

Food Safety Tips for Emergencies/ Power Outages

Porcupine Health Unit, Public Health Inspection Services, Food Safety

In the event of a natural disaster or emergency incident, be sure to carefully inspect all food items and do not eat or use any food you think may be unsafe. Check food in your refrigerators and freezers for signs of spoilage and temperature abuse. Be prepared with these food safety tips.

Be Aware of Bacteria and Hazardous Contamination

- Throw away fresh meat and produce and any food, including packaged food, that has been contaminated by flood water, snow and ice, chemicals, animal waste, soil and dirt or extraneous materials from the outside environment. Contamination can occur from these circumstances if bacteria or other hazardous materials come in contact with food. Even if the food appears to be dry it still may not be safe.
- Food in glass or plastic jars and bottles may be unsafe, as hazardous materials may seep into the lids of these containers and may contaminate the food.
- Only food in hermetically sealed, airtight containers is safe, such as metal cans, juice boxes and

packages of freeze dried meals. However, these containers must be carefully cleaned and disinfected before use. Containers that are bulging or damaged are considered unsafe and should be thrown away.

Sanitation

Containers can be cleaned by washing them in a strong detergent solution and then immersing them in a mild bleach and water solution for two minutes followed by air drying, to prevent potential contamination when the containers are opened.

Frozen Food and Refrigeration

- Freezing stops the growth of bacteria. An upright or chest freezer should keep food frozen for about 24 hours during a power failure, if the freezer is kept closed.
- A refrigerator will keep food cool for four to six hours. Put ice, if available, in the refrigerator, an ice box or cooler to help keep perishable foods temporarily chilled.
- If you know that a power failure will last for a long period of time,

transport the food to a place with a working refrigerator or freezer.

- Have a back-up power source available for refrigerators and freezers, i.e. generator.
- Discard any thawed food that has remained at room temperature for two or more hours and any food that has an obvious strange colour or odour.
- Food that still contains ice crystals or feels refrigerator-cold can be re-frozen. If raw food has leaked during thawing, clean and disinfect the areas the food has touched. Do not reuse wash cloths until they have been cleaned and disinfected.

**For more information,
contact your local
health inspector
or call 1-800-461-1818.**

