

# FOOD

## Suggested Emergency Food Supplies

The following items are suggested when selecting emergency food supplies. You may already have many of these on hand.

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables and a can opener
- Protein or fruit bars
- Dry cereal or granola
- Peanut butter
- Dried fruit
- Nuts
- Crackers
- Canned juices
- Non-perishable pasteurized milk
- High energy foods
- Vitamins
- Food for infants
- Comfort/stress foods

## Food Safety and Sanitation

Flood, fire, natural disaster or the loss of power from high winds, snow or ice could jeopardize the safety of your food. **Knowing what to do before and after an emergency** can help you reduce your risk of illness and minimize the amount of food that may be lost due to spoilage.

Power outages can occur at any time of the year and it may take from a few hours to several days for electricity to be restored to residential areas. Without electricity or a cold source, food stored in refrigerators and freezers can become unsafe. Bacteria in food grow rapidly at temperatures between 40 and 140 °F, and if these foods are consumed, people can become very sick.

### Do:

- Keep food in covered containers.

- Keep cooking and eating utensils clean.
- Keep garbage in closed containers and dispose outside, burying garbage if necessary.
- Keep your hands clean by washing them frequently with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected.
- Discard any food that has come into contact with contaminated floodwater.
- Discard any food that has been at room temperature for two hours or more.
- Discard any food that has an unusual odor, color or texture.
- Use ready-to-feed formula, if possible, for formula-fed infants. If using ready-to-feed formula is not possible, it is best to use bottled water to prepare powdered or concentrated formula. If bottled water is not available, use boiled water. Use treated water to prepare formula only if you do not have bottled or boiled water. Breastfed infants should continue breastfeeding.

**Don't:**

- Eat foods from cans that are swollen, dented or corroded, even though the product may look safe to eat.
- Eat any food that looks or smells abnormal, even if the can looks normal.
- Let garbage accumulate inside, both for fire and sanitation reasons.

**Note:** Thawed food usually can be eaten if it is still “refrigerator cold.” It can be re-frozen if it still contains ice crystals. To be safe, remember, “When in doubt, throw it out.”

For more information about food safety during an emergency, visit [FoodSafety.gov](http://FoodSafety.gov).

**Cooking**

Alternative cooking sources in times of emergency including candle warmers, chafing dishes, fondue pots or a fireplace.

Charcoal grills and camp stoves are for outdoor use only.

Commercially canned food may be eaten out of the can without warming.

**To heat food in a can:**

1. Remove the label.
2. Thoroughly wash and disinfect the can. (Use a diluted solution of one part bleach to ten parts water.)
3. Open the can before heating.

## **Managing Food Without Power**

### **Be Prepared:**

- Have a refrigerator thermometer.
- Know where you can get dry ice.
- Keep a few days' worth of ready-to-eat foods on hand that do not require cooking or cooling.

### **When the Power Goes Out:**

- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- The refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened.
- Refrigerators should be kept at 40° F or below for proper food storage.

### **Once the Power is Restored:**

- Check the temperature inside the refrigerator and freezer.
- If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, check the temperature when the power comes back on. If the freezer thermometer reads 40° F 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 or is 40° F or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook.
- Refrigerated food should be safe as long as the power was out for no more than 4 hours. Keep the door closed as much as possible.
- Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs or leftovers) that has been above 40° F for two hours or more.

### **Using Dry Ice:**

- Under normal circumstances you should not keep dry ice in your freezer. If your freezer is functioning properly it will cause the unit to become too cold and your freezer may shut off. However, if you lose power for an extended period of time, dry ice is the best way to keep things cold.
- Twenty-five pounds of dry ice will keep a 10-cubic-foot freezer below freezing for 3-4 days.
- If you use dry ice to keep your food cold, make sure it does not come in direct contact with the food.
- Use care when handling dry ice, wear dry, heavy gloves to avoid injury.