

August 3, 2015

[Michigan State University Extension](#) advises consumers that food safety can be a major concern for people during an outage, especially when the electric company can't give you an estimated time for when the power will be back on. The [United States Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA) recommends the following tips to follow:

- **Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.**
  - The refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened.
  - A full freezer will keep the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed.
  - Buy dry or block ice to keep the refrigerator 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 fully-stocked freezer cold for two days.
- If you plan to eat refrigerated or frozen meat, poultry, fish or eggs while it is still at safe temperatures, it's important that each item is thoroughly cooked to the proper temperature to assure that any foodborne bacteria that may be present is destroyed. However, if at any point the food was above 40 degrees Fahrenheit for two hours or more, discard it.
- Wash fruits and vegetables with water from a safe source before eating.



Once power is restored you will need to determine the safety of your food. Here's how:

## MSU EXTENSION

- If an appliance thermometer was kept in the refrigerator or freezer, check the temperature when the power comes back on. If the freezer thermometer reads 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen.
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, check each package of food to determine its safety. You can't rely on appearance or odor. If the food still contains ice crystals, it is safe to refreeze or cook.
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the refrigerator, you will need to evaluate each item separately. **Use this chart from [Foodsafety.gov](http://Foodsafety.gov) to determine what is safe to keep and what should be discarded.**

Keep in mind that perishable food such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk and eggs that are not kept adequately refrigerated or frozen may cause a [foodborne illness](#) if consumed, even when they are thoroughly cooked. Following these guidelines can help ensure that no one will become sick from tainted foods.

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