

# Handling Food and Drinks when Losing Power

## Freezer Items

When a power loss happens, a full, well-functioning freezer should be able to keep foods frozen for 2 days *if the freezer temperature was at 0 degrees F or below*. A freezer that is only half full will keep foods frozen for about 1 day.

If there is an appliance thermometer in the freezer, check the temperature when you get power. If the temperature is 40 degrees F or lower, the food is safe to eat and may be refrozen. Remember that some foods may lose their texture or flavor if they are refrozen.

If the food in your freezer has begun to thaw, you will need to check each item to see if it is safe to eat. The chart below can help you decide which foods and drinks you can keep safely. *Do not rely on taste or smell to decide if something is safe to eat!*

Food/Beverage type	Has ice crystals	Has thawed and has been at 40 degrees F or warmer for 2 hours or longer
Poultry, pork and meat (including ground meet and organ meat)	Refreeze	Throw out
Casseroles, soups and stews	Refreeze	Throw out
Fish, shellfish and breaded seafood products	Refreeze (may be a loss of texture or flavor)	Throw out
Milk	Refreeze	Throw out
Egg products	Refreeze	Throw out
Ice cream and frozen yogurt	Throw out	Throw out
Cheese (soft and semi-soft)	Refreeze	Throw out
Hard cheese	Refreeze	Refreeze
Shredded cheese	Refreeze	Throw out
Cheesecake	Refreeze	Throw out

Food/Beverage type	Has ice crystals	Has thawed and has been at 40 degrees F or warmer for 2 hours or longer
Fruit juice	Refreeze	Throw out if moldy, has yeasty smell or slime
Vegetable juice	Refreeze	Throw out if temperature is above 40 degrees for more than 6 hours
Fruits that have been home or commercially packaged	Refreeze (may be changes in texture and flavor)	Throw out if moldy or has yeasty smell or slime
Vegetables that have been packaged at home or done commercially	Refreeze (may lose some texture and flavor)	Throw out if temperature is above 40 degrees for more than 6 hours
Breads, rolls, muffins and cakes without custard fillings	Refreeze	Refreeze
Pie crusts and bread dough (commercial or homemade)	Refreeze (may lose some quality)	May be refrozen (quality will be poor)
Flour, cornmeal and nuts	Refreeze	Refreeze
Waffles, pancakes and bagels	Refreeze	Refreeze
Frozen meals, TV dinners and other convenience foods	Refreeze	Throw out

### Additional Freezer Storage Tips

- ◆ Group packages together to help keep items cold.
- ◆ Place meat and poultry together on the lower shelves of the freezer so their juices won't contaminate other foods if they begin to thaw.
- ◆ Open the freezer only when necessary, working quickly when the door is open.

### Refrigerator Items

Food and drinks in the refrigerator should be safe to consume as long as the power has not been out for more than 4 hours. Keep the refrigerator door closed as much as possible.

If the refrigerator temperature has been **40 degrees F or higher for 2 hours or longer, the following foods should be thrown out:**

- ◆ Any meat, fish, poultry, seafood, pork, eggs or soy (including dishes and salads)
- ◆ Lunchmeat, hot dogs, bacon, sausage or dried beef
- ◆ Pizza
- ◆ Canned hams labeled "Keep Refrigerated"
- ◆ Opened canned meats and fish
- ◆ Soft cheese (Monterey, Jack, Mozzarella, Brie, blue, cottage, cream, ricotta, Neufachatel and queso blanco fresco)
- ◆ Shredded cheese

- ◆ Low-fat cheese
- ◆ Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, yogurt, eggnog or soy milk
- ◆ Opened creamy-based salad dressings (except for opened jars of mayonnaise, tartar sauce and horse radish, which should be **thrown out after 8 hours if temperature reaches 50 degrees F**)
- ◆ Opened baby formula
- ◆ Eggs (fresh, hard-boiled, egg dishes or any egg products)
- ◆ Custards and puddings
- ◆ Casseroles, soups and stews
- ◆ Fresh fruit that has been cut up
- ◆ Opened jars of spaghetti sauce
- ◆ Refrigerator biscuits, rolls and cookie dough
- ◆ Cooked pasta rice and potatoes
- ◆ Pasta salads with mayonnaise, or with salad or vinaigrette dressings
- ◆ Fresh pasta
- ◆ Cream-filled pastries, custards, cheese-filled or chiffon pies, and cheesecake
- ◆ Pre-cut, pre-washed and packaged salad greens
- ◆ Cooked vegetables and tofu
- ◆ Opened containers of vegetable juice
- ◆ Baked potatoes and potato salad
- ◆ Commercial garlic in oil

*The following can be kept above 40 degrees for 2 to 3 days* (but end up losing taste and texture):

- ◆ Grated Parmesan or Romano cheese (in a can or jar)
- ◆ Butter and margarine that is wrapped or in a covered container
- ◆ Raw fruits and vegetables (that have not been cut up)
- ◆ Peanut butter, jelly, relish, taco sauce, mustard, catsup, olives and pickles
- ◆ Worcestershire, soy and barbeque sauces
- ◆ Vinegar-based dressings
- ◆ Dried and candied fruits and dates
- ◆ Hard cheese (Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, Parmesan, provolone and Romano)
- ◆ Processed cheese
- ◆ Opened canned fruits
- ◆ Opened fruit juices
- ◆ Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads and tortillas
- ◆ Waffles, pancakes and bagels
- ◆ Fruit pies
- ◆ Fresh mushrooms, herbs and spices

Adapted from: *Emergency Food and Water Supplies*, Texas Cooperative Extension and *Keeping Food Safe During an Emergency*, USDA.

[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News\\_&\\_Events/NR\\_091905\\_01/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/NR_091905_01/index.asp)

Reviewed by Dr. Kevin Gillespie, USDA FSIS.

Produced by AgriLife Communications and Marketing, The Texas A&M System  
Extension publications can be found on the Web at: <http://AgriLifebookstore.org>

Visit the Texas AgriLife Extension Service at <http://AgriLifeextension.tamu.edu>

Educational programs of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Edward G. Smith, Director, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, The Texas A&M System.