

## Keeping Food Safe during an Emergency

This information is taken from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA): Food Safety and Inspection Service.

[www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/Emergency\\_preparedness\\_Fact\\_Sheets/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Emergency_preparedness_Fact_Sheets/index.asp)

### Steps to follow to prepare for a possible weather emergency:

- Keep an appliance *thermometer* in the **refrigerator** and **freezer**. An appliance thermometer will indicate the temperature inside the refrigerator and **freezer** in case of a power outage and help determine the safety of the food.
- Make sure the **freezer** is at 0°F (-18 C) or below and the **refrigerator** is at 40°F (5 C) or below.
- Freeze containers of water for ice to help keep food cold in the **freezer, refrigerator** or coolers after the power is out.
- Freeze refrigerated items such as leftovers, milk and fresh meat and poultry that you may not need immediately — this helps keep them at a safe temperature longer.
- Plan ahead and know where dry ice and block ice can be purchased.
- Have coolers on hand to keep **refrigerator** food cold if the power will be **out for more than 4 hours**. Purchase or make ice cubes and store in the **freezer** for use in the **refrigerator** or in a cooler. Freeze gel packs ahead of time for use in coolers.
- Group food together in the **freezer** - this helps the food stay cold longer.
- Store food on shelves that will be safely out of the way of contaminated water in case of flooding.

### Steps to follow after the weather emergency:

- 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) and the door remains closed.
- **Discard** refrigerated perishable food such as meat, poultry, fish, soft cheeses, milk, eggs, leftovers and deli items *after 4 hours without power*.
- Food may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 40°F (5 C) or below when checked with a food thermometer.
- Never taste a food to determine its safety!
- Obtain dry or block ice to keep your **refrigerator and freezer** 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.
- If the power has been out for several days, check the temperature of the freezer with an appliance thermometer. If the appliance thermometer reads 40°F (5 C) or below, the food is safe to refreeze.

- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, check each package of food to determine its safety. If the food still contains ice crystals, the food is safe.
- Discard any food that is not in a waterproof container if there is any chance that it has come into contact with flood water. Discard wooden cutting boards, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and pacifiers.
- Thoroughly wash all metal pans, ceramic dishes and utensils that came in contact with flood water with hot soapy water and sanitize by boiling them in clean water or by immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of drinking water.
- Undamaged, commercially prepared foods in all-metal cans and retort pouches (for example, flexible, shelf-stable juice or seafood pouches) can be saved. Follow the *Steps to Salvage All-Metal Cans and Retort Pouches* in the publication "Keeping Food Safe During an Emergency" at: [www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/Keeping\\_Food\\_Safe\\_During\\_an\\_Emergency/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Keeping_Food_Safe_During_an_Emergency/index.asp)
- Use bottled water that has not been exposed to flood waters. If bottled water is not available, tap water can be boiled for safety. For more information on drinking water safely during weather emergencies, access the FSIS publication "Keeping Food Safe During an Emergency" at: [www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/Keeping\\_Food\\_Safe\\_During\\_an\\_Emergency/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Keeping_Food_Safe_During_an_Emergency/index.asp)
- **When in Doubt; Throw it Out!**

Emergency Management Ontario website: <http://www.getprepared.gc.ca>