

The Atlantic County Division of Public Health

Food Safety During a Power Outage

A power outage is more than a simple inconvenience. When the power goes out, refrigerated or frozen food may spoil. Protect your family from the health hazards of spoiled food by following these simple tips from the Atlantic County Division of Public Health.

Keep Foods Cool

- Keep the freezer closed. This helps the air inside stay colder, longer. If you do not open the door more than necessary, a full, free-standing freezer will stay at freezing temperatures for about two days. A half-full freezer will stay cold for about one day.
- If your freezer is not full, group frozen packages together to keep them cool.
- If you think the power will be out for several days, use dry ice to keep items cool. Be sure to follow handling instructions carefully and avoid touching the dry ice or breathing in its fumes.
- Use block ice in your refrigerator's freezer unit. Place refrigerated perishables like meat, poultry and dairy items in the freezer unit. Group meat and poultry to one side or on a tray so that if they thaw, their juices will not get on the other food.

Discard Spoiled Food

- Meats, poultry and foods containing milk, cream, sour cream or soft cheese spoil quickly. As a general rule, discard these products if they have been kept above 40 degrees Fahrenheit for over two hours.
- Discard any fully-cooked items that were either in the freezer or refrigerator and have come into contact with raw meat juices.
- *When in doubt, throw it out.*
- Remember, you cannot rely on appearance or odor to determine if an item is safe to eat. Never taste food to determine its safety. Some foods may look and smell fine, but if they have been stored at room temperature too long, food-poisoning bacteria may have multiplied enough to make you sick.

Refreeze Items as Appropriate

- Prepared foods, vegetables and fruits can normally be refrozen, but there may be some quality loss.
- Fruits and fruit juices can be refrozen with minimal quality loss.

For more information about food safety, call the toll-free Meat and Poultry Hotline during regular business hours at 1-800-535-4555 or the Atlantic County Division of Public Health at 609-645-5971.

