Fax 513.946.7890
hamiltoncountyhealth.org

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Frozen Food

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 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 6 hours.



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Home or commercially packaged or blanched	Refreeze. May suffer texture and flavor loss.	Discard after held above 40 °F for 6 hours.
BREADS, PASTRIES		
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.
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

Questions

For more information, contact our Environmental Health Division at (513) 946-7800. For additional food safety information about meat, poultry, or egg products, call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1 (800) 535-4555; Washington, DC area, (202) 720-3333; 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 using a touch-tone phone.

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



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