

## **PRESS RELEASE RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR A HEALTHY RETURN FOOD SAFETY**

### **Food Safety**

If the power is out for less than 2 hours, then the food in your refrigerator and freezer will be safe to consume. While the power is out, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to keep food cold for longer.

If the power is out for longer than 2 hours, follow the guidelines below:

- For the Freezer section: A freezer that is half full will hold food safely for up to 24 hours. A full freezer will hold food safely for 48 hours. Do not open the freezer door if you can avoid it.
- For the Refrigerated section: Pack milk, other dairy products, meat, fish, eggs, gravy, and spoilable leftovers into a cooler surrounded by ice. Inexpensive Styrofoam coolers are fine for this purpose.
- Use a food thermometer to check the temperature of your food right before you cook or eat it. Throw away any food that has a temperature of more than 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 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 the chart below to see what has to be discarded and what can be kept.

**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.

**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.

**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.

| <b>Frozen Foods</b>   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Meat and Mixed Dishes:</b>   | <b>Still Contains Ice Crystals. Not Above 40° F</b> | <b>Thawed, Held Above 40° F For Over 2 Hours</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  | Discard  |
| <b>Dairy:</b>   | <b>Still Contains Ice Crystals. Not Above 40° F</b> | <b>Thawed, Held Above 40° F For Over 2 Hours</b>               |
| Milk  | Refreeze  | Discard  |
| Eggs (out of shell) egg products  | Refreeze  | Discard  |
| Ice cream, frozen yogurt  | Discard   | Discard  |
| Cheese (soft and semi soft) cream cheese ricotta  | Refreeze  | Discard  |
| Hard cheese (cheddar Swiss parmesan)  | Refreeze  | Refreeze   |
| <b>Fruits and Vegetables:</b>   | <b>Still Contains Ice Crystals. Not Above 40° F</b> | <b>Thawed, Held Above 40° F For Over 2 Hours</b>               |
| Fruit Juices  | Refreeze  | Refreeze. Discard if mold, yeasty smell or sliminess develops. |

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| Home or commercially packaged fruit                              | Refreeze  | Refreeze. Discard if mold, yeasty smell or sliminess develops. |
| Vegetable Juices   | Refreeze  | Discard if above 50° for over 8 hours.                         |
| Home or commercially packaged or blanched vegetables             | Refreeze  | Discard if above 50° for over 8 hours.                         |
| <b>Baked Goods Baking Ingredients:</b>                           | <b>Still Contains Ice Crystals. Not Above 40° F</b> | <b>Thawed, Held Above 40° F For Over 2 Hours</b>               |
| Fruit Juices   | Refreeze  | Refreeze   |
| Flour, cornmeal, nuts  | Refreeze  | Refreeze   |
| Pie Crusts, Breads, rolls, muffins, cakes (no custard fillings)  | Refreeze  | Discard if above 50° for over 8 hours.                         |
| Cakes, pies, pastries with custard or cheese filling, cheesecake | Refreeze  | Discard  |
| Commercial and homemade bread dough                              | Refreeze  | Refreeze   |

## Refrigerator Foods

| <b>Dairy/Eggs/Cheese:</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> |
|---|--|--|
| 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>                           | <b>Food Still Cold, Held At 40° F Or Above Under 2 Hours</b> | <b>Held Above 40° F For Over 2 Hours</b> |
| Fruit juices, opened; Canned fruits, opened; Fresh fruits | Keep   | Keep                                     |
| Vegetables, cooked; Vegetable juice opened                | Keep   | Discard after 6 hours                    |
| Baked potatoes  | Keep   | Discard                                  |
| Fresh mushrooms, herbs spices                             | Keep   | Keep                                     |
| Garlic, chopped in oil or butter                          | Keep   | Discard                                  |
| <b>Meat, Poultry, Seafood:</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> |
| Fresh or leftover meat, poultry, fish, or seafood         | Keep   | Discard                                  |
| Lunchmeats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef          | Keep   | Discard                                  |
| Canned meats <b>NOT</b> labeled                           | Keep   | Discard                                  |

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| "Keep Refrigerated" but refrigerated after opening  |  |  |
| Canned hams labeled "Keep Refrigerated"   | Keep   | Discard                                  |
| <b>Mixed Dishes, Side Dishes:</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> |
| Casseroles, soups, stews, pizza with meat   | Keep   | Discard                                  |
| Meat, tuna, shrimp, chicken, or egg salad   | Keep   | Discard                                  |
| Cooked pasta Pasta salads with mayonnaise or vinegar base   | Keep   | Discard                                  |
| Gravy stuffing  | Keep   | Discard                                  |
| <b>Pies, Breads:</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> |
| 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>   | <b>Food Still Cold, Held At 40° F Or Above Under 2 Hours</b> | <b>Held Above 40° F For Over 2 Hours</b> |
| Mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish   | Keep   | Discard                                  |
| Opened salad dressing, jelly, relish, taco and barbeque sauce, mustard, catsup olives   | Keep   | Keep                                     |
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