

# Help! The Power Is Out...

Sudden power outages can be **frustrating** and **troublesome**, especially when they are prolonged. Perishable foods should not be held above 40 degrees for more than 2 hours. **If a power outage is 2 hours or less, you need not be concerned**, but how do you save your food when the refrigerator is out for longer times? Being prepared can help. By planning ahead, you can save your perishables.

## What do I need?

- One or more **coolers**. Inexpensive styrofoam coolers can do an excellent job as well.
- **Ice**. Surrounding your food with ice in a cooler will ensure that it will stay cold.
- **Shelf-stable foods**, such as canned goods and powdered or boxed milk. These can be eaten cold or heated on the grill.
- A digital quick-response **thermometer**. A digital thermometer should be a necessity in your kitchen anyway. With these thermometers you can quickly check the internal temperatures of food for doneness and safety.



## What to do...

### Do not open the refrigerator or freezer.

Tell your little ones not to open the door. An unopened refrigerator will keep foods cold enough for a couple of hours at least. A freezer that is half full will hold for up to 24 hours and a full freezer for 48 hours. (See chart on back for more details.)

If it looks like the power outage will be for more than 2-4 hours, pack refrigerated milk, dairy products, meats, fish, poultry, eggs, gravy, stuffing and leftovers into your **cooler** surrounded by **ice**. (See chart on back for more details.)

If it looks like the power outage will be **prolonged**, prepare a cooler with ice for your freezer items.



## Q's and A's

**What if I go to bed and the power is still not on?** Before you go to bed, pack your perishables into your coolers if you haven't already done so and put in as much ice as you can. Also, when you go to bed, leave a bedroom light switched on. When the power goes back on, it will wake you, so you can check the condition of your foods in the freezer. If freezer foods still have ice crystals they can be refrozen.

**What if the power goes out while I'm at work or out of the house and it has been more than a few hours before I get home?** Try to determine how long the power has been out. Check the internal temperature of the food in

your refrigerator with your quick-response thermometer. A liquid such as milk or juice is easy to check. Spot check other items like steaks or leftovers also. If the internal temperature is above 40 degrees, it is best to throw it out. (Check the chart on the back.) If the food in the freezer is not above 40 degrees and there are still ice crystals, you can refreeze.

**What if the power goes out and comes back on while I am out?** If your freezer is fairly full and you know it was not longer than 24 hours, the food should be okay. There will be loss of quality with refreezing, but the food will be safe. If the refrigerator was out for more than 2-4 hours, you are best to discard the perishables.



**American  
Red Cross**

*We'll be there.*

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