

Power Outages

Sudden power outages can be frustrating and troublesome, especially when they last a long time.

If a power outage is two hours or less, don't be concerned about losing your perishable foods. For prolonged power outages, though, there are steps you can take to minimize food loss and to keep all members of your household as comfortable as possible.



Crisis and Disaster

How Do I Prepare for a Power Outage?

To help preserve your food, keep the following supplies in your home:

- **One or more coolers.** An inexpensive set of styrofoam coolers will work well.
- **Ice.** Surrounding your food with ice in a cooler or in the refrigerator will keep food colder for a longer period of time during a prolonged power outage.
- **A digital quick-response thermometer.** With these thermometers you can quickly check the internal temperatures of food to ensure they are cold enough to use safely.

Create an emergency supply kit with these supplies in case of a prolonged or widespread power outage:

- **Water:** One gallon per person, per day. Keep a two-week supply of water for each person in your home. Have a three-day supply of water ready to go in case of evacuation.
- **Flashlight.** Do not use candles during a power outage due to the extreme risk of fire.
- **Battery-powered or hand-crank radio**
- **Extra batteries**
- **First aid kit**
- **Medications** (seven-day supply)
- **Multi-purpose tool**
- **Sanitation & personal hygiene items**
- **Copies of personal documents** (list of medications and pertinent medical information, deed/lease to home, birth certificates, insurance policies)
- **Cell phone with chargers**
- **Emergency contact information** for local resources and family members
- **Extra cash**

Other important tips to help you prepare for a power outage:

- If someone in your home depends on electric-powered, life-sustaining equipment, remember to include backup power in your survival and evacuation plans.
- Keep a non-cordless telephone in your home. It is likely to work even when the power is out.
- Keep your car's gas tank full.

What Should I Do During a Power Outage?

- Keep food as safe as possible.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. Use perishable food from the fridge first. An unopened refrigerator will keep foods cold for about four hours.
- Then use food from the freezer. A full freezer will keep the temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed.
- Use your non-perishable foods and staples after using food from the refrigerator and freezer.

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Power Outages *(continued)*

- If it looks like the power outage will continue beyond a day, prepare a cooler with ice for your freezer items.
- Keep food in a dry, cool spot and keep it covered at all times.

Electrical equipment:

- Turn off and unplug all unnecessary electrical equipment, including any appliances or electronics you were using when the power went out. When power comes back on, surges or spikes can damage equipment.
- Leave one light turned on so you'll know when the power comes back.
- Eliminate any unnecessary travel, especially by car. Traffic lights will be out and roads will be congested.

Using generators safely:

- When using a portable generator, connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator. Do not connect a portable generator to a home's electrical system.
- If you are considering getting a generator, get advice from a licensed, qualified professional, such as an electrician. Make sure that the generator you purchase is rated for the amount of power that you think you will need.

What Should I Do When the Power Comes Back On?

Do not touch any electrical power lines and keep your family away from them. Report downed power lines to the appropriate officials in your area.

Throw out unsafe food.

- Throw away any food that has been exposed to temperatures 40°F (4°C) for two hours or more or that has an unusual odor, color or texture. When in doubt, throw it out!
- Never taste food or rely on appearance or odor to determine its safety. Some foods may look and smell fine, but if they have been at room temperature too long, illnesses-causing bacteria can start growing quickly. Some types of bacteria produce food-borne toxins that cannot be destroyed by cooking.

- If food in the freezer is colder than 40°F and has ice crystals on it, you can refreeze it.
- If you are not sure if food is cold enough, take its temperature with the food thermometer.
- Throw out any foods (meat, poultry, fish, eggs and leftovers) that have been exposed to temperatures higher than 40°F (4°C) for two hours or more, and any food that has an unusual odor, color or texture, or feels warm to the touch.

Caution: Carbon monoxide kills.

- Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, garage, or any partially enclosed area. Locate the unit away from doors, windows and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.
- The primary hazards to avoid when using alternate sources for electricity, heating or cooking are: carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock and fire.
- Install carbon monoxide alarms in central locations on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas to provide early warning of accumulating carbon monoxide.
- If the carbon monoxide alarm sounds, move quickly to a fresh air location outdoors or by an open window or door.
- Call for help from the fresh air location and remain there until emergency personnel arrive to assist you.

Let Your Family and Friends Know You're Safe.

If your community experiences a disaster, register yourself on the [American Red Cross Safe and Well Listing](#) website to let your family and friends know you are safe. If you don't have Internet access, you can call their toll-free line to register yourself and your family.

Red Cross Safe and Well Listing:

- <https://SafeAndWell.communityos.org>
- www.RedCross.org
- 1-866-GET-INFO

Source:
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