



Food Safety during severe weather events

The Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) recommends that consumers take the following steps to reduce food waste and the risk of foodborne illness during severe weather events.

Steps to follow if the power goes out:

- Keep appliance thermometers in both the refrigerator and the freezer to ensure that temperatures remain food-safe during a power outage. Safe temperatures are 40 degrees F or lower in the refrigerator and 0 degrees F or lower in the freezer.
- Freeze water in one-quart plastic storage bags or small containers prior to a storm. These containers are small enough to fit around the food in the refrigerator and freezer to help keep food cold. Remember, water expands when it freezes, so don't overfill the containers.
- Freeze refrigerated items such as leftovers, milk and fresh meat and poultry that you may not need immediately. Doing this helps keep them at a safe temperature longer.
- Know where you can get dry ice or block ice.
- Have coolers on hand to keep refrigerator food cold if the power will be out for more than four hours.
- Group foods together in the freezer. This "igloo" effect helps the food stay cold longer.
- Keep a few days' worth of ready-to-eat foods on hand that do not require cooking or cooling.
- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. A refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours if the door is kept closed. A full freezer will hold its temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours if half-full).
- Place meat and poultry to one side of the freezer or on a tray to prevent cross-contamination of thawing juices.
- Use dry or block ice to keep the refrigerator as cold as possible during an extended power outage. Fifty pounds of dry ice should keep a fully stocked 18-cubic-foot freezer cold for two days.