



# Region F Public Health Press Release

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Regional Health Departments Food Safety Recommendations

Recent power outages within the area have caused many citizens to question the safety of their food. The Region F Health Departments recommend the following state guidelines to be used to determine if household food is safe.

- **Measure the Temperature:** Keep an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer at all times to see if food is being stored at safe temperatures (34 to 45°F for the refrigerator, 0°F or below for the freezer.) The safety of foods in the refrigerator and freezer is determined by how cold they are kept. A majority of foodborne illnesses are caused by bacteria that multiply rapidly at temperatures above 45°F.
- **Keep the Freezer Door Closed:** A full freezer should keep food safe approximately for two days; a half-full freezer will keep food safe for about a day. Add bags of ice or dry ice to the freezer if it appears the power will be off for an extended period of time. You can safely refreeze thawed foods that still contain ice crystals or feel cold to the touch.
- **Refrigerated Items:** These foods should be safe as long as the power is out for less than four-six hours. Discard any perishable food that has been above 45°F for two hours or more and any food that has an unusual odor, color or texture. When in doubt, throw it out. Additionally, when possible, leave the refrigerator door closed. If it appears the power will be off for more than six hours, transfer refrigerated perishable food to an insulated cooler filled with ice or frozen gel packs. Keep a thermometer in the cooler to be sure the food stays at 45°F or below.
- **Never Taste Food to Determine Its Safety-** Some foods may look and smell fine, but if they've been at room temperature longer than two hours, bacteria that can cause foodborne illnesses can begin to multiply very rapidly. Some types will produce toxins, which are not destroyed by cooking and can possibly cause illnesses.

Besides following these guidelines, it is always important to use proper cooking temperatures when preparing any food items. Ground meats must be cooked to at least 155°F for 15 seconds, poultry products must be cooked to 165°F for 15 seconds, and products such as fish, pork, and beef steaks must be cooked to at least 145°F for 15 seconds.

For more information or for further questions please contact individual area Health Departments.

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# POWER OUT CHART

Use the following charts to decide which foods are safe to eat when the power is restored.

## Refrigerator Foods

### When to Save and When to Throw It Out

FOOD	Held above 45 °F for over 2 hours
<b>MEAT, POULTRY, SEAFOOD</b> Raw or leftover cooked meat, poultry, fish, or seafood; soy meat substitutes, gravy, stuffing, broth, lunchmeats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef	Discard
<b>CHEESE</b> Soft Cheeses: blue/bleu, Roquefort, Brie, Camembert, cottage, cream, Edam, Monterey Jack, ricotta, mozzarella, Muenster, Neufchatel, Queso blanco fresco, Processed Cheeses, Shredded Cheeses, Low-fat Cheeses	Discard
Hard Cheeses: Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, Parmesan, provolone, Romano, Grated Parmesan, Romano, or combination (in can or jar)	Safe
<b>DAIRY</b> Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, yogurt, eggnog, soy milk, Baby formula, opened	Discard
Butter, margarine	Safe
<b>EGGS</b> Fresh eggs, hard-cooked in shell, egg dishes, egg products, Custards and puddings	Discard
<b>CASSEROLES, SOUPS, STEWS</b>	Discard
<b>FRUITS</b> Fresh fruits, cut	Discard
Fruit juices, opened, Canned fruits, opened, Fresh fruits, coconut, raisins, dried fruits, candied fruits, dates	Safe
<b>SAUCES, SPREADS, JAMS</b> Opened mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish	Discard if above 50 °F for over 8 hrs.
Peanut butter, Jelly, relish, taco sauce, mustard, catsup, olives, pickles, Worcestershire, soy, barbecue, Hoisin sauces, Opened vinegar-based dressings	Safe
Fish sauces (oyster sauce), Opened creamy-based dressings, Spaghetti sauce, opened jar	Discard
<b>BREAD, CAKES, COOKIES, PASTA, GRAINS</b> Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads, tortillas, Breakfast foods –waffles, pancakes, bagels	Safe
Refrigerator biscuits, rolls, cookie dough, Cooked pasta, rice, potatoes, Pasta salads with mayonnaise or vinaigrette, Fresh pasta, Cheesecake	Discard
<b>PIES, PASTRY</b> Pastries, cream filled, Pies – custard, cheese filled, or chiffon; quiche	Discard
Pies, fruit	Safe
<b>VEGETABLES</b> Fresh mushrooms, herbs, spices, Vegetables, raw	Safe
Greens, pre-cut, pre-washed, packaged, Vegetables, cooked; tofu, Vegetable juice, opened, Baked potatoes, Commercial garlic in oil, Potato Salad	Discard



# Frozen Food

## When to Save and When To Throw It Out

FOOD	Still contains ice crystals and feels as cold as if refrigerated	Thawed. Held above 45 °F for over 2 hours
<b>MEAT, POULTRY, SEAFOOD</b> Beef, veal, lamb, pork, and ground meats, Poultry and ground poultry, Variety meats (liver, kidney, heart, chitterlings), Casseroles, stews, soups	Refreeze	Discard
Fish, shellfish, breaded seafood products	Refreeze. However, there will be some texture and flavor loss.	Discard
<b>DAIRY</b> Milk, Cheese (soft and semi-soft)	Refreeze. May lose some texture.	Discard
Eggs (out of shell) and egg products	Refreeze	Discard
Ice cream, frozen yogurt	Discard	Discard
Hard cheeses	Refreeze	Refreeze
Shredded cheeses, Casseroles containing milk, cream, eggs, soft cheeses, Cheesecake	Refreeze	Discard
<b>FRUITS</b> 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.
<b>VEGETABLES</b> Juices	Refreeze	Discard after held above 45 °F for 6 hours.
Home or commercially packaged or blanched	Refreeze. May suffer texture and flavor loss.	Discard after held above 45 °F for 6 hours.
<b>BREADS, PASTRIES</b> 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.
<b>OTHER</b> 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

Sources:

1. Clemson Extension, Home and Garden Information Center. Food Safety in Power Outages.

<http://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheets/HGIC3760.htm>

2. USDA/FSIS (2006), Keeping Food Safe During and Emergency.

[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/keeping\\_food\\_safe\\_during\\_an\\_emergency/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/keeping_food_safe_during_an_emergency/)